VIET-NAM VETERANS SPEAK OUT

We are veterans of the Viet-Nam war. We believe that this "conflict" in which our country is now engaged in Viet-Nam is wrong, unjustifiable and contrary to the principle of self-determination on which this nation was founded. We believe that the activities and objectives of our forces in Viet-Nam are directly contrary to the best interests of the Vietnamese people and of the people of the United States. We believe that our policy in Viet-Nam supports tyranny and denies democracy. We believe this because of our experiences in Viet-Nam. We know, because we have been there, that the American public has not been told the truth about the war or about Viet-Nam.

We know:

- that Viet-Nam is one country—historically, culturally and as specified in the Geneva Accords of 1954.
- that this conflict is basically a civil war.
- that the government in Saigon, despite the recent "election," is a military dictatorship—supported by a small feudal aristocracy, the ARVN (Saigon) officer corps and half a million American troops.
- that the majority of the people we are fighting in south Viet-Nam are south Vietnamese.
- that the basic problem in Viet-Nam is not military—but social, economic and political; not American—but Vietnamese. There is no military "solution." There is no "American" solution.

We believe that if the American people realized this they would join the dissent of the millions of Americans already against this war.

We believe that true support for our buddies still in Viet-Nam is to demand that they be brought home (through whatever negotiation is necessary) before anyone else dies in a war the American people did not vote for and do not want.

Sgt. Alfred L. Ackerly, USMC
Sgt. Albert B. Adams, Jr., USA Special Forces
A./1C Samuel J. Albury, Jr., USAF
Sp./4 Robert F. Barnes, USA
Cpl. Joseph J. Barr, USMC
M.U./2 Bernard Bartz, USN
Capt. Arthur S. Blank Jr., M.D., USA
Sp./5 Philip E. Beck, USA
1/Cpl. G. James Boggio, USMC
Sp./4 Allen D. Brandon, USA
Sp./5 David E. E. Braun, USA
1/Cpl N. Daniel Burdekin, USA
L./Cpl Carl Joseph Campbell, USMC
Sp./5 Daniel E. Cleghorn, USA
Sp./4 Peter J. Coe, USA
1/Lt Peter G. Conrad, USMC
SM George Cross, USN
Sp./4 Jan B. Crumb, USA
Sp./4 Marshall D'Arcy, USA
A./2C Richard J. Davis, USAF
Sp./4 Dennis M. DeMello, USA
YN3 Mark E. Donnelly, USN
M./Sgt. Donald W. Duncan, GM32 G. Newell Eisele, USN
USA Special Forces
Sp./4 Carl D. Rogers, USA
1/Lt Peter G. Conrad, USMC
SM George Cross, USN
Sp./4 Jan B. Crumb, USA
Sp./4 Marshall D'Arcy, USA
A./2C Richard J. Davis, USAF
Sp./4 Dennis M. DeMello, USA
YN3 Mark E. Donnelly, USN
M./Sgt. Donald W. Duncan, GM32 G. Newell Eisele, USN
USA Special Forces
Sp./4 Norman J. Harolds, Jr., USA
Sp./4 Jonathan Horwitz, USA
Lt./JG Richard M. Howland, USNR
Pfc. Dalton C. James Jr., USA
Pfc. F. J. Johnson, USMC
YN2 Stephen J. Kessler, USA
Sp./4 Anthony Lauta, USA
Sp./4 James Mackenzie, USA
Sp./5 Dick McFarlane, USA
Sp./2 Michael Nutnick, USMC
Pfc. James N. Oss, USA
Sp./5 Donald Weiss, USA
A./1C Robert Wilkinson, USA
Sp./4 Chuck Williams, USA
Sp./4 Jack E. Wilson, USA
Pfc. William F. Witt, USA
A./2C James A. Zeleski, USAF

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Jan Crumb—Co-ordinator

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SOME

Some stood up once
and sat down.
Some walked a mile
and walked away.
Some stood up twice
then sat down.
I've had it, they said.
Some walked two miles
then walked away.
It's too much, they cried.

Some stood and stood and stood.
They were taken for fools.
They were taken for being taken in.

Some walked and walked and walked
They walked the earth
They walked the waters
They walked the air.

Why do you stand
They were asked, and
Why do you walk?
Because of the children, they said, and
Because of the heart, and
Because of the bread.

Because
The cause
Is the heart's beat
And the children born
And the risen bread.

—Daniel Berrigan

25 YEARS FIGHTING FOR VETERANS, PEACE AND JUSTICE

It's hard to believe that 25 years have passed since Vietnam Veterans Against the War first lifted a banner in an antiwar demonstration. Veterans, previously unacquainted, united together — eager, war-toughened, bold, idealistic, angry, innocent, young and filled with the urgent necessity to change the course of history. Our mission was nothing less than to end the war we had fought in Vietnam.

And we were, simply, terrific. We marched, lobbied and communed with each other in politically charged veteran's demonstrations and encampments. We defied Richard Nixon and the Justice Department, the Supreme Court and Congress. Yet, we welcomed Senators, Representatives and the American public to our encampments, as we eloquently and viscerally testified to our experiences in Vietnam. The country listened to us as we moved to end the war in a peaceful and most dramatic way.

With the help of dedicated professionals, VVAW pioneered work in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, veteran's rap groups, and treatment and compensation for exposure to Agent Orange. As veterans we reached out to war resisters, working with them for universal and unconditional amnesty. In the past 25 years, we’ve provided draft and registration information to thousands of high school students, sharing with them the realities of war and the military. We’ve continued to speak out for normalization of relations with Vietnam and against misguided American policies, whether in Central America or the Persian Gulf.

Through thick and thin, high times and low, internal strife, VVAW survives with a renewed sense of mission. Now we mark our 25th anniversary and salute you, your families and all our friends as we celebrate our collective accomplishments and individual contributions to the fight for veterans, peace and justice.

—Edward Damato
SELECTED WORKS ON VVAW ACTIONS, BY VVAW MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS, OR PROFILING VVAW CONTRIBUTORS


FILMS

Born on the Fourth of July; Coming Home; Different Sons; For Vietnam Veterans…; In the Beginning; Winter Soldier; documentaries.
WE SALUTE OUR HONORARY BOARD FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT AND YEARS OF DEDICATION TO VETERANS, PEACE & JUSTICE:

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Gulf War Conscientious Objector

N.Y. ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:


IN MEMORIAM: Clarence Fitch, John Janos.

"EDITOR’S" NOTE:

The contents of this journal have been not so much edited as collected. Though not a policy statement of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc., each article and photograph speaks to the ongoing programs and concerns to which VVAW has been dedicated this past quarter century. Some contributions were solicited, others arrived at our mailbox as serendipitous gifts and offerings. In the words of their authors, they represent the depth of feeling and breadth of concerns that comprise just part of the legacy of the Vietnam War. It has been a privilege to assist in the compilation of these voices and visions. They are an eloquent rejoinder to those who suggest we forget Vietnam.

WE ARE INDEBTED TO OUR ADVERTISERS, ENDORSERS, CONTRIBUTORS AND SPONSORS:


GRATEFUL APPRECIATION TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO WORK GRACE OUR JOURNAL:

Steve Berman, Svetlana Cook, Steve Dalber, J.J. Garcia, Doug Hostetter, Denis Lund, Mahmood Nadia, Per-Olaf Odman, Sheldon Ramdell, Barbara Rothkrug, Larry Rottman, Allan Ruld, Ralf Wege and the much loved Anonymous. Very special thanks to Fred W. McDarragh for his generosity in providing photographs documenting Dewey Canyon III. Cover photo by Per-Olaf Odman.

THANKS TO OUR DEAR FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS: (At press time)

Congratulations
and best wishes
on your 25th Anniversary

Continue the fight
for Peace
and Justice

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VIETNAM
VETERANS
DEMAND
BRING OUR
BUDDIES
HOME, NOW!
IN THE TEETH OF WAR

The following is excerpted from the foreword by David Dellinger to In the Teeth of War, a photographic documentary of the March 26, 1966, New York City demonstration against the war in Vietnam. It is the conclusion of a three-part commentary, which spoke first to the spectators, second to those who relied on the mass media for coverage, and lastly to American GIs. It is an early and direct address to the question of antagonisms between soldiers and the antwar movement.

The third group with whom we hope to communicate through this book is the men in the armed forces, particularly those in Vietnam or likely to be sent there if the war continues. We hope that everyone who picks up this book will try to get it into the hands of a friend in the Services. The courageous men in Vietnam, whose plight is heartrending, should know the truth about those at home who expose themselves to calumny and slander because of their efforts in behalf of all those, on both sides, whose lives are being needlessly destroyed.

In a sensible world it would be obvious that there is a natural alliance of sympathy and common interest between the men whose lives and limbs are threatened in a dishonest and unnecessary war and those who are trying to bring that war to an end. It would also be obvious that among those who are exempt [because of age, occupation, sex or other accidental circumstance] it takes more courage, more loyalty to one's fellows who are bearing the brunt of the war, to speak up for peace than to keep conveniently and safely quiet. This does not mean that the peace demonstrators are necessarily right in everything they say or do, but it should be clear that their motives and character are different than is often suggested by the government and its most narrow-minded supporters.

It hardly seems possible that those who recklessly insist on committing more and more men to the hazards of jungle warfare, in the service of a cruel and unpopular dictator like Ky, should pose as the soldier's best friends. Yet from their havens in Washington (and in the case of some of the most vociferous, from their plantations in the South) they beat their breasts and cry out that those who want to save the soldiers' lives and honor are somehow "stabbing our boys in the back."

In my own experience, I would say that there was a time, when American escalation first began, when some opponents of the war—horrified by the tendency of the press and administration to assume that Vietnamese deaths didn't really matter—may have given the false impression that they were more upset over the death and suffering of Vietnamese than of Americans. This was never an accurate expression of the sentiments of the peace movement as a whole, which is concerned for all victims. And it has been a long time since I have heard anyone speak in a way that might foster this unfortunate misimpression. As the American casualty lists have grown, the demonstrators have been protesting with increased passion against the government's callous disregard for the American youths who are being slaughtered in the interests of "saving face" or gaining a temporary advantage in the dishonorable "game" of power politics. That is why the most popular slogan in the March 26 parade was "Support the G.I.'s, Bring Them Home Now."

One of the featured speakers at the rally on the Mall was Donald Duncan, a man whose courageous patriotism has been doubly demonstrated—first by his outstanding service as a member of the Special Forces, when he thought that U.S. participation in this war really was in behalf of freedom, and secondly by his public advocacy of peace, after he had learned that Washington's claim are "a lie." He evoked a roar of approval when he said, "The people protesting the war are not against our soldiers in Vietnam; We are against our soldiers being in Vietnam."

On another occasion, he wrote: 'When I returned from Vietnam I was asked, 'Do you resent young people who have never been in Vietnam, or in any war, protesting it?' On the contrary, I am relieved. I think they should be commended. I had to wait until I was 35 years old, after spending 10 years in the Army and 18 months personally witnessing the stupidity of the war before I could figure it out. That these people were able to figure it out so quickly and so accurately is not only a credit to their intelligence but a great personal triumph over a lifetime of conditioning and indoctrination.'

Young people who have never been in any war are only part of the varied group who take part in demonstrations to stop the war in Vietnam. Leading the March 26 parade down Fifth Avenue were two large contingents of veterans of World War II and the Korean War.

While he was still in Vietnam, Donald Duncan edited a small information paper for Special Forces. He writes: 'I tried in my own way to bring a little light to the men with whom I worked. On the last page of the first issue were the names of four men—all friends of mine—reported killed in action on the same day...

"To these friends I wrote this dedication: 'We can best immortalize our fallen members by striving for an enlightened future where Man has found another solution to his problems rather than resorting to the futility and stupidity of war."

That "enlightened future" is long overdue in Vietnam.

—Dave Dellinger
RECRUITING THE LADY

Bob Baracca, Steve Julie, Mike Parker, Tim McCormick, Ray Grodecki, Bob Clark...the names of some of the vets who took part in the Statue of Liberty demonstration - part of the Winter Soldier campout at Valley Forge, December 24, 1971.

Steve and I were the first two up into the arm of the "Lady." We came over at 9 a.m. Every hour, two more vets slipped under the side of the "locked" gate into the arm. At 5 p.m., the island emptied out and all of the staff left. The Statue night watchman left when we asked if he wished to join us.

We immediately barricaded the doors and took ourselves on a tour unlike any other ever held there. For 48 hours we were able to communicate our message to media from all over the world - a simple "Bring our Brothers and Sisters Home - No More War!"

In retrospect, those moments were probably the nicest high one could feel - to be the messenger, to sense the unity that VVAW gave us as individuals and as brothers and, finally, to know that the military had given us training that could be used for a positive good.

— Jim Murphy

OPERATION PEACE ON EARTH

December 31, 1971 - Operation Peace on Earth:
- VVAW and Vietnam Vets Protest Treatment in Hospital at Travis Air Force Base!
- VVAW Liberates the Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia!
- VVAW Marches In D.C. and Takes Over the Lincoln Memorial!
- VVAW Spills Blood on Steps of the Capitol!
- VVAW Liberates South Vietnam's Embassy in San Francisco!
- VVAW and Scientists March to Independence Hall in Philadelphia where Human Blood is Spilled on the Steps!
- VVAW Liberates Air Force Recruiting Station in Dorchester, Massachusetts!
- VVAW Petitions the United Nations to Call an Assembly to Stop the Indochina War!
- VVAW Holds Anti-War Demonstration at Times Square on New Year's Eve!

I got back from Valley Forge last night. I went down on December 27th with Paul, John, Bill and Jack. We spent the first day traveling. We stopped at the park across from the Statue of Liberty, but we couldn't do anything constructive since the ferry service to the island was stopped. We then split to Valley Forge. We found the tents and people were very organized - with security, registration, a task force, cooks and press spokesmen. We sat around the fire discussing the actions that had already taken place (Statue of Liberty, Betsy Ross House, Fort Dix, Travis AFB). The next morning we loaded up into a convoy which consisted of about five vans and six cars and we headed to D.C. We were stopped along the way by the state police who were radioing ahead to other police. The convoy was going 45 m.p.h. with all the headlights on. We were slowing traffic down so the police escorted us for several miles in order to speed us up to 55 m.p.h.

We arrived around 12 noon after getting lost a few times in D.C. It took a while to locate where the rally was taking place since everything that had been planned was just what we weren't going to do. Everyone was confused and rightly so. Even the feds were confused. If they had agents in Valley Forge finding out what our next actions would be they couldn't possibly know - I didn't even know! The whole day everyone was confused as to what to do and what to expect next, but there was a spark of karma, a vibration of unity that no confusion could diminish.

We held a rally near the White House on a monument which also served as a traffic rotary. Already we were getting a strange premonition of how the police were going to react to us later. We started marching. There were about one hundred and fifty of us. I knew we must have looked strange, almost foreign to the onlookers. All of us were wearing some remnant of our military past. Some of the vets were in wheelchairs and other walked with crutches. We had a bass drum, which beat in a slow, death-march rhythm. Bill played the harmonica.

Some of the songs were As Johnny Comes Marching Home; Glory, Glory Hallelujah and the National Anthem. I think everyone in the march was pretty well wrecked. We were having a good time. There were many clenched fists raised and leaflets given out as we marched. Our banners waved as the march progressed toward the Lincoln Memorial. The press really thought the casket we carried was sensational (exactly!). We marched slowly and in single file in front of the White House....

At the Lincoln Memorial: when the march reached the steps of the Memorial everyone fell out and started charging up the steps. This startled the cops who were but a handful. They were stationed between the giant pillars at the front of the building. The casket was placed directly below Lincoln's feet where one vet was holding the VVAW flag. Four cops were standing behind the area that was cordoned off in order to protect 'Mr. President' from any pranks we might perpetrate upon his marble majesty. We all sat down around the casket in a semi-circle. Harvey B. was laid inside the casket and our banner was placed over the casket after
being unfolded, military-style. The silence... No one knew what to do (we were lucky we'd gotten this far!) without breaking up in confusion)...  

We decided to remain at the Memorial. We blocked the entrances. We got arrested, booked, charged with disorderly conduct. We spent the night in jail (about 75 of us) and were freed the next day on $50 bonds. We split to Philadelphia to catch the ongoing demonstration there, but it was already over. We picked up some newspapers—we made the front page again. Then we made a visit to the VVAW office in Philly before we split back to Valley Forge...many plans were discussed but few put into effect. The next morning we went to the United Nations building, and then we returned to Boston. The day we returned, nine Vietnam veterans were arrested after defiling a recruiters station. The trial is on January 20th—much support!

January 13, 1972—Yesterday I spoke at Xaverian Brothers High School to the senior class assembly. Good response. I showed two films: Winter Soldier and Only the Beginning. John H. called. He wanted the films so I went to the VVAW office in Cambridge and then to Watertown with him. We showed one film and spoke at an experimental school called 'Home Base.' We're attempting to introduce a weekly seminar on Vietnamese history.

January 21, 1972—The demonstration in support of the 'Dorchester 9' came off quite well. We had many picket signs and a couple of bullhorns. About 150 people came. We made a lot of noise. The judge didn't want to handle the case so he sent it up to Superior Court. Paul Weinberg made a motion that since the courts are used to recruit people into the military, the vets who opposed military recruiting could not get a fair trial.

January 28, 1972—Went to a meeting at John C's house. At first it was just the UMass VVAW who was there, but later on quite a few other people from CCAS, SDS and concerned Dorchester residents came to talk about the problems at Columbia Point, creating a Vietnamese history course and what to do about military recruiters on the campus.

January 29, 1972—The party at Paul's last night was really great. A lot of vets from the Cambridge office showed up and a few people came from Fort Devens. I had some really decent talks with Dave S., Mike R., John H. and Lew G. Last night there was a real spirit of solidarity in the air. The apartment was crowded and just about everyone there has a revolutionary mind. Sheila H. mentioned that someone should be keeping a diary of what the VVAW is doing because someday it will be history....

Mark S. Foley

Mark began keeping a journal two weeks before leaving for Vietnam. The preceding excerpts are from the period directly before, during and after Nixon's infamous Christmas bombings of 1971.

SONG FOR LEELA, BOBBY AND ME

for Robert Ross

The day you flew to Tam Ky, I was green with envy. Not that lifeless washed-out green of sun-bleached dusty jungle utes. I was rice shoot green, teenage green. This wasn't going to be just one more chickenscratch guerrilla fight:

farmers, women, boobytraps and snipers, dead Marines, and not a Viet Cong in sight.

This was hardcore NVA, a regiment at least. But someone had to stay behind, man the bunker, plot the H & I.

I have friends who wonder why I can't just let the past lie where it lies, why I'm still so angry.

As if there's something wrong with me. As if the life you might have lived were just a fiction, just a dream.

As if those gold Nebraska dawns were just as promising without you.

As if Nebraska soil can grow things just as well without you.

Since you've been gone, they've taken boys like you and me and killed them in Grenada, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, and Panama. And yet I'm told I'm living in the past. Maybe that's the trouble: we're a nation with no sense of history, no sense at all.

I still have that photo of you standing by the bunker door, smiling shyly, rifle, helmet, cigarette, green uniform you hadn't been there long enough to fade somewhere in an album I don't have to look at anymore. I already know you just keep getting younger. In the middle of this poem, my daughter woke up crying. I lay down beside her, softly singing; soon she drifted back to sleep.

But I kept singing anyway.

I wanted you to hear.

Reprinted from Just for Laughs by W.D. Ehrhart; Chevy Chase, MD: Vietnam Generation, Inc., 1990
"DON'T TELL ME
WOMEN DON'T KNOW ABOUT WAR..."

I remember you on your way home from the war. We met in the Pacific. There were so many of you. I was part of the surgical team that worked around the clock to save your life and tried to save your limbs. Sometimes we did and sometimes we didn't. And I remember the holes in your guts. We sewed those up too.

You don't remember me, but I remember you. I held your hand when they brought you to the Operating Room while they put you to sleep. Many times I was the only female on the surgical team trying to hide my emotions.

How could I forget you? The faces you had and the faces you didn't have. Some of you came back so many times to haunt me with your faces blown off. And for some of you there was so little we could do for you. We gave you more skin grafts when what you needed was a whole new face. The despair and hopelessness I felt I saw in your face and I saw in your eyes. I remember changing your dressings and the roaches that came crawling out of the wounds of your stumps. The roaches that were eating you alive and you didn't know it. I tried to hide the roaches from you and stop from vomiting and still provide you with nursing care all at the same time. Yes, those were difficult days, for me too.

I remember your screams when they had to amputate your legs. I had compassion for you and cared about your recovery. I held your hand then, too. After the surgery was over I cleaned the blood up in the Operating Room and then had to carry your amputated leg to the laboratory and prepare the room quickly for the next case, all day and sometimes all night. There were so many of you. There were days when I felt haunted from the constant stress of taking care of so many of you.

Don't tell me women don't know anything about war because we weren't out on the "front lines." I had battle fatigue, too. From those grueling years in surgery; it was a war zone there, believe me. There were days when the stress and strain and blood and guts almost had to equal what you experienced.

I went home to a lonely apartment and started drinking to kill the pain I had in caring for you. That hurt me even more. After a while I didn't feel anything and fooled myself and thought I was coping better. But the alcohol was slowly taking its deadly toll on me.

The Army trained me well for the surgical team to help take care of your war-torn bodies, but they didn't train me for that "other war." The one we had. When you turned on me. You turned on me with your unrelenting sexual harassment and assaults. You battered me. I met you on Army post after Army post. Some of you were black and some of you were white, but you were all male. Maybe you were frustrated from the war or maybe the Army trained you that way, I don't know.

A SECOND WALL

A second wall
for those who cracked
like weathered stone
split open like gutted fish
by the knife
of memory and nightmare

A second wall
for those who landed
on American shores
hit the trip wires
the punji pits
got caught in the most concealed
ambush of all
the one that waited
secretly for years
to slay its final victims
the one that hid
in the tunnels of the spirit

– Lamont Steptoe
There were days when I felt terrorized by the psychological warfare going on between us.

Then there was the added unrelenting stress of working in surgery all those long days and nights. I’m still damaged. The Army never recognized that war, either. I felt trapped. I tried to ignore the harassment and hoped you’d leave me alone. I felt so powerless to cope being a woman in a man’s army. There was nowhere to turn for help with a male chain of command. I tried though. Women only made up 2% of the Army population back then. I thought if I worked hard, you’d stop your harassment. The Army never trained me to fight back either – only to save your life. So I was at a terrible disadvantage and not prepared for your ruthless attacks. I was stunned and felt helpless. I was devastated. I drank more. Isolated myself. My problems got worse.

When I got out of the Army four years ago (1978), I came home with some of the same problems you did. Alcohol, antisocial behavior and isolation from family and friends. I had a hard time holding down a job, too. I also had to change occupations – I couldn’t go back to surgery. Like you, I was misunderstood by society, too. No one took my military service seriously, either, because I was a woman. So in one way it was easier for me than for you to quietly hide out when I got home.

Then, a year ago, I came down with a severe depression and anxiety and was hospitalized. I was exhausted and suffered fatigue – and I still never talked about my experiences in the military. Maybe I was suffering with delayed stress syndrome, I don’t know. The scars are still there and they’re deep.

After all these years I’m just now starting to cry. I’ve cried for days. And I’m starting to feel again. I’m hoping that maybe I’ll recover from the emotional trauma I held inside me for so long from all those years of taking care of you and all that abuse that women have to put up with in the Army that seems built into the system.

I want the American people to know I’m not going to hide out anymore. It is not easy for me to write this letter – and I hope you will print this letter in its entirety.

I recovered from the alcoholism but I desperately need psychiatric care for a full recovery. I tried to get help at the VA but they don’t have programs for women – and I’m a service-connected veteran, too! I’m worried that if I don’t get the help I need and soon, I may lose a fine job that I value very much.

After serving in the armed forces for so many years, and helping to save and mend so many lives, now I need help and there is no place for me to go for help. And I am angry.

I urge all Americans, and especially women veterans who came home from those war years as shattered and battered as I did, to put some pressure on the VA to recognize the special problems women have in coping with the shattering experiences they had while they were on active duty. Special programs should be provided by the VA for women because they are urgently needed.

The VA and the American people need to know that women need help, too. We’ve been silent too long. We count, too. After all, we volunteered our services and took time out of our lives to help save other lives and to serve our country, too.

And if we can’t get help at the VA, we’ll just have to go to the Veteran Outreach Centers in the community and start our own groups. But, please, women veterans, come out; we’ve been hiding too long. It’s the only way we’re going to recover.

— Judy Marron

This letter was published in the VVAW Veteran in 1982. The writer later took her own life by leaping from the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge.
FOR THE SLAIN COLLEGIANS
OF JACKSON STATE AND KENT STATE...
IN MEMORY OF PHILLIP L. GIBBS, JAMES EARL GREEN,
ALLISON KRAUSE, JEFFREY GLENN MILLER,
SANDRA LEE SCHEUER, WILLIAM K. SCHROEDER

At the time of the 1967 founding of VVAW, I was happily anti-
icipating the high school graduation of my son, Jeff, and his
entrance to Michigan State that coming September — a happiness
that almost, but not quite, overcame our sadness and anger at the
seemingly endless war in Vietnam.

More than a year before, Jeff (not quite 16 years old) expressed
his feelings in a poem. He was a high school junior when he wrote
it and I find his mention of Ohio so strange — almost as though he
had a premonition that four years later he would transfer to Kent
State University and be shot to death by his own government for
expressing the antiwar sentiments that he had so eloquently
voiced in his poem...

— Excerpted from a letter to VVAW by Mrs. Elaine Holstein,
mother of Jeffrey Miller

WHERE DOES IT END?
The strife and fighting continue into the night.
Mechanical birds sound of death as they buzz overhead,
sputting fire into the doomed town where the women
and children run and hide in the bushes and ask why —
why are we not left to live our own lives?

In the pastures converted into battlefields
the small metal pellets speed through the air,
pausing occasionally to claim another victim.

A teenager from a small Ohio farm clutches his side
in pain and as he feels his life ebbing away, he too
asks why —
why is he dying here, thousands of miles from home,
giving his life for those who did not even ask his help?
The War Without a Purpose marches on relentlessly,
not stopping to mourn for its dead,
content to wait for its end.

But all the frightened parents who still have their sons
fear that
the end is not in sight.

— Jeff Miller, February 14, 1966
A FAMILY OF VETERANS

Organizing for VVAW's silver anniversary has caused me to reflect on Vietnam, VVAW and my family. I, my wife and son, are all Vietnam veterans. I was in Vietnam as a Marine from September 1967 to June 1969. My son, ngã, was born in Vietnam in November 1970, and his sister was killed there. My wife, Mariann, is also a veteran, since she has lived with the war that is still inside ngã and me. Also, VVAW has become part of our family.

It was in the Summer of 1964 that Vietnam became for me more than just another place in the news. A friend, Chip, and I were watching television at his house outside Syracuse, New York. President Johnson was giving a speech at Syracuse University just after the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Chip's father came into the room. He was upset over what Johnson was saying. He was afraid that Chip and I would end up fighting in Vietnam. I didn't realize at the time his prediction would come true.

In 1966, after my father had a heart attack and was out of work, I left college to join the Marines. A year later I was in Vietnam. I remember the first day in-country riding on the back of a truck to a base camp north of Da Nang. I was shocked to see the horrible conditions of refugees living alongside the road in cardboard huts made from empty beer cartons. During my 20 months in Vietnam, the sight of hungry children and the horrors of war made a lasting impression. Those images were a major reason why Mariann and I later adopted a child from Vietnam.

Although I was gung ho before I got there, once in Vietnam I began to question what was going on. I guess I never accepted the racist training propaganda that the Vietnamese were gooks, etc., or somehow less than us. Watching poor Vietnamese struggle to exist caused me to develop a deep respect for them. Also, I started to learn more about the history of the war. Someone from Cornell University sent me a copy of The United States in Vietnam by Kahin and Lewis. It presented a different story than had been told to us during basic training. I started to realize the government had lied to me. I got angry and knew that I had to do something.

I got married in 1970 after being discharged from the Marines. Mariann is Danish and I had met her in Copenhagen while on leave from Vietnam. Her letters had kept me going during my last six months in Quang Tri and Dong Ha. The fact that she was removed from the war helped me readjust to civilian life.

Dewey Canyon III was the first time I heard of VVAW. I was glad to learn that there were other veterans who felt the way I did. I quickly joined. I remember the early rap sessions on 26th Street, Ed's long hair, the Brooklyn chapter, delivering a casket to Maxwell Taylor at Kennedy Airport, the Statue of Liberty takeover, the takeover of the V.A. in New York, having prisoners at the Navy Brig throw messages from their cells to our demonstration outside, VVAW's Brooklyn storefront and sickle cell anemia testing, organizing the Washington-Maryland region, the takeover of the Saigon Information Office, Gainesville 8 trial and demonstrations, Peace Accord march to Arlington Cemetery, the July 74
demo in Washington, suing the government, burning discharges, fighting with the police, Danny marching with a bandaged head, Gary Lawton, Highway 13, the second Statue of Liberty takeover, revitalizing the chapter in Brooklyn, the campaign to test, treat and compensate for Agent Orange, blocking trains in Cleveland to support Ashby Leach, defending a vet who had busted up a Klan rally, Dewey Canyon III anniversary, too many meetings in New York, Washington, Yellowsprings, Buffalo, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and much more. But most of all, I remember the long-lasting friendships I have developed with other VVAW members.

Through all of the ups and downs, twists and turns of VVAW, Mariann has stood by me. She has put up with me going away for demonstrations, meetings and trials. She has let VVAW members stay in our home, whether they were building for a demonstration, testifying before Congress or attending a conference. She also made some good friends and even got a great spaghetti recipe. As well, she has lived with the horrors of the Vietnam war and the loss of Ngã's sister.

We adopted Ngã, a Black-Vietnamese boy, in 1975. He was 4½ years old at the time and spoke only Vietnamese. It was several months before we learned that his older sister had been killed in the crash of the Lockheed C-5A in Saigon with more than 70 other children. Once it was discovered that a defect in the plane had caused the crash, a lawsuit was commenced on behalf of the survivors and those who had died.

The crash occurred because a hinge failed and the rear cargo door opened at 23,000 feet. There was an explosive decompression and the door severed the control lines to the tail section. Babies had been placed two to four in a seat in the upper passenger section. When the plane decompressed, there weren't enough oxygen masks for the babies or enough adults to put them on. Many of the babies who survived the crash were brain damaged from lack of oxygen. Ngã's sister, who was 8½ years old, was in the lower cargo section with 71 other children. They had no oxygen masks at all. The plane crash-landed and there was an explosion. Ngã's sister and all but one child in the cargo section died.

During the lawsuit, we discovered that Lockheed knew of the defective hinge, but covered it up in order to get government contracts. They also had Air Force officers destroy documents and attempt to cover up Lockheed's liability in the crash. The reason for even using the C-5A to airlift the children from Vietnam was in hopes of getting good publicity for Lockheed and President Ford. Ford was going to meet the children as they came off the plane in California. There were hospital-equipped aircraft in the Philippines which could have been used, but they couldn't fly to the U.S. with as many children.

The killing of Ngã's sister was just another example of the corruption and horror of the American military-industrial complex. It is another reason why our family is proud to have been part of VVAW's fight for veterans, peace and justice.

—Terry A. Selzer, Vietnam '67-'69

CAVATINA
"A People are not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is done, no matter how brave its warriors nor how strong their weapons." —Cheyenne proverb

I submit these ancient words for the VVAW 25th anniversary journal, and dedicate them to the strong, willful and beautiful women of this organization. To those who came before me and after me, in the ongoing struggle, to friends with loud and resolute voices, strong spirits, huge hearts and courageous deeds. You taught me to be focused and powerful. Your hearts were never on the ground. VVAW survives. For this I offer my thanks, my love, my respect and honor.

—Sukie Wachtendonk

CARRY IT ON...

Like so many others, I returned from Vietnam intent upon forgetting the war. When you threw back your medals, I was planning to get married, struggling to earn enough to make my car payment. I didn't dare to deal with Vietnam, or with its implications for my children's futures, until 1982. VVAW was there, to encourage, to inform, to guide the way.

I am impressed at how powerless we are as individuals. As more and more of the truth becomes known, and as the carefully managed deceptions of the Vietnam era have become blatant, flagrant abuses in today's news, you're still there. We become mired in car payments and gardens, children and careers, all the experiences of life. We forget that our government is still shedding blood. VVAW persists, and every once in a while the mail shakes our comfortable lives. Congrats, for a job well done! And, thanks!

—John Ketwig

WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

In early 1971, one of my professors brought to my attention a small notice in the New York Times Book Review requesting poems for an anthology by Vietnam veterans. The notice didn't say who the editors were, or what were their politics, but I had written some poems about the war, so I sent what I had and kept my fingers crossed.

The editors turned out to be Jan Barry, Basil Paquet and Larry Rottmann, members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. More than a year later, thanks to the energy and imagination of these three men, as well as financial backing from other VVAW members and supporters, Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans was published to wide acclaim almost unheard of for a book of poetry.

Eight of the poems in the book were mine. The pride and satisfaction I felt as I held that book in my hands for the first time remains, twenty years later, one of the most profound moments of my life. Out of the wreckage and sorrow of the Vietnam War, the editors and poets had created something good and beautiful. Poetry had given back to me the voice I had lost in the riorfields and hamlets of Vietnam.

Winning Hearts and Minds touched the lives of thousands of people and made them better for it. It touched my life, leaving me with a permanent fascination in the power of words. It made me want to be a poet—not just a doodler or a hobbyist, but a writer. It opened the way to the life I have lived ever since.

—W.D. Ehrhart
On July 7, 1972, agents of the FBI began to serve subpoenas commanding the appearance of 22 men and one woman before a federal grand jury in Tallahassee, FL. There were two reasons why these subpoenas were unique. First, all were returnable at the same hour, on the same day. Second, all were for members of one organization — Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

For the first time, the U.S. government had launched a frontal attack on VVAW. Prior to this date, the government seemed to be at a loss in coping with an organization of antiwar veterans. There had been attempts to deny that the "hirsute vagabonds" were actually veterans; there had been harassment arrests — but the organization's membership was steadily growing.

VVAW had been making plans to attend both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. Exactly what the government hoped to gain by holding the grand jury in July wasn't clear, but as pieces were added to the puzzle, the government's intentions became more clear.

Richard M. Nixon, in an attempt to make good his campaign promises of 1968, had to change the character of the war in Southeast Asia. He hoped that an escalated air war, coupled with a naval blockade and mining of North Vietnamese ports, would bring the Vietnamese to their knees and force them to accept U.S. terms at the Paris peace talks. His future as President seemed to hang on the war in Vietnam.

Nixon was receiving a message from the American people: he could not ignore — the war had lost its appeal! With the leaking of the Pentagon Papers, more and more Americans broke their silence and started asking embarrassing questions about U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Ultimately, eight people were indicted by the grand jury and charged with "conspiracy to promote, incite and participate in a riot" at the 1972 Republican National Convention in Miami, FL. They were Pete Mahoney of the National Office; Bill Patterson and John Kniffen, Texas; Scott Camil, Don Perdue and Alton Foss, Florida; and John Briggs and Stan Michelsen, Florida regional.

The Gainesville 8 plead 'not guilty' to conspiracy, but guilty of war crimes in Southeast Asia; the government was told in no uncertain terms that VVAW considered the charges politically motivated. The Gainesville 8 trial came on the heels of several other politically-motivated grand juries and conspiracy trials, including those against antiwar activists in Chicago, IL; Seattle, WA; and Harrisburg, PA.

When the trial opened, John Kniffen — one of three vets acting as his own attorney — told the jury: "We have asked for an end to war and the government has called us traitors. We have asked for justice for all citizens and received police clubs. We have asked for justice and received an indictment." The jury had been selected in less than three days — seven were women, three African-American, and one a Vietnam veteran. Within two weeks of the start of the trial, five jurors sent a letter to presiding Judge Arrow stating that they suspected their phones had been tapped. The jurors requested for an investigation was ignored.

On August 31st, 1973, 14 months after the trial started, the Gainesville 8 were unanimously declared innocent of all charges.
VET CHIC AND A VALUABLE AWAKENING

There's two occasions I lingered over in reviewing my memories: the Vet Chic Fashion Show at Dewey Canyon III and a brief, but now—in retrospect—most valuable awakening I had via John Lindquist...They kind of interfere.

I had worked long, hard and singly at first, defining then attempting to pry open the closet door behind which many Vietnam vets had hidden away—especially in Lima, Ohio. Confused, isolated from most media and certainly from support and/or services, I left the VA medical center in Marion, Indiana, with a mission: carry the message that we were exclusive in our pain, but there was hope!

Our experiences as combatants, and then as veterans, had alienated us—we isolated to avoid more pain. At the hospital, treated for the all-too-common malady of self-over-medication with drugs and alcohol, I had found the camaraderie last felt when I was in the military. A lot of my loneliness and the concomitant despair had waned. A clear head and restored health equalled energy and I was propelled—self-will without aftercare is a unique 'speeder' and I ran hard for a year solid.

Having not accepted much help and blocked by the residual denial that I believed myself 'cured,' I was low on ego credit when Dewey Canyon III actualized. Here was the peak—the goal—"Vet Net" and all the community, the nation! Reward. I had arrived within the greater whole. It was Wonderful!

From some special place I wish I could find again, the idea of a Vet Chic Fashion Show just happened. It came together in minutes...This grand community of like minds, whims, satirists and saboteurs for social change took it up and made it happen! For me, it was acceptance, identity, ego and fruition. As the high point for me, at DCIII, this was the best. I'm still grateful for the opportunity. VVAV erased my loneliness, filled my emptiness with love and buoyed my hope.

My memory says it was very late, one evening/ morning at the Milwaukee "camp-out"...Those unique hours after many others filled with talk and activity, that monologists like myself wind down and are able to listen...

John Lindquist had been to my discourse of the moment, the Vet Centers and the need for VVAV to somehow protect them from the clinicalization that was fast obscuring the roots set by VVAV—peer counsel as rap groups...John saw things from a more senior and long-term perspective—the psychology, sociology and philosophy were all appropriate, sure, but they addressed symptoms, period. For any of us to truly recover from our experiences we needed to know and accept the politics that were Vietnam. "Used once and thrown away" the chant begins. But it closes, "Vietnam Vets will have their day."

It was many years and many treatment centers after, but John's message had stayed with me. I had to overcome my victimization and dispel all the associated resentments if I was to stay clean and sober. By being in touch with the politics that use and abuse—the consumption of the consumer—I'd have the knowledge that could be the power to overcome.

VVAV has always been a little ahead—on point, if you will. We have been a vanguard and a rear-guard. The checks and balances that serve the national conscience and contain the adventurists, the knee-jerk populists and other and equally dangerous, self-serving, pocket-lining opportunists. We won't be used again!

—Lee Channing

THE HISTORY OF THE P.V.S. LIBRARY

Since the dawn of VVAV, Inc., we have been involved in dealing with the war's aftermath, mainly veterans care. Our war may have been different in some ways, but care of veterans after our nation's wars has been a policy of used once and thrown away since the Revolutionary War.

I would like to deal with the history of VVAV and PVS (Post Vietnam Syndrome). It is nowadays referred to as PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)—I prefer PVS because Vietnam is still part of it. Whatever it is called, VVAV originated the first PVS rap groups in New York City in 1970, and started the National Clearinghouse on PVS and the PVS Library in 1972.

In Fall 1972, at the National Steering Committee meeting in Palo Alto, CA, a PVS workshop was held headed by Jack McCloskey of San Francisco. One of the many people attending was Ann L. Bailey of the Milwaukee chapter. Milwaukee was already involved with the Don Kemp PVS case in Wisconsin. Don, a Nam vet, was awakened by his wife from a nightmare, and shot and killed her with a gun he kept under his pillow. He received a life sentence—he's still there. One of the many things talked about at the workshop was the need to make more information about PVS available to veterans and their families through a central location. Angie graciously volunteered John Lindquist to compile the library as an aid to the formation of more PVS rap groups.

This project was started in Milwaukee by the simple act of compiling news articles and psychiatric papers on the "Veteran's Syndrome." We knew that Drs. Robert Jay Lifton, Florence Pincus and Chaim Shatan had been working with the New York City chapter of VVAV since 1970 to form the nation's first Vietnam veterans rap groups. In addition, VVAV's use of the Winter Soldier Investigations to bring the war home to the people of America also played a part in originating veteran's rap groups. These WSIs, held throughout America by VVAV, helped us deal with the guilt we carried. We learned to direct our guilt over what we personally did or witnessed towards our government's war policy and not back onto ourselves.

As veterans across the country dealt with problems of rage, guilt, flashbacks and so on, they wrote to VVAV for more information. As requests came in, we'd copy what we had for $5 a page and send it out. As the library got bigger, the process of feeding nickels into a machine for over 100 pages became overwhelming. We moved up to the high-tech reproduction of that era—the dreaded mimeograph.

All the articles had to be typed on stencils and we didn't even own a typewriter; anyway, Angie refused to get stuck with this detail. A local civilian social worker came to our rescue. The Jewish Vocational Center offered to type the project. Their curative workshop taught typing by the use of typing exercises—why not replace Dick and Jane stories with articles about Medal of Honor veterans dying in candy store robberies with unloaded guns, and articles by doctors typed onto mimeograph stencils? We all remember the joys of ink and stencil on the local church machine. In the end, we had 304 stencils at 25 libraries at a time—it was quite the trip.

After years of struggle, this grassroots project of VVAV, Inc., became our national Vets Center Project and the recognition of PTSD as a rated service-connected disability. This article is a personal thanks to all who helped, and a remembrance to the thousands of veterans who died by their own hands, ended up in American prisons, or live among us on our nation's streets. Decent benefits for all veterans is still not a reality in America—the fight continues. Copies of the PTSD Library are available for $10 by writing: VVAV, 3433 N. Flatney, Milwaukee, WI 53212.

—John A. Lindquist, 3rd Marines, Quang Tri, '68-'69
SPIRIT, SENSE OF PURPOSE AND UNITY

The beginning was auspicious— I saw the ad in Playboy. But it was all uphill from there.

I carried no weapon in Vietnam, now I had found other soldiers for peace. I remember brotherhood, stuffing envelopes, Winter Soldier in frozen Detroit, stuffing envelopes, the great week in D.C., stuffing envelopes, and brotherhood.

In New York there were enough marches, collecting donations, meetings, travelling and speaking engagements to make me want to get a job to have a rest. I tried to organize Brooklyn but it enveloped me.

The Spirit, the Sense of Purpose, the Unity as Brothers and Sisters that we shared among us and with others is still there and will always be.

— Frank Toner

IT'S HARD TO BE NOSTALGIC WHEN YOU CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING

Yellow Springs, Ohio— Pete Zastrow giving his 'pickpocket' speech to the National Steering Committee, and Annie Bailey and John Linquist acquiring a big black dog.

Washington, D.C.— Brian Adams leading the chanting of "We'll be back" at 3 a.m., when the mounted Park Police woke us from our unauthorized slumbers on the Mall; working the medical tent at Dewey Canyon IV with Christy, Klinkers, Stoney, and Mac — and Lee Channing and the spontaneous "Vet Chic" show; presenting fatigues to African freedom fighters; seeing Danny Friedman earn his reputation as the person in VVAW most likely to get beaten up by the cops; taking turns with Annie Bailey at being a human bullhorn and leading chants and counting cadence (and having no voice left)....

Chicago, Illinois— Bruce Barnett and a cast of hundreds occupying the West Side VA and demanding action from the administration; the National Office on Newport, with the cap picture over the archway (which Charley still hates), and the National Office on Fielding, with the amazing floors; helping to bring the Free Gary Lawton campaign to Chicago; demonstrating against the war with Bart Savage and Joe Petzel....

Milwaukee, Wisconsin— The production of the "Michael Maggot" skit; going to the concert featuring Country Joe, Rick Duvall and Jim Wachtendonk; all the wonderful national camp-outs on the Otis/Fechter's land; attending the demonstrations against the chemical companies....

Madison, Wisconsin— Attending a Karl Armstrong rally with the late Steve Hawkins; the annual Veteran's Day ceremony in the State Capitol Building with Muriel Hogan and Jim Wachtendonk singing....

Atlanta, Georgia— Going to the dedication of LZ Friendly; being at the National Meeting in Athens; listening to Elton Manzione acquire a Georgia twang over his New Jersey accent....

— Annie Luginbill
INCARCERATED VETS: VIETNAM BEHIND BARS

"Kilo, kilo, kilo. Any kilo station this net. If anybody can hear me, I'm coming out. Say again, I'm coming out!"

This radioman did come out. Alone. He left his commanding officer lying in the rice paddies—shot between the eyes. He left his best friend lying with his guts spilling from a massive hole in his chest—dead. All of his squad members remained at the ambush site—dead.

The above statement is not unusual if you hear it coming from a Vietnam combat veteran. The same statement is repeated daily in the minds of many of this nation's forgotten warriors.

In this case, however, the statement was made by a veteran as he walked down the steel and concrete halls of Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, OH—a prison. The man, an ex-Marine who served in Vietnam, was experiencing a flashback. When he finally came out of his altered state of mind and began to realize where he really was, he was terrified. He ran toward another Vietnam veteran, begging him to stop the authorities from taking him to the institutional hospital. The veteran knew they would lock him in a room. He knew they would make fun of him. He knew they would say he was crazy.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is only one of the many problems suffered by incarcerated Vietnam veterans. Many of these veterans suffer a wide variety of physical disorders, lack of vocational training and education, and deficiencies in self-worth. A number of these vets are afraid they have been exposed to the chemical defoliant Agent Orange, and that the dioxin is killing them slowly. They worry that they have passed on the poison to their families.

Incarcerated veterans have severe parole planning and employment problems, major factors for a successful transition into the world of reality. Incarcerated veterans have no way of knowing what is available to them once they are released. How could they? Source information is kept on the "outside."

Incarcerated Vietnam veterans are expected to exercise their postal service rights in order to put together their entire lives. How does my radio operator friend ever begin to explain what goes through his mind in a letter? How can he ever tell someone that he is visualizing his Vietnam war experiences in flashbacks and horrendous dreams? How can he begin to explain to this unseen person that he only uses hard drugs in order to escape the reality of what he presently is going through? My friend has never talked about what happened to him in Vietnam. He can't reveal his drug problem—the prison authorities would haunt him day and night.

My friend remembers his radio and terminology very well. Maybe he could write out his message to a seemingly uncaring world: Hotel-Echo-Lima-Poppa. No, it is doubtful anyone would understand.

There are over 30,000 Vietnam veterans serving time in federal and state prisons across the nation. Many of these veterans are serving their third or fourth prison sentence. 95% of these veterans have never been, nor spoken with, a Veterans Administration representative. The incarcerated Vietnam veteran has no means of assistance to help him gain control of his life.

From the death scenes of a cruel and unjust war to the steel and concrete warehouses of mankind: for 30,000 Vietnam veterans the transition has been one hell of a price to pay for serving their country. It's past time the American people recognize the need to reach "inside" to the incarcerated Vietnam veteran and help to bring him home... "Any Kilo station this net, I'm coming out!"

—Stephen Gregory

ON PATROL
Seventeen years later
I still leave home
like I was going
on patrol
I still move
through life
as if I was in Vietnam
with snipers
and booby traps
Seventeen years later
loud noises
disconnect my heart
a cat's whisker
twitching in the wind
wakes me at night
Seventeen years later
I'm still at war
because America's
at war with me
(or rather the color of me)
Seventeen years later
I'm still breathin'
Many ain't
—Lamont Steptoe, 9/9/84

PARTS
We saw
people
fragile as brown sticks
in black silk skin
living under
the shells of hats
We saw
rice paddies
We saw
water buffalo
We saw
snakes
I am
part snake
I am
part water buffalo
I am
part rice paddy
I am
part black silk skin
brown stick
living under
the shell of a hat
I am
the rainy season
I am
the dry season
I am
the red dust of the moon
—Lamont Steptoe, 8/13/89
Approximately one-third of single men who are homeless have served in the United States armed forces. The federal government estimates that between 150,000 and 250,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and that possibly twice that many experience homelessness over the course of a year. The National Coalition believes the number is higher than that. Those who fought in every conflict from World War II to the recent Persian Gulf War are now homeless. In addition, there are homeless veterans in every state, and the problem is not limited to big cities. While the numbers continue to grow, the response of the Bush Administration and the Department of Veteran Affairs has been shamefully inadequate.

The report continues, making these points: "The problem is national in scope. ...yet 16 states have no federal programs to serve homeless veterans [five of these are in New England – the region hardest hit by the "recession"].

Most homeless veterans are well-educated (over 80% are high school graduates and one-third have attended or graduated from college) single men. An estimated 10% are homeless with their families. The majority of veterans have been homeless for less than a year, and the vast majority are currently unemployed but have been working as recently as a year ago. Most are not receiving unemployment benefits.

40-60% of homeless veterans served in the military during the Vietnam War...20-40% served post-Vietnam, and the remainder during the Korean War, World War II and periods in between.

Veterans become homeless for the same reason that other Americans become homeless – they can't afford to pay their rent.

General trends: While the incomes of the very rich have increased dramatically, the income of poor and middle class Americans has stagnated or declined. As a result, one-third of all households in the United States -- 27 million -- don't have enough money left over after paying rent to pay for other necessities like food and clothing. There is a serious shortage of affordable housing. The incomes of those working at minimum wage jobs or receiving public assistance are often insufficient to cover housing costs.

Issues specific to veterans: Post 'Traumatic Stress Disorder [shell shock, soldier's heart]; approximately one-half of veterans who are homeless have a problem with alcohol or drugs; Agent Orange exposure.

How has the federal government responded? The performance of the VA at delivering services at the local level is poor. Many VA hospitals regularly release veterans who have completed residential treatment programs to the streets or shelters. The VA is currently spending millions of dollars in ways which increase the likelihood that a veteran and his/her family will become homeless:

-When veterans default on mortgages backed by the VA through the Home Loan Guaranty program, the VA usually forecloses on the property instead of working with the veteran to restructure their payments. According to the General Accounting Office, foreclosure is the most expensive approach to terminating a loan.

-Of an estimated 6,800 empty foreclosed VA homes, only six have been obtained through the VA's program to make these properties available to those seeking to provide services and shelter to homeless veterans.

- Funding for programs specifically targeted to homeless veterans at the Department of Veteran Affairs constitutes only one-tenth of one percent of the VA's total budget.

Funding for job training programs for homeless veterans through the Department of Labor is $1.9 million annually for the entire country. "the program is only able to serve approximately 5,800...homeless veterans.

Recommendations

Homelessness among veterans is a national problem of crisis proportions. The Department of Veterans Affairs alone cannot end homelessness among veterans. In order to end homelessness among veterans, sustained national leadership and a redirection of priorities and resources towards critical domestic needs – housing, jobs, and health care – is necessary.

Until more services become available, there are a number of ways in which this shameful situation can be improved. The performance of the VA could be vastly improved... Specifically, we recommend the following changes:

- The VA should immediately stop releasing veterans to the streets from VA medical facilities without adequate discharge planning procedures;

- The VA should undertake an aggressive national outreach campaign to make homeless veterans and those working with them aware of the services and benefits available to them;

- The reluctance on the part of many homeless veterans to use VA services because they have had so many bad experiences with the VA underscores the need for the VA to contract out with nonprofit organizations serving homeless persons and community-based veterans' organizations when providing services to homeless veterans;

- In order to make the foreclosed homes program work, the VA should make these properties available for lease as well as for sale similar to the property disposition program at HUD. In addition, the VA should move to market these properties aggressively...

The VA should immediately stop spending taxpayers' money to foreclose on veterans and their families who have defaulted on their mortgages. These funds could be better spent on helping veterans who are currently homeless get off the streets [and in preventing veterans and their families from becoming homeless].

Condensed version

prepared by Mike Bukovcik

The preceding material was extracted from a report of the same name published by the National Coalition for the Homeless [November 1991], and authored by the Coalition’s Assistant Director, Joan Alker, et al. It is presented with permission of the Coalition; copies of the full report may be obtained from the Coalition at 1621 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009, Telephone (202) 265-2371.

PROMETHEUS AGAIN

he once brought
fire
down
on some village
children
in that latest
crazy
forgotten
war of ours
now
he's come home
to spend his days
asleep
beneath
newspapers
of inconsequence
and
his nights
chained
to our
garbage cans
drunk on
ripple
muscatel
thunderbird
retching our guts up
in to
the relentless
dawn.

Kay Richardson
Reflection on the Wounds of War

My purple heart
beats with the same steady beat today
Even as my life careens wildly around corners
out of rhythm.

My weary purple heart
Veteran of domestic wars
for which they give no medals.
Bruised heart, purple heart
Wounded in daily battle
Each beat full of the pain
of getting through life without you.
Each beat marking the passage of time
made empty by your absence.

You fought your war in a faraway jungle
when you were only 19.
Fought, survived
and went on to become a casualty.
You did not tell war stories
but only dropped hints from time to time.
15 years later
I am left to read between the lines
Seeking the source of your hurt
And your anger...

Two years have passed since I wrote that fragment of a poem following the death of my husband, Clarence Fitch, on May 7, 1990. I went back to my journal after I was asked to write a "reflection" for VVAW's 25th Anniversary about the "wounds of war" and those lines jumped off the page at me.

Clarence was known to many of you as an active member and the East Coast coordinator of VVAW for many years. He died of complications of AIDS after a two-year battle. Clarence faced his illness with a lot of love, courage and humor – I share these thoughts in that spirit.

For many years, Clarence walked with the pain of Vietnam without ever talking about it. Like a kind of shrapnel in the heart, it stayed with him. When the pain got too great, he tried to numb it with alcohol or drugs and for 15 years, off and on, he battled with heroin addiction. At the same time, he tried to be a good father, son, brother, uncle, husband and worker – and he was a political activist whose work was respected and valued.

Finally, when his "double life" became impossible to sustain, Clarence began to recover from his addiction. With the help of a 12-step program he took back his life and began a healing process that carried him through the next seven years. His work with VVAW became an important part of that process.

When Clarence was diagnosed with AIDS in 1988 our world turned upside down overnight. Like every family affected by this disease, we had to deal immediately with all of the issues it creates: who to tell, what to do about work, the possibility that I was also infected, the fear that AIDS meant imminent death, the possibility of stigma and discrimination. AIDS came into our lives at a time when we felt we had everything to look forward to and reminded us that nothing is promised or guaranteed.

Clarence chose to live with his illness by throwing himself completely into his work for peace and justice – particularly work with young people. Though medical treatment took up a lot of his time (he often said having AIDS was like having a part-time job), the rest was spent out on the VVAW circuit – speaking at high schools, to peace groups, walking the picket line at demonstrations.

Despite the toll the illness was taking on his body, Clarence's spirit was always renewed by these debates and encounters. He would return from speaking with high school students full of energy – sometimes frustrated by the "knuckleheads," as he called them, who didn't believe he had really been in Vietnam because he wouldn't talk about the blood and guts of killing. He saw himself in them, and wanted desperately to reach out and give them information he never had.

I think the achievement he was proudest of during those years was his involvement in the movement to stop a ROTC program from being initiated at Martin Luther King High School in New York. He felt this program was an insult to the memory of Dr. King. He debated a four-star general at an assembly of teachers and won! And the teachers voted the program down.

In 1989, he went to Panama as part of a Veterans' Factfinding Delegation that predicted the American invasion of that country which took place a few months later. I was terrified that he would become more ill or return home with some horrible parasitic infection – but being able to participate in these kinds of activities was what kept him going.

When Clarence died he had made his peace with this life. He often told me that he felt each day of life after Vietnam was a gift. And he left all of us who loved him with warm memories of his deep, loud laugh and stubborn ways.

I continue my work as a pediatric nurse in an AIDS program in Newark, New Jersey, a city that is being devastated by the effects of the epidemic. I often feel like I am in a war and the casualties just keep rolling in – children, women, whole families. The spirit and heroism of families living with AIDS, facing what my own family faced, gives me the strength to keep on with my work.

They don't give purple hearts for that kind of heroism, or for the wounds that families living with HIV/AIDS suffer every day.

Clarence's name will never be inscribed on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC, though he considered himself a casualty of that war. Instead his memory will be lovingly sewn into a panel of the Names Quilt and displayed, along with 50,000 others (already more people have died of AIDS in this country than are named on the Wall). And my wounds, the wounds of war, have slowly begun to heal.

– Elena Schwolsky-Fitch
Mommy
Am I going to
be affected by
Agent Orange

THE DOW LEGACY
The seed
that your malicious
wizardry
planted in me
on the banks
of the Bong Son River
may now be bearing
fruit
in my own children:
innocent passengers
on your
agent orange special
heavy
with your brainchild
festering
in their genes.

– Dale Reich
BELIEVING IN US

I grew up in Middletown. It is a small city about 70 miles from New York City. It wasn’t a pretty little suburban town, it was a manufacturing and railroad town with its good and bad sides.

I grew up with small town values. I was patriotic and anxious to fight for my country. These were values that I shared with many young men who fought in Vietnam and with many Vietnam vets who later protested the war. For me, they were values shaped by the two strongest forces of my childhood: my family and my religion.

I am not sure which force was stronger, they were both completely intertwined. I grew up Roman Catholic, went to Catholic school, was an altar boy, went to church every day that I can remember, and we prayed the rosary as a family every night. The nuns and priests were like the Pope — infallible. For me the greatest thing you could be in life was a priest, so I followed one of my older brothers and enrolled in the local Carmelite Seminary. Although these priests were strict, and becoming a Carmelite would have been a great sacrifice, I wanted a little more adventure and joined the African Missionary Society when I went to college.

This was during the 1960’s and the Church was changing. Many theologians questioned the riches of the Church and thought it should be more in touch with the poor of the world. Outside my Seminary world, the nation also was telling its politicians to be more in touch with the poor and the Great Society was being born. I started feeling that there was hypocrisy in the Church, and that maybe it was not the answer to my ideals. Certainly Communism was still an evil, I thought, and Vietnam was our defense against it. Perhaps I could be a “martyr” in Vietnam, or at least do something significant against this evil.

After leaving the Seminary, I had a few months before going to the Army. I was becoming influenced by the different pacifist writings of the time, but I still enlisted. But then, I became further turned off by the hate and racism I found in Army training. On my way to Vietnam, I learned that another naive, idealistic young man whom I had known had committed suicide because he could not handle the hate he found in this world. He, too, had been raised a religious Catholic. This hurried my evolution towards pacifism, and when I got to Vietnam I refused to carry a weapon.

I was lucky in some respects. After some initial haggling and threats, I was allowed to serve as a non-gun carrying medic. But it was rough psychologically, being opposed to violence and hate in a country ravaged by it. I remember getting into a jeep one night and speeding through the base camp to release tension, afraid I might commit suicide. Complete disillusionment had set in. I was in the middle of Sydney, Australia, on R&R and a person came up to me and said, “You look like you believe in nothing.” I said, “You’re exactly right” — I felt like I had no one to turn to. In retrospect, my family would have been there for me, but I somehow didn’t think they would understand or, perhaps, that I could really explain how I felt.

One day, about nine months after my Vietnam tour, I found VVAW. I found veterans with similar backgrounds who were against the war. I found persons who believed in people. Brothers and Sisters we called one another. Together we had a great cause — an adventure I could really sink my teeth into — putting an end to the war. We worked, we marched, we leafletted. We spoke the truth and it was heard. We influenced foreign policy, saved lives, and we did it creatively and without violence. All this we did while forming friendships that have lasted until today and will go on lasting. It was better than founding a church.

I never went back to the Catholic religion, since I lost my belief in God. Years later, I did feel I needed to give my kids some organized belief and support system, so I got involved in the Ethical Culture Society. It first attracted me since it was a humanist society, had liberal tenets, and I did not have to believe in God. I came to appreciate it more when I understood their basic belief: “Believe in people and try to elicit the best in them.”

— Frank Toner

MAYDAY WASHINGTON, D.C. 1971

I’ve realized for some time that my basic belief in life is people. I’ve certainly done my share of studying good and evil in seminary school. We may argue forever about whether it exists or what to call it. But there are actions we take in our life that are generally helpful to others and to this world, and other things we can do that are destructive. I believe in the positives in life and think we should try to create an environment for positive actions in our society. We have seen that the general good of society is not served when we promote unbridled greed. Most of all, we have seen the positive impact a small group of people can have when they work together to promote peace, brotherhood and sisterhood. Just a few thousand people can wake the consciousness of a nation and help bring an end to war. We know, we did it, we believed.

— David Connolly
WHY VETS SHOULD TALK TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT THE WAR

In his poems and novels glorifying English colonial wars, the English writer Rudyard Kipling probably misled thousands of young people about war. But when his own son died in the first World War, Kipling wrote a two-line poem closer to the truth. In the voice of a dead soldier, the poet wrote, "If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied."

Too often in the past, veterans either lied or were silent about the terrors of war and about the disparity between foreign policy platitudes and the grim reality of military ventures. Obviously, VVAW members refused long ago to collaborate in that silence. Many VVAW members must feel that they themselves were lied to before their war - by Hollywood, pulp fiction, politicians, and silent veterans. We were victimized by a culture that couldn't face reality.

Once in 1990, I did a radio call-in show opposing the impending Gulf War, and mentioned the blunders and the bloodshed of the Battle of the Somme in 1916. A woman called to complain that I should not say such things. Pressed to explain why, she said that if young people heard all that, they might not go to the next war. Bingo.

We were all lied to or misled by most of our country. The war in Vietnam taught us some truths. And we have all since then come to agree that as long as we have this terrible knowledge, we should share it with the young, some of whom might be enticed by recruiting commercials, and all of whom need some facts in order to be effective citizens.

Of course, talking about what happened to us, and what we saw, and how we felt can be difficult. But our stories need to be told. While talking to high school students about Vietnam is emotionally demanding, it can provide both the veteran and the students with greater clarity and understanding.

In fact, since I returned from Vietnam, nothing has given me the same sense of satisfaction, the same sense of purpose, or the same comfort of turning a terrible experience to good purpose, as has my speaking to scores of high school classes in Western Massachusetts.

The group I speak for is the Veterans Education Project (VEP), founded in 1982 by Brian Willson and another vet who were angered by the slick presentation of recruiters landing helicopters in schoolyards to dazzle potential recruits. Since VEP began, several dozen veterans have found purpose and satisfaction in telling their personal stories to students who know little of war, but have seen the Rambo films.

Quite a few of these students have mute fathers or uncles who were in Vietnam, but who do not talk about it. Many of those students look to us for explanations for the other men's silence or moodiness. I hope that some of the students we have talked to used our appearances to begin talking with their parents about the war.

Some vets speak for a short while, and some have been working with young people for many years. Some take periods off from speaking, but find themselves returning to this fulfilling and important work.

If you haven't spoken with high school students about your experiences in Vietnam and after, maybe you should. You'll find most of them genuinely interested in your story, ready to learn what the schools and popular media aren't telling them. They need to know more of what we know.

We don't preach, but we tell what happened to us, what we learned, and especially, how we felt, how we feel. We've learned a lot about how to talk effectively to students, and how to get invited into the schools. You can learn from our experience by writing to us, the Veterans Education Project, at Box 416, Amherst, MA 01004-0416. We have a training manual and videotape of classroom presentations to share with you.

While students are almost always open-minded and eager to learn, not every school principal is ready for straight talk from veterans. Our group has encountered strong resistance from some principals with military backgrounds, and from some inner city principals who have told us that they don't want anyone discouraging their students from enlisting because there are no other job options.

In some cases, a sympathetic teacher can bring in guest speakers without notifying the front office. A little recon will let you know which schools will be receptive, which ones require some work, and which ones will probably always be closed to vets.

Robert Bly, Joseph Campbell and others have shown that, unlike most cultures, in ours there is no serious mechanism by which older people can pass their wisdom along to younger ones. We leave that to people who do not have the young people's best interest in mind, including advertisers, recruiters, entertainers, and politicians. Veterans who feel as strongly as we do have a special obligation, I think, to counter the lies which are told to our young people.

— Stephen Sossaman (9th Infantry Division, Vietnam)

LOOKING INSIDE

I looked inside
the exploded chest
of a dead Viet Cong
His heart
had leaked the sky
his torso
was a canyon mouth
shouting an angry poem
his ears never heard.

— Lamont Steptoe
TO THOSE WHO HAVE GONE HOME TIRED

After the streets fall silent
After the bruises and the tear-gassed eyes are healed
After the consensus has returned
After the memories of Kent and My Lai and Hiroshima
lose their power
and their connections with each other
and the sweaters labeled Made in Taiwan
After the last American dies in Canada
and the last Korean in prison
and the last Indian at Pine Ridge
After the last whale is emptied from the sea
and the last leopard emptied from its skin
and the last drop of blood refined by Exxon
After the last iron door clangs shut
behind the last conscience
and the last loaf of bread is hammered into bullets
and the bullets
scattered among the hungry
What answers will you find
What armor will protect you
when your children ask you
Why?

—W.D. Ehrhart

Reprinted from To Those Who Have Gone Home Tired
New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1984

RETURNING THE MISSING

Boxes
smaller than bodies
returning the missing home
Dog tags
and wood
fragments of bone
All that's left
of Johnny
Jimmy
José
Leroy
Willie
or Jake
All that's left
of history
impassioned mystery
sundown of mistake

—Lamont Steptoe

THE HOODED LEGION

"Let us put up a monument to the lie"

Joseph Brodsky

There are no words here
to witness why we fought,
who sent us or what we hoped to gain.
There is only the rain
as it streaks the black stone,
these memories of rain
that come back to us –
a hooded legion reflected in a wall.
Tonight we wander worshipless and cold
along the shore of the Potomac
like other soldiers who camped here
looking out over smouldering fires into the night.
What did we dream of
the summer before we went away?
What leaf did not go silver
in the last light?
What hand did not turn us aside?

—Gerald McCarthy

PEACE

My wounds are healing.
They are closing.
The scars remain forever.
They are mine.
Look at them!
Mothers, Fathers,
Sisters, Brothers,
Do not allow your Sons,
Do not allow your Daughters,
To grow up to be soldiers!
There are no heroes.
There is no glory.
Teach your children
The virtues of Peace!

—Eric K. Schwartz
PRAYING IN PUBLIC

What words shall I make here today:
what walls of unshed tears construct,
what wordy monument contrive, to signify this gesture?

There are words upon The Wall...
such stone will outlast all my puny words.
It will instruct the children in our ways,
console their children on some future day.
So then, what matter can I make of words?

Can my words fill the belly of one hungry child,
or stop a single bullet short of blood,
or tip the scales of justice gone awry?
What matter can I make of words today?

Shall I repeat the ritual:
to honor here a promise made and kept
for us, by us, for us and by us...
Here and now, we pause...
to keep our promise
to remember, to reflect, and to give thanks.

Thank you, my black brothers,
my yellow sisters,
my red mothers,
my brown fathers,
my white children...

Thank you for taking my bullet, for embracing my bomb.
Thank you for my arms, my legs, my ears,
my eyes, my genitals, my life!
Thank you for being my enemies.
Because of you, I learned compassion and was better loved.

Thank you, my comrades-in-arms...
Most of what I know about what it is to be human,
I learned best from you.

I wish I could tell you all, that for your sacrifice,
our children have inherited a just and loving world...
Still – the bands play on, our flags yet wave,
and somewhere men are calculating cost and profit
of the next vainglorious war.

I wish I could tell you anything
to justify or mitigate the shame of this hour.
I can’t, except to say: I’m sorry, I am trying, and I’m not alone.

Perhaps it’s good you cannot hear;
these words are not for you.
These words are, after all...
only a prayer to myself.

– Mike Bukovcik, Memorial Day weekend, 1991
I had spent approximately ten months in the field, first in the
Northern section of I Corps in Vietnam with the 196th Infantry
Brigade. Now, the Brigade was incorporated into the
Americo Division with the 11th Infantry Brigade newly arrived
from Hawaii.

Things were very different in this unit — casualties were ex-
tremely heavy, not from shooting combat, but from mines. In the
almost two months I spent with them, we had suffered almost
40% casualties with only one man shot; the rest were bouncing
betsy, foot poppers and a few anti-tank mines. It produced a
strange psychology where shooting combat was almost a relief.
Firing your weapon and being shot at seemed more personal and
safer, somehow, than mines. The constant pressure of the mines
combined with the push for a body count produced things like the
My Lai massacre — the pressure created a kind of psychosis I had
not seen in much more difficult combat situations.

On this morning, I was coming down the hill toward our com-
pany position after an all-night ambush. Across a ridge line,
another squad of my platoon was also weaving its way back. Su-
ddenly there was smoke, combined with an explosion. My platoon
sergeant was hit, blown off the ground by a bouncing betty. There
was plenty of screaming as a medic tried to patch him up. In a
short time, the sergeant was on a Medevac chopper; we con-
tinued toward the perimeter. Casualties never gave speeches or
were hit clean like in the movies; it was always noise and real
blood — red, followed by silence.

Once we’d got inside the perimeter, the company commander
told me the Battalion chopper was coming in, and that I should
gather my things and report to it. I was beside myself with joy —
only 45 days left and now I was being taken from the field. I
grabbed my stuff and headed for the smoke that signalled the in-
coming chopper. When I got to it, the battalion commander held
up a paper for me to read: “Your nephew Robert was killed along the
DMZ; you have been requested as body escort; will you go?”

Nothing was said as I climbed on the chopper. I was only a
month older than Bob; we had both been in the 196th together —
and now he was dead and I was going home. In less than 12 hours
I was at Cam Ranh Bay sitting inside a large transport waiting to
fly home.

In between I had flown to Chu Lai to Division HQ and found a
staff sergeant from my old unit. He told me that Bob had been
shot in the neck along the DMZ and that no one could get to him
because of intense fire — he had drowned in his own blood. He
had tried to help a friend who had been shot and was hit himself,
so he was getting a medal along with the coffin. The sergeant said
I was getting one too, for a previous action while with the unit. So,
my nephew and I would be going home together, both with
medals on our uniforms. Only no one could see Bob’s — he had
spent too much time in the jungle and his casket would not be
opened.

Bob really didn’t have much luck. While others were getting
draft deferments, he was drafted. While Congressmen’s sons
were getting 4-Fs for braces on their teeth, Bob was drafted as
part of “Project 100,000.” He didn’t want to go, but Secretary of
Defense McNamara had come up with a plan to draft 100,000
men a year physically or mentally unable to pass the tests — and
that left the sons of the rich free to take over Daddy’s business.

It took me only 24 hours to get back to the USA — the World.
Everything happened so quickly that I had not even been able to
wash. The only clothes I had were some rumpled khakis I’d worn
on R&R six months earlier. Bob was left on base and I took a taxi
to find a hotel, only there were no vacancies — sign after sign said
“welcome,” but when I asked the lobby clerk, the answer was
always, “no vacancy.”

I spent more time in the taxi than I had spent clearing Vietnam.
Finally, I found a place with color TV, double bed, bath and
shower. I had gone from an ambush patrol to color TV in less than
24 hours, arriving with Vietnamese mud and my nephew’s body.
I made it out alive, but the “World” had somehow changed, and
now Vietnam seemed much more real.

— Barry Romo

THE NAME ON THE WALL
SP4 Fredrick A. Pine, Co C, 2/12, 1st Air Cav
Killed in Action January 2, 1968

I am the name on the Wall
who received the greeting from Uncle Sam to become
cannon fodder for the government, under threat of a jail term.

I knew I would die,
I told my mother before I left for Nam that they would all cry.

I crossed four or five rivers a day, carried the radio,
walked the point, was sprayed with chemicals and bullets,
rode the choppers, picked up wounded buddies,
met and became friends with our brave nurses,
slept in the mud and blood,
crawled through tall grass that cut my face and body,
watched my best friend get killed.

How bad I felt I couldn’t explain, though I tried
in 24 letters I wrote by flashlight to Mom in four months.

Then Westmoreland turned traitor
and betrayed me and my family and my buddies.
I was ambushed and did my best to hold off the enemy
until my wounded friends were loaded on the chopper.

When I tried to run for cover, I was killed.

Some of my buddies who I saved died a week later at Chu Lai.

I was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" for Valor.
The guys in the hospital wanted me to have
the Silver Star for my bravery.

Then they wanted to make a big thing
of giving the medal to my mother.
She refused the ceremony.

I am the name on the Wall.
I will never walk again or cry.

I will never say,
"Mom, your good-looking son is home, what's to eat?"
when I come home from work.

I am glad that some of my friends made it home.

You must fight to make Vietnam "the war to end all wars."
I am the name on the Wall.
I will never forget, nor will my mother or brother
who suffered with me when I was listed as an MIA.

When the closed casket was sent home.
I am the name on the Wall.
Westmoreland put most of the names there.

— Ann Pine, Gold Star mother
VIETNAM AND THE U.S. SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER

April 1992

Tam Ky, Vietnam. August 26, 1968. I help bury one of my students today. Last night Thanh, 17, still in high school, studied at a friend's house. The NFL started to mortar. As Thanh ran toward the bomb shelter, he was shot in the doorway. No one knows by whom.

Today I hauled 25 classmates to his home a few miles outside Tam Ky. Thanh's friends carried his wooden casket, covered with red paper, on two bamboo poles to the hillside which overlooked his home and the rice fields below. Candles and memorial papers were burned for him, and then all of us threw some of the red dirt back into the grave. It was one of the saddest experiences I have had.

There were fresh 50-foot-wide bomb craters around Thanh's home. Thanh's father pointed to holes in the wall made by the 105 Howitzer shells fired by Saigon troops from Tam Ky. He said one of these killed his grandchild over Tet. The motto of Asian cultures with the three traditional blessings — happiness, prosperity and long life — hung broken on the wall, cracked in the blast.

Only the mildew on the cover of my journal pages reminds me it has been over two decades since we buried Thanh. The promise of happiness, prosperity and long life, shattered by America's longest war, remains unfulfilled.

A full accounting isn't possible, but we know 57,692 American GI's died, 300,000 were wounded, 100,000 of the wounded are permanently disabled. Over 100,000 Vietnam veterans have killed themselves since the war; many vets languish in mental hospitals; scores of thousands are homeless; at least 25,000 suffer from the effects of Agent Orange. Vietnam vet's rates of divorce, drug problems, homelessness, and birth defects are much higher than their peers who did not go to Vietnam. Less obvious wounds are the 41% of Vietnam vets who are in jail or have served prison time since the war ended. Forty percent are unemployed.

The U.S. spent more than $274.4 billion on direct war expenditures. Hidden costs of caring for the wounded, retirement of officers, and servicing the debt incurred during the war bring the final dollar cost to over $1.647 billion, or $16,956 per U.S. taxpayer.

No one can calculate the political and social cost of a President caught lying to the American people or a generation of youth alienated from the rest of society.

The Indochinese lost, too. The U.S. exploded 700 pounds of explosives for every man, woman, and child in Indochina; 170 pounds for every acre of land. One out of every 30 people in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was killed; 1 out of 12 wounded; 1 out of 4 made a refugee. Hundreds of thousands of people were physically disabled; 520 acres of land were defoliated by Agent Orange and other herbicides. If Agent Orange causes birth defects in the children of men who flew the planes that dropped the herbicide, imagine the effect on the children of women and men sprayed on the ground. "Live" explosives, between 300 and 600 million pounds, litter fields, forests and villages. And there is a generation of people who have known nothing but war.

The U.S. not only has never given a single dollar in aid to Viet-
nam, it seriously restricts voluntary agencies from sending private relief or reconstruction aid. The U.S. regularly blocks aid to Vietnam in the United Nations. Politics keeps our government from healing the wounds of the war, at home and abroad.

Americans were brought up to believe other nations' governments were corrupt, that only dictators fought wars on foreign soil to enforce their will on unwilling peoples. The Vietnam war forced a generation of Americans to see "the emperor without his clothes." The evil we detested was now seen at home.

We continue to bear a responsibility to the generations who follow so that they, too, may see through official rhetoric to the naked realities of American foreign policy as it affects the peoples of the 'Third World.'

We, who lived through that tragic portion of our history, can declare peace with the Vietnamese and with ourselves. We can choose daily to create a world of mutual respect and dignity where all share the three traditional blessings of happiness, prosperity and long life.

—C. Douglas Hostetter

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR THROUGH MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION WITH VIETNAM

The U.S. Committee for Scientific Cooperation with Vietnam has been working with ministries, institutes and universities in Vietnam since 1978. The Committee is composed of concerned scientists, physicians and academics who feel that science and learning have no national or political boundaries, but must encompass all peoples. Supported by foundation and corporate grants, donations and contributions, the Committee strives to alleviate the suffering and isolation of Vietnam and its people due to wars and economic isolation resulting from the U.S. embargo. The Committee receives no funding from the U.S. government. Committee activities range over a broad range of subjects in the academic, health and humanitarian fields and works to bring Vietnamese scholars and students to the U.S. for training, joint research and education, as well as having U.S. academics and physicians going to Vietnam to teach and work with counterparts. Our work is divided into seven areas—health, mathematics, basic sciences (physics, chemistry, geology, etc.), social sciences, engineering and appropriate technology, higher education and culture. In this article, we'll talk only about our work in the areas of health and education.

Health Field Activities. The Vietnamese government has always placed a high priority on the health of its people. Thus, there is a well-developed health care infrastructure in Vietnam which includes specialized institutes and hospitals at the national level, down to provincial and district hospitals, and village health stations. What they lack are the resources to enable them to deal with the health problems they encounter. It is frustrating for physicians to diagnose treatable conditions, and not have the medicines to treat them. Even diagnostic tests are inhibited because of the lack of basic laboratory equipment and supplies. Although the Vietnamese are very resourceful in keeping old equipment running, it is not always possible to repair high-precision instruments.

The U.S. Committee is involved in several types of health activities. They vary from specific laboratory research and development programs, to medical school development, to joint research with Vietnamese counterparts, to provision of medical supplies, equipment and drugs to a wide range of clinics and hospitals.

The focus of laboratory development is to assist Vietnamese scientists in dealing with the most serious infectious and parasitic disease problems of their country. This involves provision of laboratory equipment, training of personnel and provision of supplies and equipment, enabling Vietnam to build an indigenous scientific expertise and become independent in their medical research.

Education. Although Vietnam has a well-developed health system, in the field of education they sometimes lag behind other countries because of their economic isolation. Lacking the funds to publish and/or purchase textbooks or journals, the medical schools are hampered in having access to information about new procedures or techniques. They also lack essential laboratory equipment and reagents to teach basic medical science. In some cases, new medical schools are being developed or older ones being updated. The Committee has provided some laboratory equipment, medical school curricula, medical textbooks, and individual specialists who give lectures, seminars and clinical demonstrations to medical school students and faculty. Teaching, rather than patient care, is the major focus of these programs so that local surgeons can perform the procedures themselves, and can care for their patients after U.S. physicians depart.

Since 1978, the Committee has brought outstanding Vietnamese scholars and post-doctoral fellows to the U.S. for periods of a few weeks to one year to work with counterparts at various U.S. universities and research institutes. In 1989 it became possible for Vietnamese students to come to the U.S. for graduate studies and we created a separate program—the Vietnam Educational Exchange Program (VEEP)—to facilitate the process. Since the Vietnamese students must have funding to attend U.S. universities, VEEP seeks fellowships, or teaching and research assistantships from the accepting universities.

The U.S. Committee for Scientific Cooperation with Vietnam is just one of many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with ongoing projects in Vietnam. The preceding article is just a brief overview of our activities. For more information contact Prof. Judith Ladinsky, Chair, at [608] 263-4150 or by writing Dept. of Preventive Medicine, 3300 University Avenue, 101 Bradley Memorial, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

—Prof. Judith Ladinsky
PROJECT: HEARTS AND MINDS
MEDICAL AID TO VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, & NOW CUBA

Project: Hearts and Minds (PHAM) is a Veterans for Peace "people to people" medical aid program designed to bring medical supplies to rural health clinics that serve the needy of Vietnam and Cambodia. PHAM is an outgrowth of the Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project which started in 1988. After returning Vietnam veterans built several clinics, the need to supply those clinics and other facilities with medicines and medical equipment became apparent. 

Project: Hearts and Minds makes available free of charge to any returning veteran, one or two 25-50 lb. cartons of medical supplies. Since most airlines allow 140 lbs. of luggage on trans-Pacific flights, freight charges can be avoided by those who limit the weight of their personal luggage. Air Vietnam has so far waived all overweight fees for in-country flights.

This type of delivery system has several advantages: (1) it provides the returning veteran with a "special mission" and, sometimes, an opportunity to return to a particular area; (2) it "broadens the dialogue" between former enemies; (3) it provides an opportunity for veterans to participate in the reconciliation process; (4) it guarantees delivery to specific clinics and facilities; and (5) provides the veteran with an opportunity to address his/her respective community and enhance political/humanitarian awareness.

Due to the U.S. trade embargo, it was necessary for the Monterey California VFP chapter to apply to the U.S. Department of Commerce for a special license. PHAM received its Humanitarian License #H000025 for Vietnam on July 3, 1991. Cambodia was added on July 7, 1991, and Cuba added on March 24, 1992. To date, 20 veterans have made 23 deliveries to different facilities in Vietnam, including two deliveries to My Lai and Cambodia. Despite a 31-year-old blockade, PHAM made the first-ever federally licensed bulk delivery of medical supplies to Cuba on April 19, 1992.

PHAM works because of a coordinated effort among VFP chapters in Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, CA; Albany and New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Manchester, NH; and the Vietnam Veterans Restoration Project. These chapters have collected medical supplies from many private individuals and humanitarian organizations, including The Flying Doctors, Volunteer Optical Services to Humanity (VOSH), Medics of Illinois, the RACORSE (Recycling, Allocation and Conservation of Operating Room Supplies & Equipment) Network, Medi-Cuba, and the generous staff of several hospitals.

For more information, contact Project: Hearts and Minds, c/o Gordon Smith (Director), 33 Portola Ave., Monterey, CA 93940.

--Gordon Smith

Bach Mai Hospital after the 1971 Christmas bombing.
THE MOON IS A NUISANCE

The moon is a nuisance.  
It rises from behind the hogback ridge  
spilling light down the snowy slope.  
Like an assailant, moonlight  
slips into the temporary darkroom in my kitchen.  
It falls prey upon the black and white  
photograph emerging in developer  
turning the image grey.  
I discard the print  
shift my chemicals away from the window  
expose another piece of paper  
slide it into developer.  
I look closely at the image  
see myself perched  
on a palm trunk bridge  
in Viet Nam.  
The Vietnamese woman beside me looks planted  
her toes spread like fingers  
gripping the trunk.  
Second Treasure  
who once fought U.S. soldiers  
looks pleased  
standing by an American.  
The photo washes and I stare  
out my kitchen window.  
A silver fox lopes through the moonlight.  
I imagine taking Second Treasure  
into this bitter cold.  
Then, it would be her turn to feel tentative.  
I picture her donning layers of wool.  
For the first time she puts on shoes.  
Every step in the wintry moonlight brings  
cautious wonder that the world can turn  
white.  
In the barn, Second Treasure removes a mitten  
tests Foxy’s wintry fur.  
Icicles on Foxy’s whiskers shatter  
into Second Treasure’s palm.  
“Look at you,” she says, touching  
the hair around my cap.  
“Twenty years older!”  
I laugh, knowing breath has frosted  
my hair white.  
The Ohio moon that could light our way to the barn  
is a nuisance  
penetrating this kitchen darkroom. At midnight  
it has intensity like the midday sun  
at this same moment  
dappling that palm trunk bridge  
in Viet Nam.  
The moonlight grazes  
the newly washed photograph –  
two women  
one tentative, the other assured –  
tempering their black and white  
differences.

— Lady Borton

RESTORING WETLANDS IN VIETNAM  
HELPS ENDANGERED CRANES AND PEOPLE  
RECOVER FROM THE WOUNDS OF WAR

The Plain of Reeds was once one of the most diverse wetland  
communities in the world. As a pristine wilderness, the  
Plain of Reeds was home to monkeys, cranes, crocodiles, and  
hundreds of other species. It also provided abundant natural  
harvests of rice, timber and fish for local people.  

More than 50 years of warfare reduced the Plain of Reeds to a  
sterile basin. More recently, government subsidies have encour-
aged landless Vietnamese to move onto the plain to develop  
domesticated rice crops, further crippling the damaged wetland.  

In 1975, Dong Thap Province began restoring the Plain of Reeds  
by protecting a portion of the wetland (called Tram Chim) from  
development so that people would remember what the plain was  
like. In 1984, dikes were built to impound water and to keep the  
vegetation from burning. As a result, the endangered Eastern  
Sarus Crane returned after a 20-year absence.  

Dikes alone were insufficient to complete the restoration. The  
cranes were threatened by new agricultural developments. With  
other conservation organizations, the National Wildlife  
Foundation and the International Crane Foundation have joined with  
Dong Thap Province to implement a plan for restoring Tram  
Chim.  

By focusing upon cranes, symbols of the mythical bird who  
flies to heaven with the soul of deceased Vietnamese upon its  
wings, we can work with a species valued by science and culture  
alone to create a refuge that protects both wild species and local  
people. In doing so, we can rebuild bridges between Viet Nam  
and America destroyed so long ago.  

The International Crane Foundation can be reached at E-11376  
Shady Lane Road, Baraboo, WI 53913.  

— Jeb Barzen
The only battle worth fighting is the battle for truth.
DEWEY CANYON III
APRIL 18-23, 1971

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED W. McDARRAH

TIN CLOTH MEDALS, 1981

got a letter while ago 'bout a tin cloth medal
i'd been awarded 4 my time in nam
sent all the "others" 2 Nixon in 71
got me 2 thinking hal Kinda like boy scouts again!
tin cloth medals don't mean a job 4 me
don't mean an end 2 my agent orange miseries
don't mean quality VA healthcare
tin cloth medals r good 2 throw at
those who told us all the lies
those who stabbed us in the back
tin cloth medals r bureauquacks mentalities
"Dewey Canyon IV, here I come"

- R. Koenig
VETS OVERRULE SUPREME COURT

U.S. seeks new site for war protesters

The Justice Department, actively trying to find a suitable alternate site, will decide this afternoon whether to attempt to evict the Vietnam Veterans Against the War from the Mall, a high Justice official said.

The veteran's last night overruled the Supreme Court 486-0, and stayed at their camp in defiance of the high court's order to leave. Meanwhile, the National Cathedral offered the veterans use of their athletic fields. Father James, Cathedral spokesman, said the demonstrators "approached us yesterday and asked if they could bovvox there and we said yes. For a while last night we were expecting them."

Another Justice source speculated that the all-volunteer army probably will not be evicted from the Mall. He said he thought the department's intent in seeking the order against the Mall camp was to avoid a precedent that would allow other groups to camp on Interior Department property.

About 16 congressmen also offered the veterans use of their offices for sleeping.

The Park Police said they would take no action against the veterans at last night in hearing with Interior and Justice Department officials.

JUST TOURISTS

Park Police Capt. Archie L. Finagles said this morning, "If my knowledge as of this moment there are 250 persons talking and chatting and drinking coffee just like any other group of visitors."

Representatives from the veterans met in the office of the Justice Department's Richard Kleindienst for two hours yesterday and were told to agree to be taken if they did not build fire; erect tents other than medical aid stations; dig up the ground, cook or sleep on the Mall.

After a vote was inconclusive, the veterans voted by states 400 to 200 to sleep the night in the park. Of those voting 20 of the 32 District delegates; 41 of the 43 Maryland soldiers and none of the 40 Virginia vets voted for the sleep-in.

The 40 who voted against sleeping favored staying awake all night as specified by Mr. Kleindienst. A third alternative, to go to sleeping area provided at Rolling Air Force Base and near Kennedy Stadium, received no support.

Pennsylvania swung the vote when its entire delegation of 36 voted to campaign. Later, in a

(Continued on Page 3)
"We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this Administration has wiped away their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission — to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last ten years and more, so when thirty years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning."

— John Kerry, April 22, 1971, from statement before Senate Foreign Relations Committee
OPERATION DEWEY CANYON III: A LIMITED INCURSION INTO THE COUNTRY OF CONGRESS

IT'S THE MEMORIES, NOT THE MERIT: A MEDAL FOR MEN'S LIVES

A thousand Vietnam veterans standing in line. Stepping forward one by one, we hurl medals at the Capitol. It’s the final day of Dewey Canyon III, the first time for a demonstration by veterans against the war they fought in. Veterans defied court orders to leave their campsite on the Mall in Washington; newspaper headlines blared, “Vets Overrule Court; Refuse to Leave!”

It was late April, 1971, and in Southeast Asia the war still raged. In Washington, we lobbied Congress, got arrested when we held a sit-in on the steps of the Supreme Court, and challenged Nixon to bring as many Vietnam vets as we had brought to speak for his often cited “silent majority.” On this final day we were taking a longer step as we shuffled forward, hurling curses along with the medals won in Vietnam, demanding an end to the war. Memories filled our minds as we moved slowly along – most of us quiet, lost in our visions...

Moving along the edge of the rice paddy, we circled the rising hill. We had taken seven casualties the day before from the local VC; today we were looking for them. We found rice caches, but the villages were empty – not even the old folks remained. Our company was spread out, moving in single file between the openness of the rice paddies and the beginning of the jungle. We moved quietly, not talking but looking, listening and waiting for something to happen.

After several hours, it happened. The VC opened up on us from a hill. We hit back, not just with our rifles, machine-guns and grenade launchers, but with heavy gunship and artillery support. The VC kept on fighting, kept on shooting and we kept hitting back at them. Our fire wasn't concentrated; we were spread out around the hill. And then friendly fire started hitting our company and my platoon – fire coming over the hill, missing the VC and hitting us!

The gunships were spraying the area as well, not just with M-60’s but also 50’s and rockets. I grabbed my RTO and ran to the squad that was hit – we went through enemy and friendly fire, popping smoke to stop the gunships. The whole squad was hit bad. Artillery had blown men as far as 50 feet; my platoon sergeant was dead, his body ripped apart. There were no smoke grenades left to mark the area for medevac choppers to land and take the wounded to a hospital. I ran into the paddy and had the choppers guide in on me.

They landed quickly and got all the wounded out, even the body of my dead sergeant. While I was walking slowly back to the rest of the company, my CO said he was putting me in for a medal. I couldn't sleep that night. A medal for men's lives. The medic gave me some tranqs to sleep.

Standing in line, I remembered that day, again moving slowly in single file. The day in Nam several years earlier was more real than the present.

As vets threw their medals away, we made statements – “These are for my brothers;” “If we have to fight again it will be to take these steps.” All I could manage was, “These ain't shit” – nothing dramatic. The American Legion, when asked, commented on the demo saying, “We find it sad when any veteran throws medals away won in meritorious service.”

What the Legion spokesman didn’t understand was that it wasn't the ‘merit’ that made the medals of value – instead, it was the memories of friends bound up with those medals.

– Barry Romo
HOME FROM THE WAR TO THE WAR AT HOME

My first recollection of VVAW is Operation Dewey Canyon III in April of 1971. At the time I was stationed in Vietnam nearing the end of my tour. News of the incursion into Washington, D.C., came by way of my hometown newspaper mailed to me by my parents.

When my buddies and I read the headlines we were ecstatic. Holy shit, the vets were marching on Washington—the end had to be near! It was absolutely unbelievable! Everyone wanted to get back to "the world" and get involved in the protests.

We were so proud of the way you guys threw your medals back in the face of the government. Even though we opposed the war, we felt that it had to be hard for you since those medals were one of the few acknowledgments you received for doing the government's dirty work. I knew then that someday I wanted to be a part of VVAW.

— Dave Kettenhofen, Vietnam '70-'71

From Vietnam veterans as they threw their medals at the Capitol steps:
- "I'm still on active duty, and I say get the hell out."
- "Here's my merit badges for murder...from the country I betrayed by enlisting in the Army."
- "I'd like to say just one thing for the people of Vietnam. I'm sorry. I hope that someday I can return to Vietnam and help rebuild that country we tore apart."
- "I earned a Good Conduct medal in Vietnam. In the words of another son of Massachusetts, Henry Thoreau, my only regret is my good conduct."
After the ceremony, a small delegation of mothers and veterans is barred from entering the Cemetery and lays two memorial wreaths at the entrance. The march re-forms and makes its way to the Capitol.

The march reaches the Capitol steps. Congressman Paul McCloskey, who joined the march en route, and Representatives Bella Abzug, Donald Edwards, and Ogden Reid address the crowd. Jan Barry Crumb, member of the executive committee of VVAW, formally presents sixteen demands to Congress.

The veterans march to the Mall and establish a campsite on a small grassy quadrangle. Some veterans go directly into the halls of Congress to lobby against the war.

Washington District Court of Appeals lifts an injunction barring veterans from camping on the Mall. The injunction had been requested by the Justice Department.

TUESDAY / APRIL 20, 1971
Veterans lobby all day in Congress. A contingent of 200 veterans, feeling that the affront of the day before cannot be overlooked, marches from the Mall back to Arlington Cemetery. They march single file across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The Superintendent tries to stop the veterans at the gates but then backs down.

WEDNESDAY / APRIL 21, 1971
Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day. Washington Park Police state they have no intention of inspecting the campsite during the night. The cast of the musical Hair entertains the troops.

THURSDAY / APRIL 22, 1971
A large group of veterans march to the steps of the Supreme Court to ask the Court why it has not ruled on the constitutionality of the war. They sing God Bless America. One hundred and ten are arrested for disturbing the peace and are led off the steps with their hands clasped behind their heads.

John Kerry testifies before a special session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for two hours.

Veterans stage a candlelight march around the White House. A huge American flag is carried upside down as a signal of distress. The march ends back at the camp when the flag carriers mount the stage.

FRIDAY / APRIL 23, 1971
Veterans cast down their medals and ribbons on the steps of the Capitol.

Congressman Jonathan Bingham holds hearings with former intelligence and public information officers over distortion of news and information concerning the war.

The quadrangle on the Mall is vacant. Not one act of violence has been committed. They came in peace.
SCHOOL OF TERROR

I write this from Federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida, where I am serving a 16-month sentence for an act of civil disobedience to protest the training of Salvadoran soldiers on U.S. soil.

As I look back, I feel my being here is no coincidence, but rather the result of God's grace and the meeting of some good people along the way who influenced my life deeply. Growing up in rural Louisiana, I gave little thought to issues of peace and justice. I studied Geology in college with the hope of getting rich in the oil fields of South America. After college, I became a Naval Officer and volunteered for duty in Vietnam, feeling it was my patriotic duty to fight Communism. There I met a missionary who, amid the war, was caring for orphans and speaking out against the violence. I saw him as a healer and a peacemaker.

I left Vietnam wanting to be a missionary and entered the Maryknoll Order, whose work is in 28 countries overseas and the United States. I was ordained a Catholic priest in 1972 and went to serve the poor of Bolivia. A slum on the outskirts of La Paz became my home for six years. In Bolivia, as in Vietnam, the poor became my teachers and challenged me to grow in understanding poverty and its causes. I then returned to do educational work in the U.S.

My involvement with El Salvador began in 1980, after Archbishop Oscar Romero was gunned down at the altar and after four church women from the United States were raped and killed by Salvadoran soldiers. Two of the women, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ida Ford, were friends of mine. Their death forced me to confront what was happening in this small Central American country.

After several trips to El Salvador, it became clear that the problem was not "Communism" or "subversion," but hunger. As in the case of almost everywhere in Latin America, the wealthy, power, and land of El Salvador are concentrated in the hands of a small elite. While members of the elite live in huge mansions where they are waited on by their servants and enjoy frequent vacations and shopping sprees in the United States and Europe, most Salvadorans live in dehumanizing poverty and die before their time. The poor, once taught that their suffering was the will of God, now know it is the result of exploitation, greed, and irresponsible stewardship of God's creation. And they are saying, "¡Basta!" (Enough!)

In May 1983, 500 Salvadoran soldiers arrived at Fort Benning, Georgia, to undergo U.S. Army training. At the time, I was speaking at churches and colleges in New Orleans about the injustice of U.S. military aid to El Salvador. I felt it was not time for business as usual, so I went to Columbus, Georgia, the home of Fort Benning, and began meeting with local residents. After two months of meetings, talks, and prayer vigils, three of us decided to enter Fort Benning at night, dressed as U.S. Army officers.

Armed with a high-powered cassette player, we climbed a tall pine tree near the barracks that housed the Salvadoran soldiers. At lights out, we tuned the cassette player to its highest volume and played Archbishop Romero's last homily, given in the cathedral the day before he was assassinated, in which he called on the military to stop the killing and lay down their arms.

We were arrested, tried for criminal trespass and impersonating military officers, and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. After serving my term, I sought a few months of silence and solitude at a Trappist monastery, then returned to the pulpit and classroom.

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker, and her 15-year-old daughter were brutally murdered in El Salvador. According to a U.S. Congressional task force sent to El Salvador to investigate the massacre, five of the nine soldiers arrested for the slayings had been trained at Fort Benning.

Today, hundreds of Salvadoran and other Latin American soldiers are being trained at Fort Benning's School of the Americas. The School of the Americas (S.O.A.) was originally located in Panama, prior to relocating to Benning in 1984. Since 1946, this training ground for Latin American soldiers has quietly readied some 54,000 soldiers and enlisted men for right-wing Latin American governments. Manuel Noriega is a distinguished alumnus, as is General Hugo Banzer of Bolivia. In 1984, when the
Vietnam Generation
Salutes
VVAW
25 Years
Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice

Since 1988 Vietnam Generation has showcased the best contemporary writing on the Vietnam war era and the Sixties generation. We publish new fiction, poetry and essays by Vietnam veterans, scholars and activists, and keep our readers current on meetings, conferences and new publications. Subscribers receive four journal issues a year, which feature regular columns on film, literature, the arts, contemporary events, history, and politics. Our outlook is progressive, our subscribers range from the solidly liberal to the wildly radical, and our purpose is to provide a forum for discussion of the broad spectrum of opinion which lies left of center. Included in the subscription price are a variety of special publications produced by Vietnam Generation, including reprints of classic writings from the 1960s-1970s, scholarly monographs, chapbooks of poetry, and much more. Topics for issues have included: race, gender and war; the GI Movement; revisionist scholarship; Kent and Jackson State; the antiwar movement; and, Southeast Asian-American communities.

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school was forced out of Panama, then-Panamanian President Jorge Illeuej describe the S.O.A. as "the biggest base of destabilization in Latin America."

The foundation of the coursework at the School of the Americas is low-intensity conflict [L.I.C.] which, by military analyst Michael Klare's definition, is "that amount of murder, mutilation, torture, rape and savagery that is sustainable without triggering widespread public disapproval at home." Students of L.I.C. learn that the enemy is not just an opposing armed force; rather, the enemy can include anyone, armed or unarmed, who threatens the stability of the existing order. Hence, priests, nuns, teachers, health-care workers, union leaders, cooperative members and human rights advocates are among the victims of the School of the Americas.

On September 3, 1990, ten of us - Vietnam veterans, Salvadorans, a teacher, and members of the clergy - began a water-only hunger strike at the entrance of Fort Benning to protest the training of Salvadoran soldiers. When our hunger strike ended after 35 days, our bodies were weak but our spirits remained strong. Miguel Cruz, a Salvadoran in our group who had been forced to leave his country because of a death threat, said, "We have the option to end our fast. However, the poor in my country do not. For them, hunger is an everyday occurrence."

On November 16, when we had recovered from the hunger strike, three of us - Charles Liteky, a former Army chaplain who had received the Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam; his brother Patrick, who had trained at Fort Benning's Infantry School, and I - returned to Fort Benning to observe the first anniversary of the killing of the six Jesuits and the two women.

After a prayer service, we entered the post, placed a white cross with photos of the eight martyrs at the entrance to the School of the Americas, and poured blood in one of the school's main halls. We wanted to impress on our country that we cannot wash our hands of the blood of innocent people killed in El Salvador by soldiers trained in the United States.

We were arrested and tried. A jury found us guilty of damaging government property. The Liteky brothers received 6-month sen-

(above) A wounded Army soldier, who later died, is placed in a vehicle after a fierce battle with FMLN freedom fighters in 1985. The body was returned to his family who lived in a nearby hamlet. The government gave the family only a wooden crate in which to bury the young soldier's body. On the outside of the crate, originally used to ship U.S. taxpayers' financed arms to the Salvadoran Army - the words "Made in the USA" were clearly visible.

tences, and I received 16 months because of my 1983 conviction at Fort Benning.

"Was it worth it?" I am often asked by friends and critics alike. Prison is hard and very lonely at times, even with the support of family and friends, who also suffer. My dad cried when I called home to tell him of my sentencing.

Yet I feel I did what my faith and the poor demanded of me in the face of such violence, death and suffering. As a person of faith, I feel I must try and relieve the sufferings of the poor and integrate my faith in a loving God with action. It is indeed tragic what our silence did to the people of El Salvador over the past 12 years, as our politicians funneled billions of dollars [our hard-earned tax money] to a military regime that killed thousands of innocent people.

The peace accords in El Salvador now bring new hope and it is a time for rebuilding and healing after so much death and destruction. It is also a time for the hundreds of Salvadoran soldiers who continue their training at Fort Benning to go home - along with the troops from Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Colombia, Bolivia and other Latin American countries. I am convinced that we can help relieve some of the suffering of the poor in Latin America by closing down the School of the Americas. It is a school of terror and should be shut down.

While in prison, friends in Georgia are carrying on the resistance. To learn more about their efforts, write to School of the Americas Watch, P.O. Box 3330, Columbus, GA 31903.

Archbishop Romero said, "We who have a voice must speak for the voiceless." It is my hope that we will speak clearly and boldly.

- Roy Bourgeois, #01579-017
Federal Prison, Tallahassee, FL 32301
ONE NIGHT IN JANUARY

On a dark, bitter evening last Winter, I found myself standing with a small group of students, faculty, and townspeople on the mall in front of the university bookstore. I was cradling a small white candle inside a paper cup, trying to prevent an icy wind from blowing out the tiny, fragile flame. The two dozen or so folks huddled around me were subdued, silent, nearly stunned. No one was speechifying. No one was chanting. No one was even carrying placards.

Most of those in the little crowd were too young — thankfully — to know how to effectively plan or execute a peace demonstration. So it was mostly by word-of-mouth and common concern that we had gathered together that night; because, once again, the United States was stumbling into a big war. And once again, some of us ordinary citizens felt angry, helpless, and dishartened.

The shock effect of America’s newest military adventure was especially jarring for me, as I’d returned just the day before from a month-long trip through Vietnam, my sixth such visit to S.E. Asia since serving there with the 25th Infantry Division in 1967-68. It was as a direct result of my Army experience that I became a writer and teacher, and I’ve been actively involved in Indochina scholarship and reconciliation work for over two decades, including such projects as: Vietnam Veterans Against the War; First Casualty Press (publishers of Winning Hearts & Minds, and Free Fire Zone); the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequence; the U.S. Indochina Reconciliation Project; the Indochina Arts Project, etc.

For the past six years, I’ve been a member of the English faculty at Southwest Missouri State University, where in addition to introducing and teaching Vietnam Literature, I’ve also helped establish the Southeast Asia-Ozark Project. SEAOP’s mission is the promotion of the educational, cultural, and humanitarian dialogue and exchange between the United States and Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. For example, last year we took a college film crew to Hue, where we shot a video documentary, The Bicycle Doctors: Life in a Vietnamese Hospital.

On every trip to Indochina, I’ve continued to search out indigenous written works, music and films which I use to enhance my teaching curriculum and personal research; materials which will facilitate additional student insight into the Vietnam War, and the people — both Western and Asian — who fought or were affected by it. I have devoted my entire adult life to the pursuit of peace and understanding, convinced that my efforts both as a witness and teacher could make some contribution to the manner in which the new generation would think and act about war.

But while the restless ghosts of nearly 60,000 American soldiers and over a million Indochinese still haunt shopping malls and rice paddies...there I was, standing with a few shivering souls in the freezing night air of Missouri, holding my small candle, and...
wondering if my life's work had all been for naught. Since it was a spontaneous gathering, there was no rally leader, and no preplanned agenda. We stood quietly, each of us lost in our own sadness. Finally, a young co-ed, wanting to make some type of statement of unity and peace, but uncertain about what might be considered proper in the face of the overwhelming war hysteria sweeping the country, began to softly sing America the Beautiful. Most of the rest of the group joined in, their thin, ragged voices mostly lost in the winter wind.

It was, by then, rather late in the evening, and the campus was virtually deserted. However, even before the song was finished, our presence began to attract attention. At first, the few late-night passersby just glared at us, some shaking their heads as if to ward off a bad dream. One student spat defiantly in our direction. Suddenly a bunch of girls appeared in the windows of a nearby dorm, and started chanting shrilly, "Death to Hussein!" and "Love It or Leave It!"

Quickly, the commotion began to spread, and before long, an openly hostile crowd of young men and women—including some of my own students—started to congregate on the sidewalk across the street from our location. Some of them had yellow head or arm bands. Others were waving or were wrapped in large American flags. Many were wearing "Nuke Saddam" or "I'd Go 10,000 Miles to 'Smoke a Camel" type T-shirts. Several were carrying signs: "War is Sexy!"; "Kill the Ragheads!"; and "Screw Peace!"

At first they were content to matter at us, or give us the finger. But as their numbers increased, they became bolder, and their taunts became more vocal and nasty: "Pinkos!"; "Wimps!"; "Chickens!"

From my position near the rear of the rapidly dwindling peace group (who were fleeing in the face of the growing and unexpected hostility), I watched with profound sadness and incredulity. I almost couldn't believe what I was seeing and hearing. I couldn't shake the feeling that it was all just a surreal dream; some kind of '60s apparition gone mad. But I knew better.

I wanted to leave, too. Needed to flee. But I wouldn't allow myself to abandon my little patch of frosty grass. Couldn't bring myself to sniff out my feeble candle. Refused to abruptly surrender my oh-so-hard-won outpost of idealism.

My mind and heart were wrenched back to the jungles of Cu Chi, and to the pale-faced lieutenant who was killed on his very first patrol in Vietnam; a mission I'd sent him on...

While fifty feet away, a college student, his face contorted with hate, yelled, "Traitors! Traitors!"

I was recalling the terrible grief and guilt I felt when writing to the lieutenant's parents about his death.

While just across the street, a young girl draped in an American flag screamed, "Communists! Communists!"

I was remembering the angry accusations of the lieutenant's fiancé, when I encountered her later in New York City...

While nearby, undergraduate fraternity brothers swigging cans of beer, bellowed, "Faggots! Faggots!"

I was mourning the names of the 58,175 American soldiers on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; and the 24 of them that I'd known fairly well...

While just a dozen yards away, a growing rabble of unruly students chanted in unison, "Cowards! Cowards!"

Even though they didn't necessarily represent the total tenor of campus opinion, at that moment I hated those kids. Hated them very nearly as much as I hated the government which had contrived a nice big war for them, and then given them the xenophobic mandate to hate Arabs (as well as fellow Americans) so openly and unquestioningly and proudly.

And just as criminal, my own nation was forcing me—once again—into the absolutely untenable position of either loving the warriors and publicly embracing their war; or abandoning my soldier students and colleagues, in the face of near-total social and academic ostracism.

Part of me wanted to wade into the mob of righteous smart alecks and try to knock some sense into them. Another part of me wanted to reach out to them with truth and history and reason. But even from across the street; even in the near-dark; I could see that either of those two approaches was hopeless. The burning brightness of their eyes and the earnest innocence of their faces told me that they were already way beyond the reach of any teacher. Despite our best intentions, we had somehow failed them; and now, although barely old enough to vote, their ignorance was permanently unassailable.

They'd never heard of Norman Morrison or Allison Krause or Thich Quang Duc or James T. Davis. Their war heroes were Oliver North and Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris and, now, Norman Schwarzkopf. Those kids wanted blood, and they wanted it now! No Viet Cong or North Vietnamese soldiers I ever faced were so unreasoningly fanatic, nor frightened me so deeply.

For a long time, I stood rooted to my small patch of lawn in the coldness of that January night, clutching my candle, and feeling a resurgence of the rage I thought I'd conquered years ago.

Finally, I slipped into the shadows, and left the campus quietly. For blocks, I could still hear the mindless incantations of the still-growing pro-war throng, echoing through the crisp night air.

And sometime during the long walk home, my candle went out. The next morning, after a sleepless night, I got up early; took a cold shower, drank two cups of extra-strong coffee, and returned to campus to resume classes. Clearly, there was a lot more teaching to be done....

—Larry Rottman

G.I. RESISTANCE BLOOMS EARLY IN GULF WAR

Camp Lejeune, North Carolina—December 17, 1990. As family members watched, members of the USMC 2nd Force Service Support Group prepared to board buses en route to Saudi Arabia. Daniel Gillis, whose Muslim name is Raghib Ehoize Shaka Mussadiq, had been trying for weeks to get his commander to process his Conscientious Objector (CO) discharge application. Now, illegally, they tell him his application has been denied. Gillis, who is African-American, refuses to enter the bus and is assaulted by his sergeant and two other white soldiers. Jody Anderson, another Black man and a friend of Gillis', rushes to protect Raghib from the white soldiers' chokehold. Unable to easily force Gillis on the bus, and aware of the many families watching, Gillis is arrested on five charges; Anderson deploys with his unit.

Later, Gillis is court-martialed and becomes one of the first CO's imprisoned during the Gulf War. The military judge refuses to allow Gillis or his attorneys to speak about his religious beliefs or about the race of the soldiers who assaulted him in their attempt to force him to go. His friend, Anderson, is court-martialed after the war and remains imprisoned.

Thousands of U.S. soldiers refused to report for Gulf War deployment when faced with the reality of being ordered to fight in what many saw as an immoral and unnecessary war. The Pentagon claims over 7,000 soldiers refused their orders. And counseling organizations such as the War Resisters League, estimate that over 2,500 U.S. soldiers filed Conscientious Objector (CO) discharge applications during the one year period beginning August, 1990. Most of these were filed by soldiers with low-or lower-middle income backgrounds; half of these resisters are African-American.

The government's first response to the resistance was to attempt to ignore and downplay its seriousness. Later, the various branches of the military chose to ignore their own regulations for the processing of CO applications. This caused the imprisonment of over 75 COs during the last year, and the harassment of hundreds of others. As of June 1992, several hundred U.S. soldiers remain in prison for convictions of Absent Without Leave (AWOL), Missing Troop Movement, Desertion, and Refusing an Order. At least a dozen of these were Conscientious Objectors to war.
Conscientious objection is an internationally recognized human right. The United Nations, Amnesty International, many major church bodies, and countless other organizations give broad definition to CO status. The narrower U.S. provision, revised numerous times since its first introduction in 1940, states that soldiers who are morally, ethically or religiously opposed to war in any form can be discharged or given non-combatant duty.

Many commands chose to ignore these regulations during the Gulf War. In December, 1991, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) agreed to investigate numerous allegations of mistreatment toward COs. Among them: that the military "lost" or mishandled many of the CO applications filed during the Gulf War; violated long-standing traditions of not deploying soldiers with CO applications; refused to accept CO applications from many soldiers; threatened COs repeatedly, physically attacking them on several occasions; and engaged in the systematic mistreatment of COs by their superior officers. Legislation has been introduced by Congressman Ronald V. Dellums to create a review process for COs who believe they were mistreated, and to place into federal statutes greater protections for future COs.

Three things you can do right away are: 1) contact your Congressperson urging him/her to co-sponsor and support the Dellums' legislation; 2) Write the heads of the various services urging them to grant clemency for imprisoned COs [Gen. Carl E. Mundy, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps, HQ Marine Corps, Washington, DC 20380 and Michael P. Stone, Secretary of the Army, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310]; and 3) write imprisoned military resisters, whose names can be obtained from the War Resisters League.

For further information, contact:
War Resisters League
339 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10012
(212) 228-0450
Hands Off!
111 E. 14th St., Rm. 132
New York, NY 10003
(212) 888-0930

African-American Network
Against U.S. Intervention
1239 Potomac Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 543-4926
Central Committee of
Conscientious Objectors
P.O. Box 422249
San Francisco, CA 94142
(415) 474-3002

-Michael Marsh, War Resisters League

MESSAGES FROM GULF WAR RESISTERS:

Clarence T. Davis. "I thank you for your support and concern during these moments of raging injustice. May God bless you always in your efforts for peace."

Paul E. Cook. "With the large amount of support letters I've gotten [many from vets], I am very heartened to know when I get out my peace activities will be part of a truly active and progressive movement! I really believe we will make a change! I'm gathering stories, photos and some videos from fellow Gulf War vets. We'll get these out in the public eye where they belong! If we can positively affect the youth, the movement will grow even more!"

Kenneth Boyd. "Your support is greatly appreciated! It is good to know that there are people not confined that are still standing up for justice."

Faith Gross. "My warmest wishes go out to all the wonderful people who have written and shown support from all over the world.... Peace - give it a chance!

Erik G. Larsen. "A September 1990 fact brief to HQMC stated that the brass wanted to get me for 'disloyal statements' for opposing a massacre in the Gulf. My refusal to comply with orders is a part of a long history of resistance. In response to the military's crackdown on democratic rights, I say: It's a GI's right to say no! Thanks for all the support and guidance."

"HELL NO, WE WON'T GO"—THE NEW GENERATION: REFLECTIONS ON G.I. RESISTANCE, THEN AND NOW

"We work for God." That haughty declaration, in bold calligraphy, was strategically placed over a JAG attorney's "Middle East Crisis" map. It's Memorial Day weekend, 1991. I'm sitting in the corridor of Building H-1 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, staring at that inscription. As I wait to testify at the court-martial of a Marine who refused to fight in the Persian Gulf, I drift into memory, back to 1969.

"The Hope the World." That phrase, a doodle really, stared up at me from the face of a manila folder I held in my lap. I was waiting for my company commander to receive me and to review the fat folder that contained my request for discharge as a Conscientious Objector (CO). I had seen enough of the army. Even though they kept insisting they did not "requisition me a brain," I came to understand enough about their "program" to decide that I would not do what they wanted me to do in Vietnam.

I sat there under the gaze of pictures of men from the nation's power structure — Nixon to Westmoreland to base commander Colonel What's-His-Name — to my company commander, Captain Boyce. Each of their half-smiling faces was linked by a heavy steel chain with a sign that read "Chain of Command." I chuckled at the memory of it once having been changed to read "Chain of Bondage."

GIs are like that — forever writing graffiti on things — Kilroy is everywhere. So it was natural for me to write what I did on my folder, as it was for that brave graffiti to customize — indeed, to correct — the sign under that pictorial display.

Martinet Boyce, however, did not take kindly to Conscientious Objectors and other GIs who were writing antiair newspapers, attending demonstrations and in a variety of personal — and increasingly political — ways, organizing against the war. With two tours of Vietnam under his belt, boasting of many a kill, he found the presence of growing numbers of antiair soldiers to be rather disconcerting.

The disillusioned Boyce once responded to a question concerning his feelings about killing Viet Cong soldiers this way, "I don't kill men," he said. "I only kill ideas." So, it was as natural for Boyce to kill my application for discharge as it was for him to kill anything else. He told me, "I might've approved this crap, just to get rid of you, but that wisecrack on your folder bugged me out."

Bang, bang, Kilroy, you're dead. The good captain really believed he could kill ideas — to the same degree that he was unable to fathom exactly what he had been forced to do in Vietnam. And he worked hard at killing ideas, imprisoning four other antiair GIs I was with at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Scenes of those court-martial came flashing back as I waited to provide "expert" testimony on conscientious objection for the defense of Corporal Enrique Gonzalez. Corporal Gonzalez has been part of a groundswell of resistance to the war that developed immediately after the Desert Storm deployment and grew at an even faster pace than the Vietnam-era GI resistance.

Actually, there is little hard data on the nature and depth of this resistance. Information on the various forms of resistance carried out by GIs opposed to the Gulf War is anecdotal and fragmented. Moreover, given the self-serving manner in which the military keeps statistics, we may never know the true extent of in-service resistance to the war. Major peace and counseling networks, however, reported being deluged with requests for assistance; they estimate that 2,500 servicepeople actually applied for Conscientious Objector status. No one knows the number of other GIs who wanted to apply, but were prevented from doing so by the brass. Still others took the less political and more time-tested route, voicing their opposition to the war with their feet. Again, even when the Pentagon releases the tally, we can only guess how many servicepeople went AWOL or deserted during Operation Stormtrooper.

We do know that the men and women who resisted the Gulf
War came from all walks of life and ethnic groups, especially African-Americans. Enlisted personnel, reservists and officers were among them, including a number of doctors. Their actions included: refusing to board planes to Saudi Arabia (sometimes to the point of being forcibly deployed), public pronouncements of non-cooperation at rallies and demonstrations, public removal of the uniform, an attempt to bus troops from a military installation to an antirwar rally; and even revival of the GI press.

We also know that the military response to this resistance was swift and punitive. Corporal Gonzalez, for example, received one of the harshest sentences handed out to this current crop of military resisters. Corporal Gonzalez voted with his feet and his conscience. He went AWOL for a few weeks, thought about what he was being ordered to do, visited his spiritual advisor and, when he came back, filed for discharge as a Conscientious Objector. The Marine Corps court-martialed him for desertion. Using a new definition of desertion, they say he — and others who did the same — are deserters because they went AWOL at a time when their units were being shipped to the Gulf. As the brass phrased it, they “missed a movement” — “movement” being one of those telltale psychological slips; an apt description of the deadly Allied dump taken over Iraq.

During that holiday weekend, the Marine Corps also moved on Enrique Gonzalez. He was convicted of desertion. His reward for coming back from AWOL and standing up for his beliefs included: reduction in rank, forfeiture of pay and allowances, a dishonorable discharge and 30 months in the brig. Enrique was not alone. Approximately 100 Gulf War resisters were imprisoned. At this writing, some are still in jail at Fort Leavenworth, Camp Lejeune and other bases throughout the nation.

The bottom line is this: if you are court-martialed for following your conscience, you are sentenced to the brig. In some cases, the violations of civil liberties have been so outrageous that the international community has taken notice. Indeed, 33 American GIs jailed for their beliefs have been formally recognized as Prisoners of Conscience by Amnesty International. Historically, imprisoned American citizens are rarely granted such status by Amnesty International. It is truly a national disgrace and an international embarrassment that so many American GIs have been imprisoned for the nonviolent expression of their beliefs.

In 1969, one of the antiwar GIs I served with wrote this on his cell wall at Fort Leavenworth: “I’ve been here before, you’ve done this, and I’ve kept faith. I keep faith with you who are to follow.” The antiwar GIs of the Gulf War have followed in the footsteps of Vietnam-era resisters and are keeping the faith needed for continued and future resistance. They not only deserve our admiration and respect for saying “no” to Mr. Bush’s war in the Persian Gulf, but they need our support in securing amnesty for the punishment they received. By standing up for their beliefs, they not only reaffirmed the principle that citizens and soldiers are responsible for the actions of their government, they also defended our precious right of free expression. In so doing, they advanced the struggle for human rights, including the right to refuse to kill, and the quest for human dignity, peace and freedom.

Resistance to the Vietnam and Gulf Wars demonstrates that, as always, something good can emerge from the evil perpetrated in our names. Today, that goodness — rooted in the American spirit of resistance — once again pours out from behind the bars of the nation’s stockades and briggs. It cannot be contained there — bars cannot hold it — the Captain Boycott of the world cannot kill it. And it grows as each succeeding generation learns from the other, and passes it on. What war resisters of the Vietnam-era have done and continue to do makes a difference. As one of the Gulf War resisters told me, “It helps to know that I share my conscience with other veterans. Things have changed since Vietnam...and we have the resisters of the Vietnam-era to thank for that. I am convinced that our stand will make a difference, and that our brand of courage will make the world better.” The hope of the world, indeed.

—Gerald R. Gioglio, U.S. Army 1969

**GULF VET’S LETTER, AUGUST 26, 1991**

According to Karl von Clausewitz, “no battle plan survives contact with the enemy.” This is as true now as it was in the Napoleonic era of which von Clausewitz wrote.

Although Operation Desert Storm was a remarkably fast and within its stated objectives — successful campaign, it was not the masterful and perfectly executed Blitzkrieg which many seem to assume. From the inside, it was what all wars are: terror, confusion, and chaos.

As an Air Force medic, I saw little of the ground campaign — just enough to convince me that I didn’t want to see any more. My six or seven hours total ground combat time flying tactical medevac missions are distinguished in my memory mainly by the screams of dying men and the silence of the dead; patients dying while under my care because of poor planning and inadequate supplies (despite the massive medical buildup during Desert Shield); and grotesqueries such as cataloguing the body parts of 20 to 30 Saudi Arabian soldiers who had been blown apart by a single A-10 strafing run — “friendly fire.” We were never sure exactly how many soldiers it had been, because there wasn’t enough left of them to get more than a rough estimate. Yes, I saved some lives, which I’m proud of — there were many more I couldn’t save.

Body counts. A little over a hundred American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines were killed. We don’t hear about the five of six thousand Saudis — or the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, mostly civilians.

Those who cried “traitor!” when Peter Arnett broadcast images of ruined Baghdad residential neighborhoods are terribly wrong. Those who dismiss such images as Iraqi propaganda are victims of a monstrous delusion. Consider: the “footprint” of a B-52 — the area over which its bombs fall — is a mile to a mile and a half wide. Over 90% of the bombs dropped during Desert Storm were not the vaunted “smart bombs,” they were, in fact, the same unguided iron bombs of the sort used since WWII. When flying bombing missions over heavily populated areas, it is absurd to speak of only attacking military targets. Consider, if your will, a mile and a half wide steamroller going through Denver to obtain an idea of what we did to the Iraqi people — civilians who not only were not fighting us, but who had not even the marginal choice of government that we have as Americans.

We fought a quick and dirty war to defend a feudal oligarchy. We supported Saddam Hussein for years before this happened, as we did Manuel Noriega and Ferdinand Marcos, and many other dictators throughout history. (Read about the U.S. attitude toward Hitler before 1939.) We created a monster which cost hundreds of thousands of lives and uncountable human misery to dispose of — and we didn’t even finish the job.

Was the invasion of Kuwait wrong? Yes. But if we will be the world’s policeman, we must also go to war over the fate of the people of Tibet, of the Slovians and Croatsians, of uncounted peoples and nations which have been trampled by aggression. This we are neither willing nor able to do; and there are better ways than war. Next time, maybe we can find them.

—Daniel Dvorin, Airman 1st Class, was transferred from England to the Middle East for Operation Desert Storm
THE PEACE MONUMENT

When will people put up statues
to those who kept the peace? Honor
those who sacrificed to stop the slaughter?

When will hometowns list local heroes
who refused to join the last great lust for killing
when it swept the world like a plague?

Where are the statues to those brave souls
who kept the peace, however much provoked
by those who make a profession of destruction?

War monuments do not commemorate any peace
but that of blasted battlefields, blasted
bodies, blasted dreams.

Where are the village green and city park
monuments to those who kept the greens?
To those who kept the parks' peace?

— Jan Barry
reprinted from Veterans Day (Samisdat Press)
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SHEDDING BLOOD AND SHEDDING TEARS

I just came back from Vietnam and I am still reeling from my
18-day-long, intensive journey.
In '67 I went to shed blood; this time I shed tears — some sad ones,
but also a lot of happy ones.

Being embraced, getting drunk and sharing war stories with
veterans of the NVA units that fought me in Khe Sanh during the
siege, and later on almost killed me, was the highlight of my trip.
The words brotherhood and understanding took on a new
meaning.

I paid my respects to a victorious Vietnam.
May it remain as harmonious and happy as it is.

— Per-Olaf Odman, a Marine grunt '67-'68
congratulates

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WINNABILITY: NEW WAR MENTALITY
By Mario Brennan (VN 68-70)

We’ve all heard the vague public utterances about “the lessons of Viet-Nam” over the years. When pressed to elaborate on those lessons, these public figures are apt to stammer, sputter and choke. Like Bill Clinton, who dodges the dodging question, instead of defending it.

In truth, “the lessons of Viet-Nam” vary with the learner—from this writer’s dark hour revisitings of flying metal’s obscenity on human beings—to the Pentagon’s decision that the next time, the Press would be hobbled. Shopping for morality at La Boutique du Viet-Nam is an unresolved muddle.

Historically, there is no doubt that the confrontational politics of the VVAW and other protest groups were essential in ending the U.S. wars in Indochina. That end, however, came on the terms and definitions of our political leaders. True outrage never survived in policy translation.

The Sense of Congress in tightening the war purse strings came not out of any agreement that U.S. involvement in Indochina was morally bankrupt, nor even politically wrong. The Hill’s legacy is this: American lives should not be wasted in a war that is unwinnable.

This moral shortfall has shaped U.S. war policy to this day. The nation’s collective memory of such outrages as the 1972 Christmas bombings has been supplanted by the Patriot’s red glare over Arabia and Tomahawk’s bursting over Baghdad. Today, many of our youth equate Viet-Nam to some deadly sporting event that we lost in overtime.

As we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the VVAW, let us resolve to re-invigorate our efforts in bringing our own memories to bear on the political landscape. Let us re-affirm our legacy of dissent in activism. Let’s continue to march against American adventurism. Let’s share our experiences in the classrooms of our high schools and colleges.

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