

# **40 YEARS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



**AUGUST 3-5, 2007  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC.  
P.O. BOX 408594, CHICAGO, IL 60640  
773-276-4189 • WWW.VVAW.ORG**



PHOTO COLLAGE BY SHELDON RAMSDELL

# HOW VVAW BEGAN

BY JAN BARRY

I was mad as hell and nobody would listen. Fortunately, I met some other vets who were also mad as hell and saw how we might get more attention in the debate over our war in Vietnam by making a joint statement. Before I met these other fuming former soldiers, upset sailors, angry airmen and mad Marines, I was a lonely voice of seething outrage.

One morning, I read a dispatch from the war in *The New York Times* that fueled a big flare of outrage. I dashed off a teeth-grindingly polite but dissenting letter to the editor. I got a two-page reply from *The New York Times* defending the war policy. So I went the next step. I dug out my war medals and mailed them with a furious letter of protest to my senator, Robert Kennedy. My medals came back in the mail with an unsigned letter stating that the Senator couldn't accept them. I wrote a blistering letter and mailed the medals to the Pentagon. There was no response from the Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara. I wasn't even called back to active duty and berated.

So I upped the ante of protest. Much against my small town, patriotic, Republican upbringing, I joined a peace demonstration. As it happened, I arrived in suit and tie and business raincoat at a massive antiwar march in New York City that drew a large contingent of veterans, who formed a highly visible bloc wearing "Veterans for Peace" hats. At the head of this bloc of veterans was a small group carrying a banner that read "VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR!"

I was drawn like a magnet to this group. But at the end of the march, the vets scattered into the crowd. It turned out that a banner was created for the demonstration, but there was no such organization. That was April 15, 1967. It took a month and a half to track down other vets, draft a statement of purpose and form an organization. After considering other names, we decided the name on the banner clearly stated our purpose.

VVAW founders included Mark Donnelly, Steve Greene, Stan Scholl, Frank Rocks, Dave Braum, Carl Rogers, Shelly Ramsdell and others who joined in the crucial first months of launching a new organization. There were 65 signatures on the "Viet-Nam Veterans Speak Out" ad we placed in *The New York Times* in November 1967. It was a far better and more effective statement, hammered out by a group of vets, than my lone letter to the editor that was rejected earlier that year. It shook up McNamara, who had the signers investigated by the FBI. It was read into the Congressional Record. It spawned similar ads in newspapers across the country. And it attracted new members.

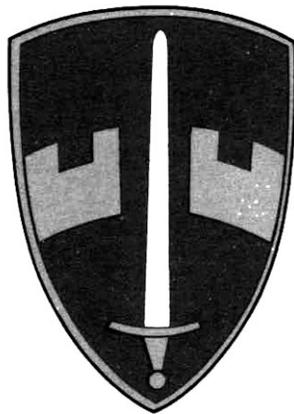
Launching VVAW was easier, however, than keeping

it going. Nixon's election in November 1968 created a discouraging atmosphere for dissent that lasted through most of 1969. Americans didn't want to hear anything critical about the war that Nixon promised he'd take care of. During that period, the VVAW banner was kept in the public eye by the Los Angeles chapter headed by James Boggio. Then the national Mora-

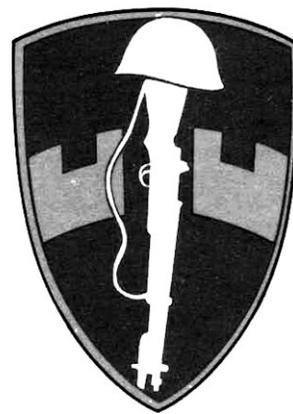
torium movement attracted a new wave of members lead by Kevin Kelly, who found new audiences on college campuses in the fall and winter of 1969-70. A pattern was set in which VVAW waxed and waned on the mood of the nation, news from the war front, and the enthusiasm and project ideas of successive waves of members and supporters.

In 1967, we were young ex-GIs, working to finish college or start a career. We could not imagine what forming a group called Vietnam Veterans Against the War would lead to. We hoped the war would be over soon and that we could play a role in changing attitudes to bring that about. We felt we could make a more resounding statement together.

– Jan Barry Crumb, Sp4 US Army  
(Vietnam 12/62–10/63), US Military Academy Class of 1968 (resigned), VVAW president 6/67–6/71



**UNDER THIS SYMBOL  
55,000 AMERICAN SOLDIERS  
HAVE DIED**



**UNDER THIS SYMBOL  
MORE THAN 317,000  
CAN BE BROUGHT HOME  
ALIVE**

## ORIGINAL VVAW LOGO CARD

# The Forum

By MARK E. DONNELLY  
and DAVID BRAUM

One of the hopeful aspects of the "peace movement" today is the broad appeal it has to members of almost every group in American society — for every hang up on the war there seems to be a bag to put it in. Whether you're black, white, a businessman, a left wing radical, or just a discontented Democrat there is a place for you in the anti-war movement.

Yet while many groups are proclaiming their objections to the war, one group has remained conspicuously silent. The one group probably most justified in supporting or disagreeing with our policies in Viet Nam — namely the thousands of Viet Nam veterans who have returned to this country. Though many may not be able to discuss the complicated geo-political and international ramifications of our policy, they certainly are justified in relating their feelings to their experience. By doing so they could provide information and insights into the war not to be had through the mass media. Yet for the most part America receives only silence. Oh, there are supposed to be a few anti-war veterans on campus, but they're just fuzzy-headed over-emotional idealists. Everyone knows about the proverbial rotten apple in the bunch.

Why is it then that we have heard so little from Viet Nam Veterans? LBJ would tell the world that the answer is obvious. "The boys I've sent there understand what this thing is all about. They personally know the horrors of war and have seen the bloody tactics of the V.C. The people opposed to the war are naive and . . ." But then that doesn't explain why no group of

## *Where Are The Viet Nam Vets?*

pro-war veterans has emerged from the ranks of the returned.

As two "Viet Nam Veterans Against the War," we don't care to have LBJ tell the American people how we feel. Contrary to what the more "hawkish" elements of our society may feel, the average Viet Nam veteran is not an avid supporter of the war. In some ways he seems to be worse. He has escaped the dangers of war in Viet Nam only to sink into the lethargic state which typifies so much of middle class America. Like most Americans he is indifferent to one of the greatest tragedies of this century. Never have so few been asked to sacrifice so much in the name of such great indifference and unconcern. It is difficult for us to fathom how a human being can go through an experience such as Viet Nam and come home indifferent to the end result. Yet, though our group remains small we find it even more difficult to find veterans who support the war. Only recently a well-publicized debate between Viet Nam veterans at Valley Stream, Long Island disappointed an expectant audience when the two pro-war veterans failed to appear. Mild support was finally given by a veteran dredged from the audience.

As two anti-war veterans we are quite willing to debate any pro-war veterans on campus who feel they can justify the war. We think it is time for the issue to be discussed openly by those who should have a special stake in this war and who feel some obligation to buddies still in Viet Nam. We hope our offer will be accepted; we can respect differences of opinion even on a highly emotional issue such as this, but we have only disgust for indifference. But then, maybe there is no defense for the greatest tragedy of our generation.



## VIET-NAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

156 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10010

Suite 621

### FACTS AND BACKGROUND

#### "After all, they've been there."

Convinced that the public has not been told the truth about the war or about Vietnam, and aware of their unique potential to influence the full spectrum of opinion on the issue, six former enlisted men in New York founded, on June 1, 1967, the Viet-Nam Veterans Against The War. Within weeks, word of the new "peace group" spread across the country and membership grew to include former officers and enlisted members of all branches of service.

#### Putting ideas into action

Composed of veterans with a wide range of political leanings, the group spent its early months ameliorating conflicting views and defining its own strategy. No other peace group has had such an immediate sense of the seriousness of the Viet-Nam war, and this seriousness kept the group together while its members discovered how much cohesiveness and organization was necessary to move from project to project. From leafleting and canvassing for referendums on the war, to participation in veterans-sponsored rallies, from initiating (with other veterans groups) the VETERANS STARS AND STRIPES newspaper, to debating "pro-war" Viet-Nam vets on the David Susskind Show. From its own Veterans Day rally in New York to publication of a half-page advertisement in the NEW YORK TIMES signed by 65 of VVAW's members.

#### Taking a stand

The ad, which states the group's position under the heading VIET-NAM VETERANS SPEAK OUT, was read into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD by Senator Ernest Gruening, and was subsequently republished in a number of other cities, further helping to expand membership to chapters and representatives in every part of the country.

#### Speaking out

Concerned primarily with exploiting the abilities and experiences of its members to educate the public on the true nature of the war, and firmly convinced that the Viet-Nam veteran, more than anyone else, can reach the uncommitted - the so-called silent center - the organization welcomed any opportunity to speak out in public and met the requests from a wide variety of church, community, college, and civic groups.

#### Moving the masses

Representatives of the organization have also met and conferred with, among others, Senators Fulbright, Gruening, Morse, and McCarthy; Congressmen Donald Edwards, and William F. Ryan; Dr. Martin Luther King, and William Sloane Coffin. The VVAW is working very closely with these national leaders to further public understanding that the basic problem in Viet-Nam is not military - but social, economic, and political; not American - but Viet-namese.

#### Making the media

Individual members, as well as the organization itself, have been featured in articles in numerous local and national publications, including REDBOOK, McCALLS, NEWSDAY, THE NEW YORK TIMES, and Japan's ASAHI SHIMBUN. One member has published a book on his experiences and views, and many other have contributed articles in a variety of magazines and journals. Two members are involved in separate documentary film projects.

#### Keeping it legal

VVAW operates from a national office in New York City, under a constitution ratified in January, 1968.

#### Keeping it going

Regular meetings are presided over by the following elected officers of the governing Executive Committee:

President, Jan Crumb  
Vice-President, Carl Rogers  
Treasurer, Samuel Albury, Jr.  
Executive Secretary, Donald Weiss



PHOTO BY SHELDON RAMSDELL

# A Struggle Continues: VVAW Turns 40

By BARRY ROMO

An empire makes a wasteland and calls it peace...and the struggle continues.

This year Vietnam Veterans Against the War is going to celebrate 40 years of struggle and triumphs. Quite an achievement considering most of us did not believe we would make it through our tours in Vietnam, through our nightmares, through the fight to stop the war, and through Agent Orange. And yet, here we stand together as a family after 40 years.

No one could predict that when the first group of veterans got together in 1967 to march through the streets of New York in protest of the war in Vietnam that a national organization of over 30,000 members would be fostered. We not only grew, we sustained. Vietnam Veterans Against the War is one of the few organizations founded to oppose the war to survive and continue to thrive.

No one could have guessed that what we called Post Vietnam Syndrome would become recognized as a service connected disability in 1979 called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Older veterans mocked PTSD and declared that we were weak and that was why we could not "win" our war. After all, their war was—according to them—worse than what we had seen. Yet today the VA and Army are admitting that one third of service men and women coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan will suffer from PTSD.

We led the protest against the use of Agent Orange because we had seen its results in deformed Vietnamese infants. Little did we know that our own government was killing us as well. When we brought this up, traditional veterans organizations accused us of perpetuating communist lies about chemical weapons. Yet we did not give up the fight. We continue to focus on the effects of Agent Orange. The same judge that gave us a settlement against the chemical companies for these deadly defoliants has refused to recognize that the Vietnamese living in it for more than forty years deserve compensation also. The Vietnamese Agent Orange Campaign one way we are working to help.

- *After the Winter Soldier Investigations exposed war crimes...*
- *After Dewey Canyon III and throwing our medals back...*
- *After overruling the Supreme Court...*
- *After our continued use of guerrilla theater...*
- *After fighting to normalize relations with the people of Vietnam and Cambodia...*

It must be recognized that we not only challenged the political establishment but we challenged the culture of war that our nation is rooted in.

But the struggle continued. The Reagan era was not a restful era for us. While fighting for decent benefits for all veterans, we had to oppose death squads, contras, and torture training camps in Central and Latin America. The his-

tory books may act like these were small "wars" or "conflicts" but who knows how big they may have been if we did not keep Reagan's feet to the fire.

Has anyone really figured out why we had to invade Panama? In that invasion we made tens of thousands homeless, wounded thousands, and kill hundreds? Was Noriega a real threat to our national security or were there other interests? As for the first Gulf War, don't forget the peace movement and VVAW protested against Saddam Hussein throughout the eighties and early nineties as the United States backed Saddam's ruthless activities.

After the first Gulf War, we fought the embargo and demanded normalized relations with the Iraqi people. We started our homeless stand-downs...feeding homeless Veterans. We celebrated the victories in Africa over colonialism, racism, and apartheid.

But the struggle continues. We may be older, but these last six years have been one heavy roller coaster ride and we're still here. We've seen a lot of old timers come back and a lot of new people come forward to protest the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not because any of us has any illusion about the Baath Party or the Taliban but because we know the lies our government is capable of.

Approximately 300,000 young men and women will be faced with the nightmares, guilt, anger, loss of family ties, loss of significant others, and the likes, due to the current wars. There are not enough facilities or personnel to treat them and we must demand decent benefits for this younger generation.

In 1975 when the Vietnam War came to an end we vowed to rise up to stop such types of wars from ever happening again, and so we fight the current wars. Unfortunately, no one could control the neo-conservative draft dodging right-wing pseudo-intellectuals that actually believed they could "right" all the supposed liberal wrongs which "lost Vietnam." Naive and with no experience of combat they thought it would be a cakewalk in Iraq and Afghanistan but we knew better. So we struggle.

These conflicts are worse than Vietnam simply because we went through Vietnam. We know the truth yet we find ourselves in a strikingly familiar situation. Has America not learned? This administration is doing precisely what they did in Vietnam. Destroying people, culture, and land, in the hell of war. From the effects of Agent Orange to depleted uranium the lies are the same. We are told if we pull out of "the war on terror," terrorism will be on our front door just as communism will take over the world. Lies. All lies.

Vietnam was our nations' longest war but there is a good chance Iraq will top that So we struggle.

We welcome participation and recognition of our younger counterparts in Iraq Veterans Against the War. Vietnam Veterans Against the War's 40th anniversary is not just a chance to celebrate the last 40 years...it is a time to rededicate ourselves to the fight for peace, justice, humanity, and veterans rights. We are ready for 40 more years of struggle if needed.

# VVAW — PARTIAL CHRONOLOGY

## **APRIL 1967**

“Vietnam Veterans Against the War”  
banner carried in peace parade,  
New York City

## **JUNE 1967**

VVAW formation meeting,  
New York City

## **NOVEMBER 1967**

“Viet-Nam Veterans Speak Out”  
advertisement in *The New York Times*

## **JANUARY 1968**

First issue of *Vietnam GI* newspaper

## **AUGUST 1968**

VVAW members swept up in police  
assaults on antiwar activists at  
Democratic National Convention,  
Chicago

## **DECEMBER 1969**

“Viet Nam Memorial Reading”  
of the names of the war dead,  
Riverside Church, New York City

## **SEPTEMBER 1970**

Operation Rapid American Withdrawal  
(RAW), New Jersey/Valley Forge, PA

## **NOVEMBER 1970**

“Rap groups” formed to address what  
later became known as post-traumatic  
stress, New York City

## **JANUARY 1971**

Winter Soldier Investigation, Detroit

## **APRIL 1971**

Operation Dewey Canyon III,  
Washington, DC

## **AUGUST 1971**

First issue of *First Casualty* newspaper

## **DECEMBER 1971**

Operation Peace on Earth, occupation  
of Statue of Liberty, Lincoln Memorial,  
Betsy Ross House

## **JANUARY 1972**

*Winning Hearts & Minds: War Poems*  
by Vietnam Veterans published  
by First Casualty Press

## **AUGUST 1972**

Operation Last Patrol convoy from  
Los Angeles to Miami, and VVAW  
“Silent March” at Republican National  
Convention, Miami

## **AUGUST 1973**

“Gainesville 8” found not guilty of  
federal charges of planning to disrupt  
the Republican Convention

## **OCTOBER 1973**

First issue of *Winter Soldier* newspaper

## **1974**

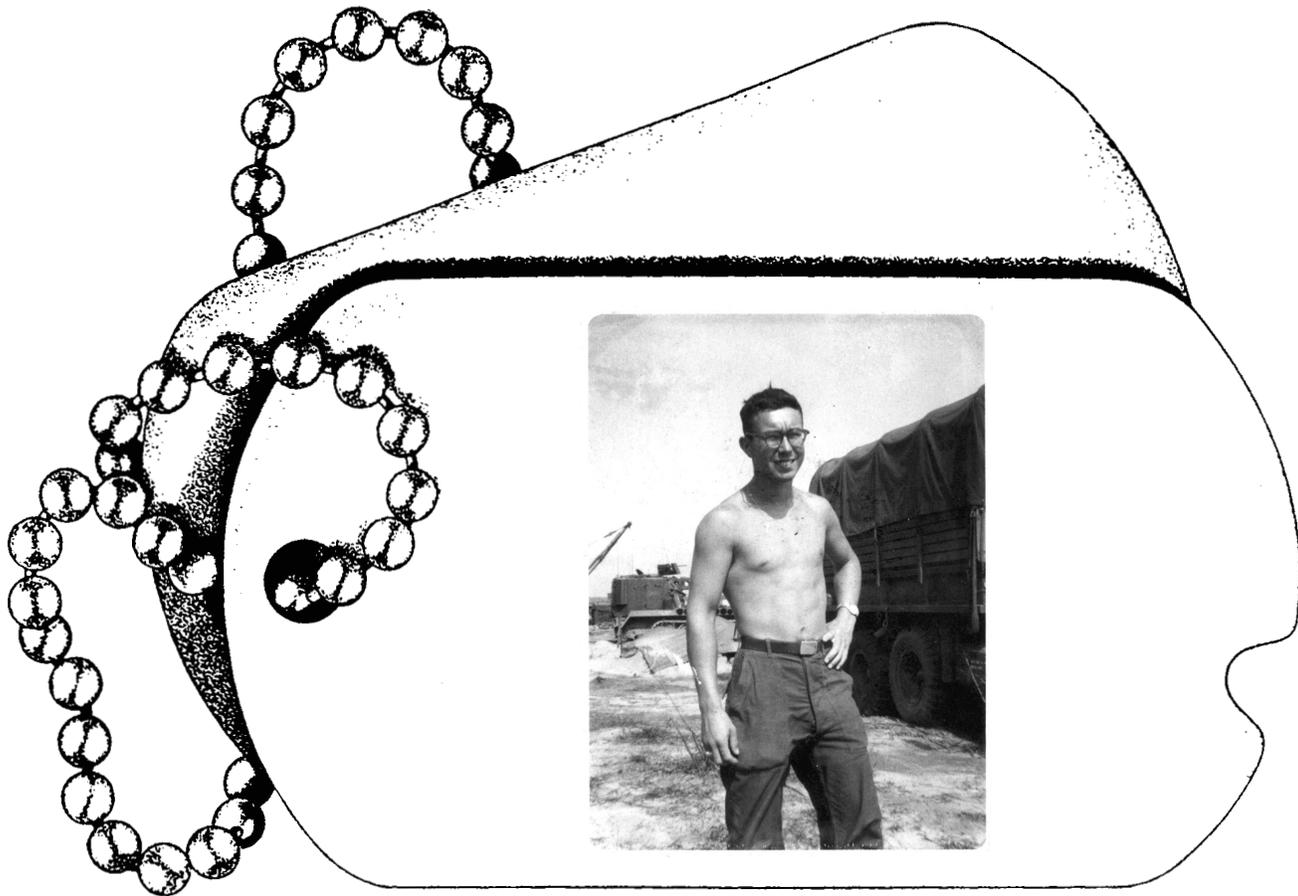
VA medical and care reforms addressed  
to aid Vietnam veterans

## **APRIL 1975**

The American war in Vietnam ended,  
VVAW continued...

# **OPERATION RAPID AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL (RAW)**

**SEPTEMBER 1970**  
**New Jersey/Valley Forge, PA**



**PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ**



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ

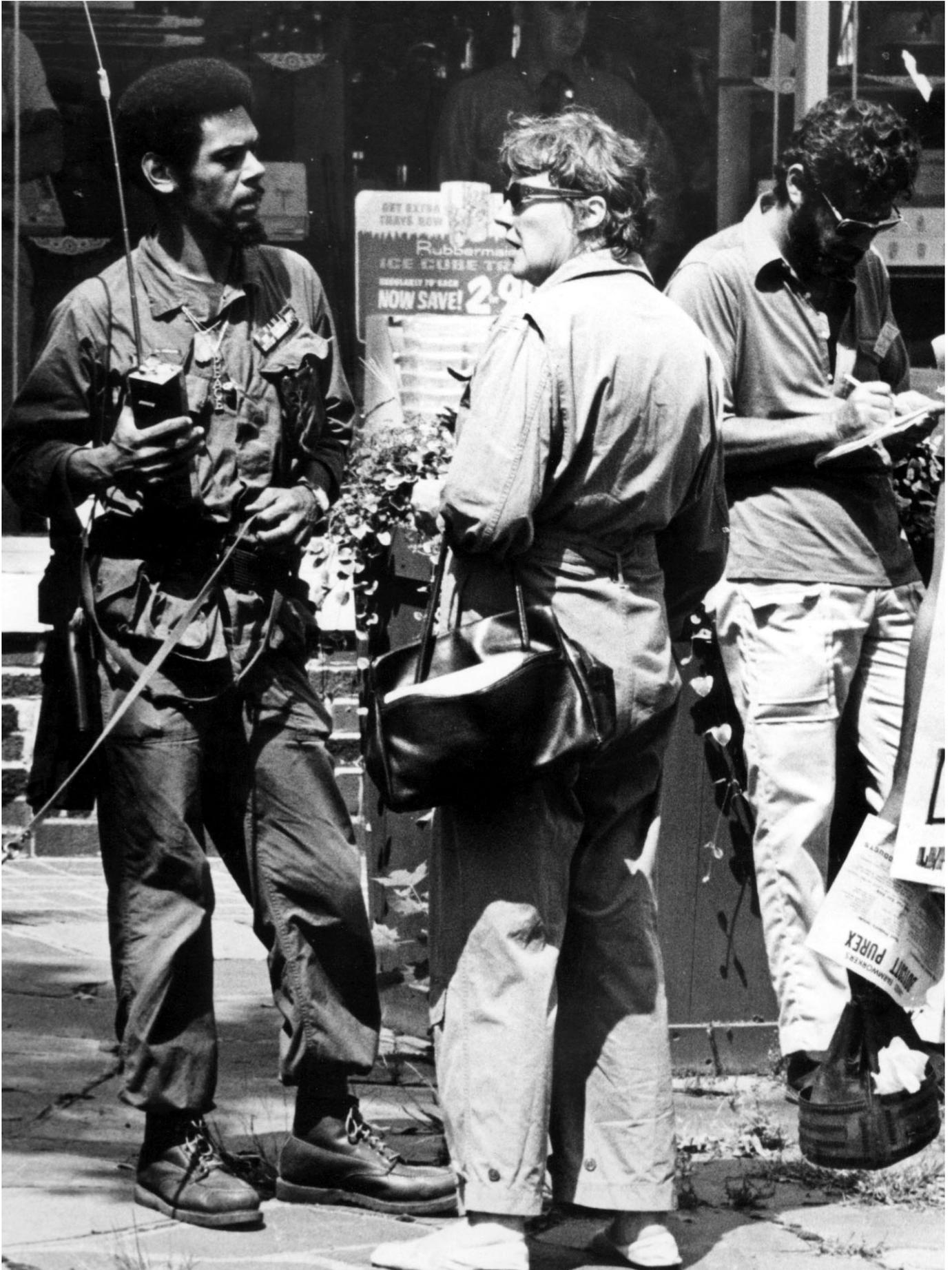


PHOTO BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTOS BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTO BY TONY VELEZ



PHOTO BY TONY VELEZ

## VETERANS MARCH TO VALLEY FORGE

From Jockey Hollow in the hills by Morristown,  
down through Bernardsville, White House  
Station, Flemington on the Jersey side,  
up the Pennsylvania bank, across Bucks County  
to Valley Forge

a hundred veterans of the latest war  
stalk the roadsides of the Delaware River backcountry,  
streaming into sleepy small towns in combat gear,

and grabbing suspect civilians  
from storefronts and sidewalks and village greens,  
holding interrogation sessions on courthouse steps  
and firefights in shopping center parking lots,  
startling passersby uninitiated to  
real-life guerrilla theater  
performed by grim young men wearing war medals  
and wound scars to prove their expertise.

Labor Day weekend, end of summer 1970.  
The Sixties are dead and buried  
with those college kids who got shot  
for too much protest, so who are these wise guys?  
the stares from cold-eyed local drivers  
on the back roads seem to say  
as they pass through the militant corridor  
of men on the march—two lines, ten yards apart.  
Some travelers and homebodies do a double take,  
honk the horn, flash fingers in a “V”  
for peace or victory.

Some knots of hate turn out along roadsides  
to heckle, wave the flag, scream out  
“Go Back To Russia Where You Came From!”  
An angry young man aims a shotgun from his porch.  
“Go To Vietnam!”  
armchair patriots shout at men who’ve been.

Three days, eighty miles the peace marchers press  
through the heat and the hecklers, the state  
police and FBI surveillance net,  
trailing camera crews, tramping the old roads  
Washington’s winter soldiers took between campaigns,  
seeking the source of America’s faltering promise,  
seeking the help of their countrymen.

– JAN BARRY

co-founder of VVAW

co-editor of *Winning Hearts & Minds:*

*War Poems by Vietnam Veterans*

This poem first appeared in *Peace Is Our Profession:  
Poems and Passages of War Protest*, ed. by Jan Barry

# **25 YEARS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



**MAY 29-31, 1992  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

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### FILMS

***Born on the Fourth of July; Coming Home, Different Sons; For Vietnam Veterans...; In the Beginning; Winter Soldier; Sir, No Sir; documentaries.***



PHOTO BY BARBARA ROTHKRUG

## 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 antiwar 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 sufferings 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 calloused 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.'" (*Ramparts* magazine, Feb. 1966)

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.

— DAVID DELLINGER

## RECRUITING THE LADY

**B**OB 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



The second takeover of the Statue of Liberty.

### THEY DIED

Brothers died  
"Doc, I'm going home,"  
They cried.  
"Sure you are,"  
I sighed.  
They died.

– ERIC K. SCHWARTZ

## OPERATION PEACE ON EARTH

**D**ECEMBER 31, 1971– Operation Peace on Earth:

- VVAW *Liberates the Statue of Liberty!*
- 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 know 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 base 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'

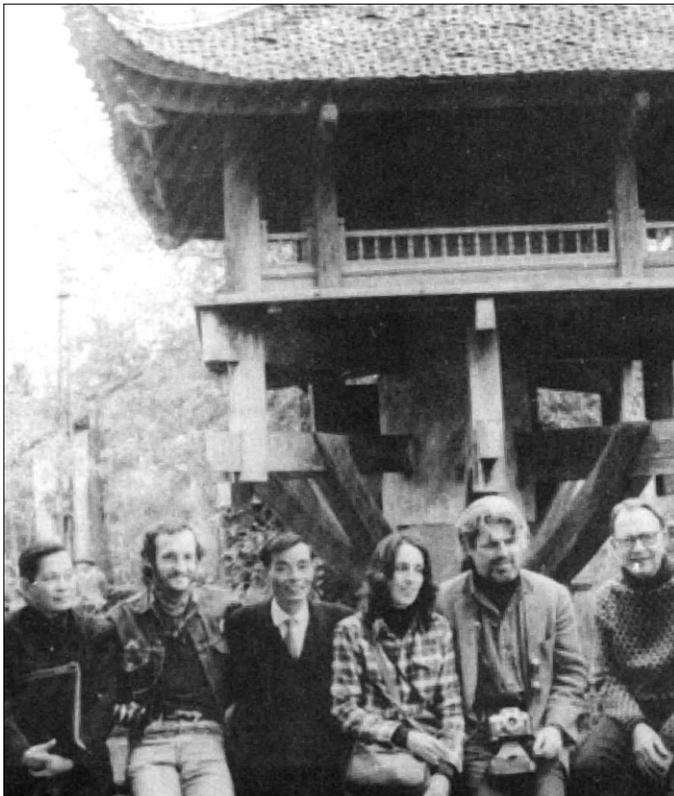
from any pranks we might perpetrate upon his marble majesty. We all sat down around the casket in a semi-circle. Harvey B. was laid inside the casket and our banner was placed over the casket after

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.



**Barry Romo, Joan Baez, Rev. Mike Alan, and Telford Taylor with Vietnamese interpreters in Hanoi at the Pagoda in the Lake, during the Christmas bombings.**

**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**

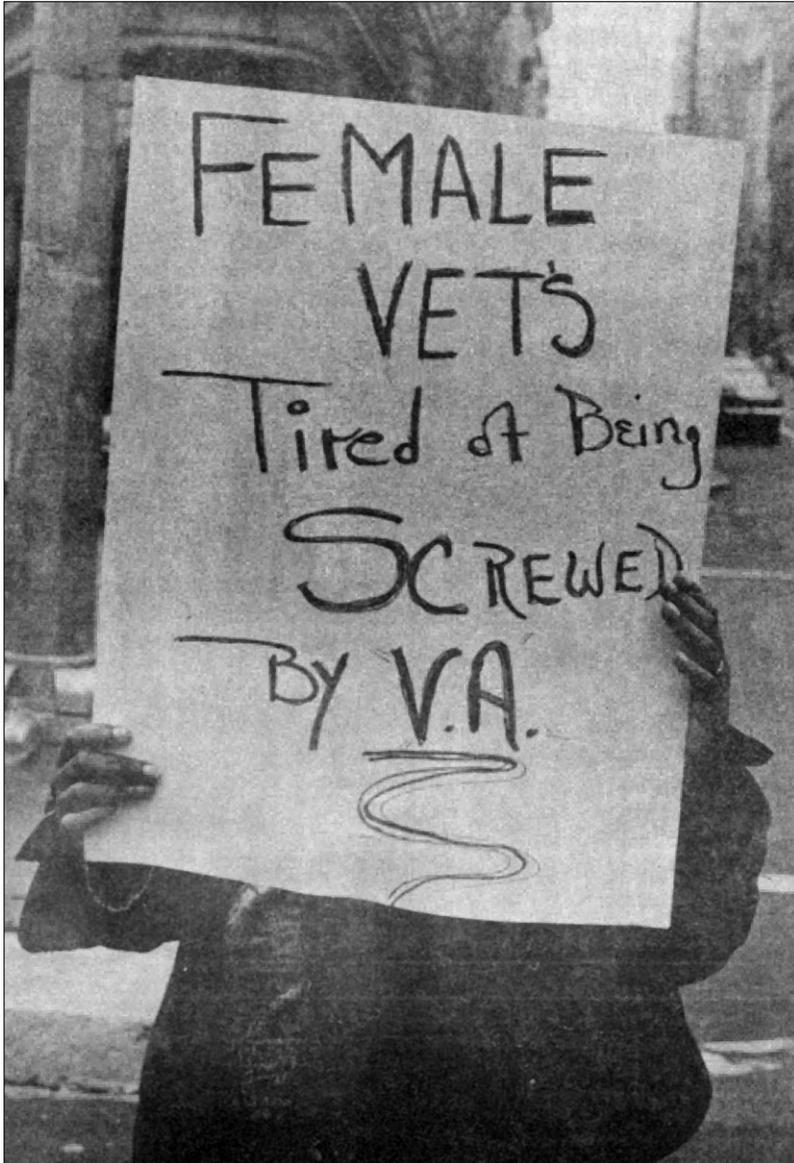
The day you flew to Tam Ky, I was green with envy. Not that lifeless washed-out green of sun-bleached dusty jungle utes. I was rice shoot green, teenage green. This wasn't going to be just one more chickenscratch guerrilla fight: farmers, women, boobytraps and snipers, dead Marines, and not a Viet Cong 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*



## 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

## “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.

And 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.

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. I 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*



Madison, WI, Capitol rotunda – Memorial Day, 1986

PHOTO BY ALLEN RUID



**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**

**A**T THE TIME OF THE 1967 founding of VVAW, I was happily anticipating 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,  
spitting 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



PHOTO BY PER-OLOF ODMAN

## A FAMILY OF VETERANS

**O**RGANIZING 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, Ngà, 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 Ngà 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

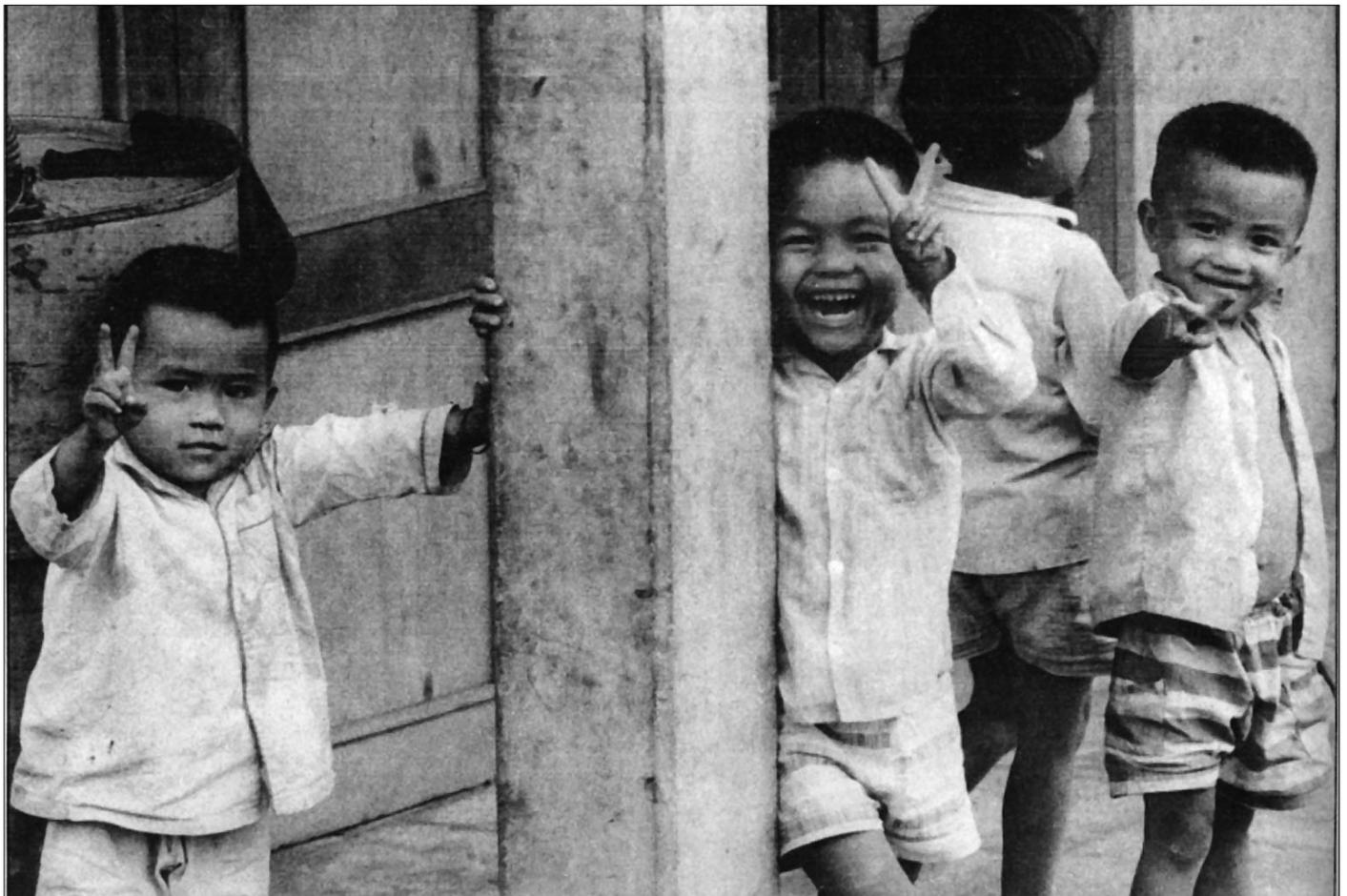


PHOTO BY DENNIS COOK

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 Ngà's sister.

We adopted Ngà, a Black-Vietnamese boy, in 1975. He was 41/2 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. Ngà's sister, who was 8-1/2 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. Ngà'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 Ngà'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

## COURIER'S REQUEST

Please tell them when they come: the secret's safe.

I carried it so far, so high  
I locked it up so tight  
I buried it so deep  
I hid it for so long

it didn't seem to matter any more.

Please hide my medals in the weeds;  
cover them with ash and memory

so far, so high  
so tight  
so deep  
so long

the child who finds them won't know what they're for.

—MIKE BUKOVCIK, VIETNAM '67-'68

## 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 sisters 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

**L**IKE 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

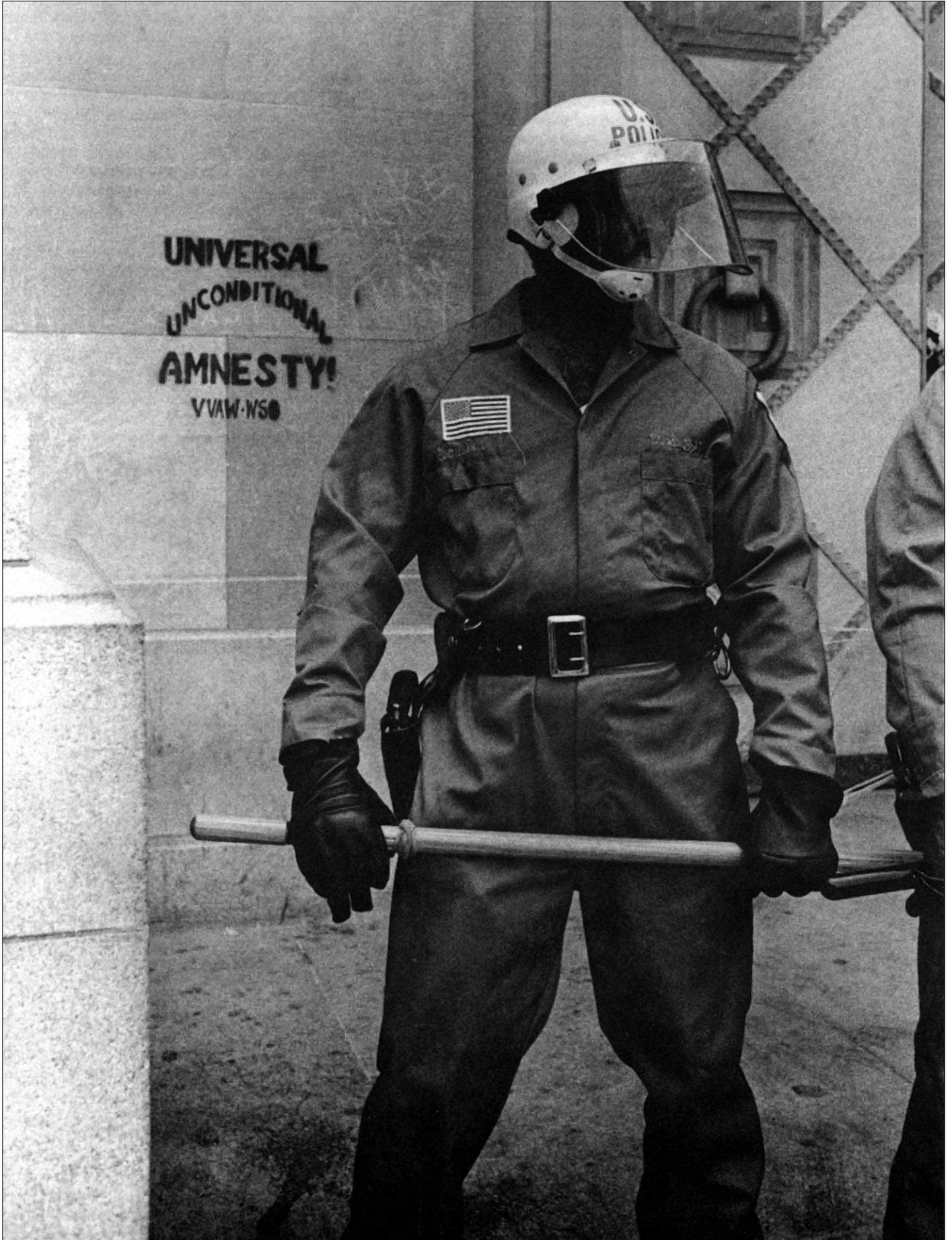
**I**N EARLY 1971, one of my professors brought to my attention a small notice in the *New York Times* Book Review requesting poems for an anthology by Vietnam veterans. The notice didn't say who the editors were, or what were their politics, but I had written some poems about the war, so I sent what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





## FREE THE GAINESVILLE 8!

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 Arnow stating that they suspected their phones had been tapped. The juror’s request 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

**T**HERE'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 interrelate.

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 equaled 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. VVAW 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 listening to my discourse of the moment, the Vet Centers and the need for VVAW to somehow protect them from the clinicalization that was fast obscuring the roots set by VVAW—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 would be the power to overcome.

VVAW 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

**S**INCE THE DAWN OF VVAW, 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 VVAW 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, VVAW 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. Annie 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 VVAW since 1970 to form the nation's first Vietnam veterans rap groups. In addition, VVAW'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 WSI's, held throughout America by VVAW, 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 VVAW 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, Annie 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 VVAW, 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: VVAW, 3433 N. Fratney, Milwaukee, WI 53212.

– JOHN A. LINDQUIST, 3RD MARINES, QUANG TRI, '68-'69



PHOTO BY RALPH WEEGE



PHOTO BY STEVE DALBER

## SPIRIT, SENSE OF PURPOSE AND UNITY

**T**HE BEGINNING was inauspicious—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, traveling 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 'pick-pocket' speech to the National Steering Committee, and Annie Bailey and John Lindquist 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 cat 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 campouts on the Otts'/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...

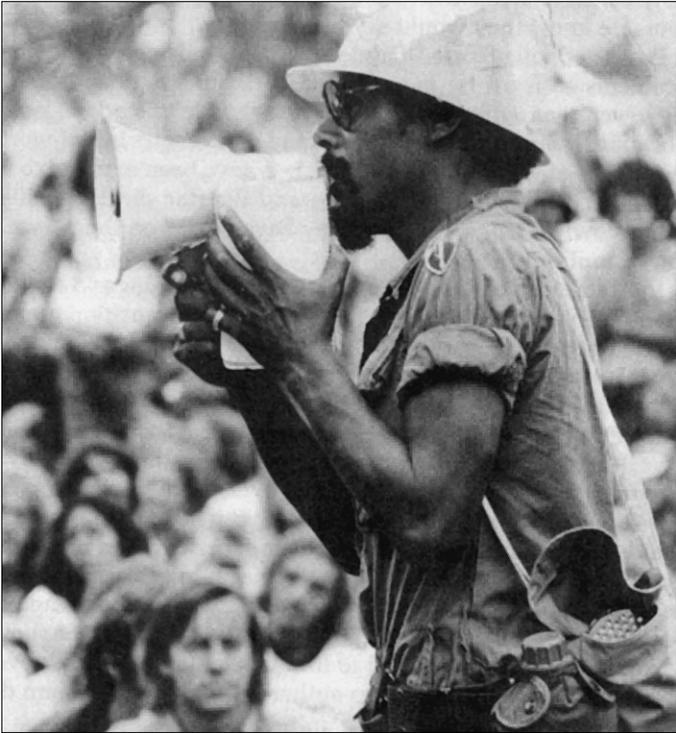
**Atlanta, Georgia**—Going to the dedication of LZ Friendly; being at the National Meeting in Athens; listening to Elton Manzione acquire a Georgia twang over his New Jersey accent...

— ANNIE LUGINBILL



Maude De Victor

PHOTO BY RALPH WEEGE



Al Hubbard



Country Joe McDonald

PHOTO BY STEVE DALBER



Operation RAW

PHOTO BY LARRY ROTTMAN



The Last Patrol



### 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

### INCARCERATED VETS: VIETNAM BEHIND BARS

**"K ILO, K ILO, K ILO.** 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 seen, 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 on this net, I'm coming out!"  
 – STEPHEN GREGORY

## HEROES TODAY, HOMELESS TOMORROW? HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS IN THE U.S.

**A**PPROXIMATELY 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 have 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 Veterans 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

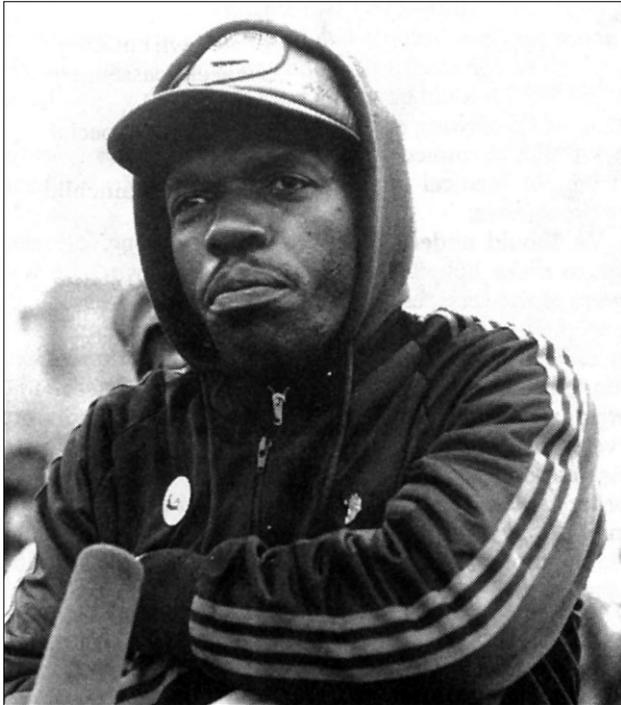


PHOTO BY DENIS LUND

## 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 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



## **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 leafleted. 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."

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.

—FRANK TONER

### MAYDAY WASHINGTON, D.C. 1971

The buses blocked  
both ends of the street,  
the gas came over them.  
Police in riot gear  
swarmed in,  
swiftly rounding up  
the dangerous group  
of crying, choking radicals.  
The group included:

a secretary out to lunch,  
a housewife clothes-shopping,  
a twelve-year-old schoolboy,  
two Baltimore firefighters,  
and some veterans  
who had asked them for help  
in stopping a war.

—DAVID CONNOLLY



## WHY VETS SHOULD TALK TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT THE WAR

**I**N 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 01104-0416. 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*

Tears slowly dry  
On greybearded cheeks  
I feel faintly in memory again  
The white-simmering heat  
Rising from the barren, barrack-pocked Sand dunes of Cam Rahn Bay  
While walking along the slatted-wood sidewalk Back from the  
foul-smelling, shit-burning latrine To the O-Club with the reel-  
to-reel Sony Playing groovy sounds from across the wide sea  
Already such a far time and place away As I awaited the slow  
number-crunching Of the 90th Replacement Battalion To decide  
my assignment fate  
On my very first exhausting afternoon Twenty-five years ago  
yesterday  
In sunny South Vietnam  
Land of wonder, land of woe  
All at once while daffodils ply the shadows  
Of this early Spring late afternoon It's like it barely ever hap-  
pened And never can be forgotten enough

• • •

For those who died  
For all who still survive May some god  
Grant us much peace

– THOMAS BRINSON,  
QUINHON, VIETNAM, 4/674/68

## 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  
Jose  
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 weaponless and cold  
along the shore of the Potomac  
like other soldiers who camped here  
looking out over smoldering 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

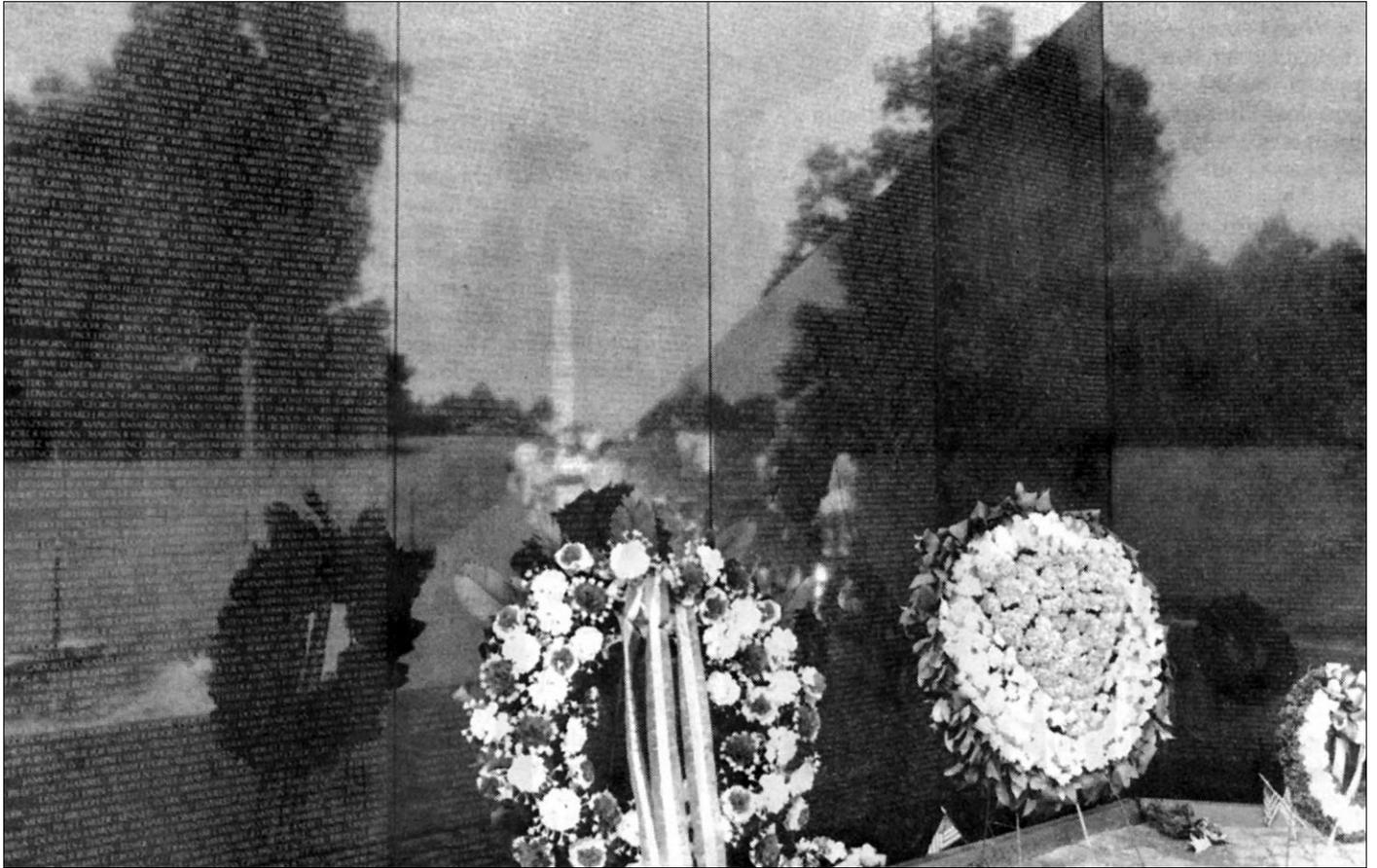


PHOTO BY DENIS LUND

## 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



## **PROJECT 100,000 "HE WAS DEAD AND I WAS GOING HOME"**

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, that Brigade was incorporated into the Americal Division with the 11th Infantry Brigade newly arrived from Hawaii.

Things were very different in this unit—casualties were extremely 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 bettys, 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 company position after an all-night ambush. Across a ridge line, another squad of my platoon was also weaving its way back. Suddenly 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 continued 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 signaled the incoming 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-F's 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



PHOTO BY C. DOUGLAS HOSTETTER

## VIETNAM AND THE U.S. SEVENTEEN YEARS LATER

April 1992

**T**AM 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."

**O**NLY 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 vets 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 Vietnam, 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

**T**HE 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, 1300 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**

**P**ROJECT: 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 Viet Nam 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 #H000028 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.**



Huang Payson (right) an Amerasian citizen and ICF volunteer, discussing the ecology of the Plain of Reeds with Mr. Nguyen Xuan Truong, founder of the Tram Chim reserve.

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

**T**HE 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 encouraged 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 Federation 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 alike 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 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 Cow's wintry fur.  
Icicles on Foxy's whiskers shatter  
into Second Treasure's palm.  
"And 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



**WEATHER**  
 Cloudy, breezy, cool today, high 65. Cloudy, low 42. Tonight cloudy Friday, high 62.  
 Today at:  
 7 a.m. .... 49  
 8 a.m. .... 52  
 9 a.m. .... 56

# The WASHINGTON News

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The GOOD Newspaper

# VETS OVERRULE SUPREME COURT

## *U.S. seeks new site for war protesters*



1971's version of Willie and Joe ...

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 veterans last night overruled the Supreme Court 480-to-4, 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. Hibbard James, Cathedral spokesmen, said the demonstrators "approached us yesterday and asked if they could bivouac 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 15 congressmen also offered the veterans use of their offices for sleeping.

The Park Police said they would take no action against the veterans—who voted to defy Justice Burger's order—until they confer with Interior and Justice Department officials.

### JUST TOURISTS

Park Police Capt. Archie L. Finagin said this morning, "To 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 no action would be taken if they did not build fires; erect tents other than medical aid stations; dig up the ground; cook or sleep on the Mall.

After a voice vote was inconclusive, the veterans voted by states 480 to 400 to sleep the night in the park. Of those voting 29 of the 32 District delegates; 44 of the 45 Maryland soldiers and none of the 49 Virginia vets voted for the sleep-in.

The 400 who voted against sleeping favored staying awake all night as specified by Mr. Kleindienst. A third alternative, to go to sleeping area provided at Bolling Air Force Base and near Kennedy Stadium, received no support.

Pennsylvania swung the vote when its entire delegation of 94 elected to camp-in. Later, in a

(Continued on Page 3)



... poncho up against rain on the Mall.

—News Photo by Charles Arnold

# **OPERATION DEWEY CANYON III**

**A Limited Incursion  
Into the Country of Congress**



**APRIL 18-23, 1971  
Washington, DC**



PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH

**I**N MY EIGHT YEARS OF PROTESTING THE WAR IN VIETNAM there was never a more powerful—and personally cathartic—moment than on that Friday morning, April 23, 1971. On that day the Viet-Nam Veterans Against the War led “a limited incursion into the country of Congress,” and one by one we hurled our Bronze Stars and Purple Hearts and all those “Medals of Freedom” at the steps of the U.S. Capitol. There were no restrictions, limitations, or even recommendations on what we should say at that historic moment, with the cameras of the world at our sides.

The words and emotions that poured out were the most poignant and angry words I had ever heard in opposition to that dirty stinkin’ rotten little war. “Some scorched the air with their curses,” said author Gerald Nicosia in

his history of the Vietnam Veterans’ Movement, *Home to War*. It was, I know, the most justifiable and legitimate FUCK YOU! moment I will ever experience in my life. “Fuck you, Lyndon Johnson! Fuck you, Robert MacNamara! Fuck you, Richard Nixon! Fuck you Henry Kissinger and all the other old men who send young men off to war! Take your goddamn medals and shove ‘em!”

I walked away from that moment in tears, but never more proud to have been a part of the founding group of brothers who created VVAW. That protest was our finest moment in working to end a war the American people did not vote for and did not want.

– CARL DOUGLAS ROGERS  
Sp4, U.S. Army (Vietnam, 3/66-4/67)  
Founding Vice-President, VVAW, 1967

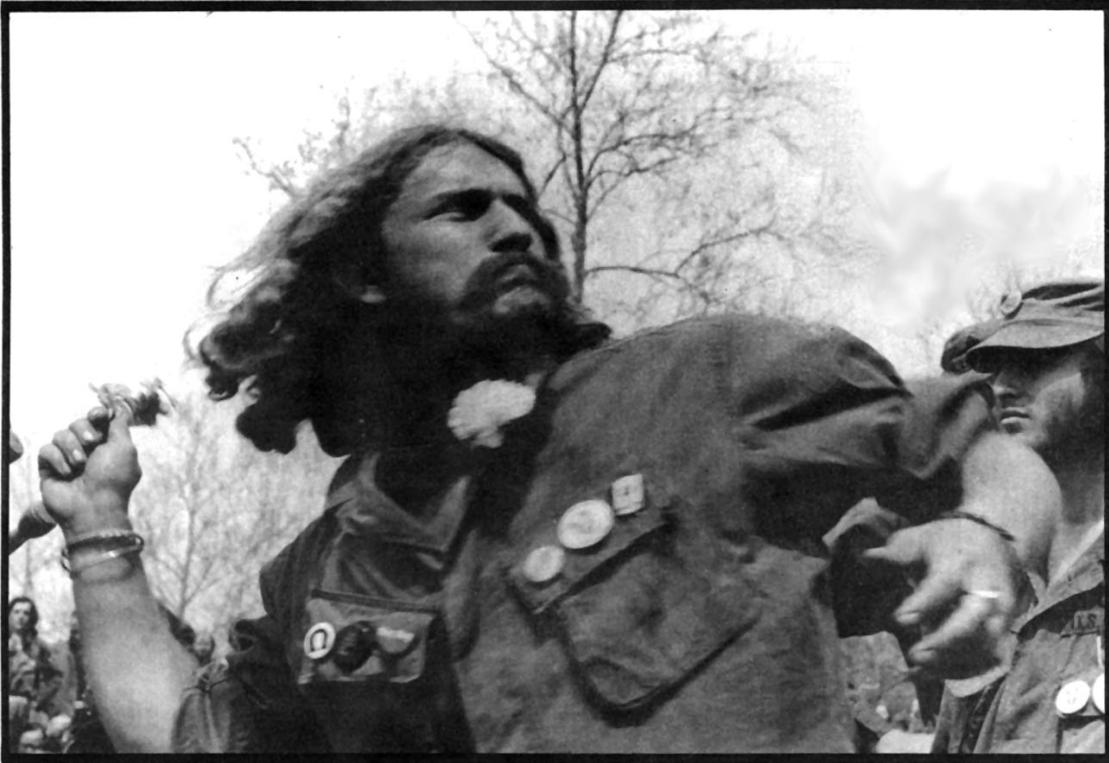


PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH

## 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  
ha! 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



PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH



PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH



PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH



PHOTO BY MICHAEL ABRAMSON



PHOTO BY FRED W. McDARRAH

## 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



PHOTO BY GEORGE BUTLER

## 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.”



PHOTO BY BERNARD MARTELL

## **CHRONOLOGY: OPERATION DEWEY CANYON III**

*Operation Dewey Canyon I took place during January and February 1969. During a five-day period in February, elements of the Third Marine Division invaded Laos. Operation Dewey Canyon II was the name given to the first seven days of the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in February 1971. The name of the operation was subsequently changed. Operation Dewey Canyon III took place in Washington, D.C., April 19 through April 23, 1971. It was called "a limited incursion into the country of Congress."*

### **SUNDAY APRIL 18, 1971**

Anti-war Vietnam veterans from nearly every state begin filtering into West Potomac Park. By nightfall, only 900 have registered and the veteran leaders are worried that they will not have the requisite numbers for the desired impact.

### **MONDAY APRIL 19, 1971**

About 1,100 veterans move across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to Arlington Cemetery, some in wheelchairs, some on crutches. Mothers who lost their sons in Vietnam (Gold Star Mothers) head the procession.

A brief ceremony for the war dead on both sides is conducted by Reverend Jackson Day on the small plot of grass outside the Cemetery beneath the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the grave of John F. Kennedy. (Reverend Day had resigned his military chaplainship a few days before.)

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 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 between Third and Fourth streets. 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**

About 200 veterans attend hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on proposals to end the war.

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.

In the afternoon, a guerilla theater performance is given on the steps of the Capitol.

Senators Claiborne Pell and Philip Hart hold a fund-raising party for the veterans. During the party, it is announced that Chief Justice Warren Burger has reversed the decision of the Court of Appeals—allegedly, the speediest process of an appeal to the Supreme Court on record. The injunction is once again in effect and the veterans are given until 4:30 the following afternoon to break camp.

### **WEDNESDAY APRIL 21, 1971**

A contingent of fifty veterans marches to the Pentagon to turn themselves in as war criminals. They are not arrested.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day. Guerilla theater is performed in front of the Justice Department.

At 4:30 PM, the appointed hour of eviction from the camp, an alarm clock rings over the microphone on the speaker's platform. No police are in sight. The area is packed with curious onlookers. The Supreme Court is meeting in special session.

At 5:30 PM, Ramsey Clark announces that the Supreme Court has offered the veterans an option: Stay on the Mall, don't sleep, and the government won't arrest you; or sleep on the Mall and the government will arrest you. The veterans retire into their various delegations and vote, in effect, on whether to sleep or not to sleep. By a close vote a majority choose to sleep. All agree to abide by that decision.

Washington Park Police state they have no intention of inspecting the campsite during the night. The cast of the musical *Hair* entertains the troops.

Senator Edward Kennedy makes a midnight visit to the Mall. He remains for one hour, talking and singing with the veterans.

The veterans sleep on the Mall without interruption.

### **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.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day.

A District Court judge angrily dissolves his injunction order, rebuking Justice Department lawyers for requesting the court order and then not enforcing it.

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 (see cover).

### **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.

Senators George McGovern and Philip Hart hold hearings on atrocities committed by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam.

Veterans begin breaking camp. A tree, donated by the veterans, is planted as a symbolic plea for the preservation of all life and the environment.

***The quadrangle on the Mall  
is vacant.***

***Not one act of violence  
has been committed.***

***They came in peace.***

***The war in Indochina continues.***



## 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 Ita 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 wealth, 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 at 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 school was forced out of Panama, then-Panamanian President Jorge Illueja described 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 sentences, 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 suffering 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



(Photo 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.

PHOTO BY J.J. GARCIA

## 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 disheartened.

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 pre-planned 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



PHOTO BY STEVE BERMAN

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 mutter 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 snuff 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, underage 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 unreasonably 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. — **MICHAEL MARSH, War Resisters League**

For further information,  
contact:  
War Resisters League  
339 Lafayette Street  
New York, NY 10012  
(212) 228-0450

African-American Network  
Against U.S. Intervention  
1239 Potomac Ave. SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
(202) 543-4926

Hands Off!  
111 E. 14th St., Rm. 132  
New York, NY 10003  
(718) 488-0903

Central Committee of  
Conscientious Objectors  
P.O. Box 422249  
San Francisco, CA 94142  
(415) 474-3002

## MESSAGES FROM GULF WAR RESISTERS:

**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 Grasso:** "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 antiwar 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 antiwar 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 bummed 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 antiwar GIs I was with at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Scenes of those courts-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 antiwar 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, I’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 brigs. It cannot be contained there—bars cannot hold it—the Captain Boyce’s 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

**A**CCORDING 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*.

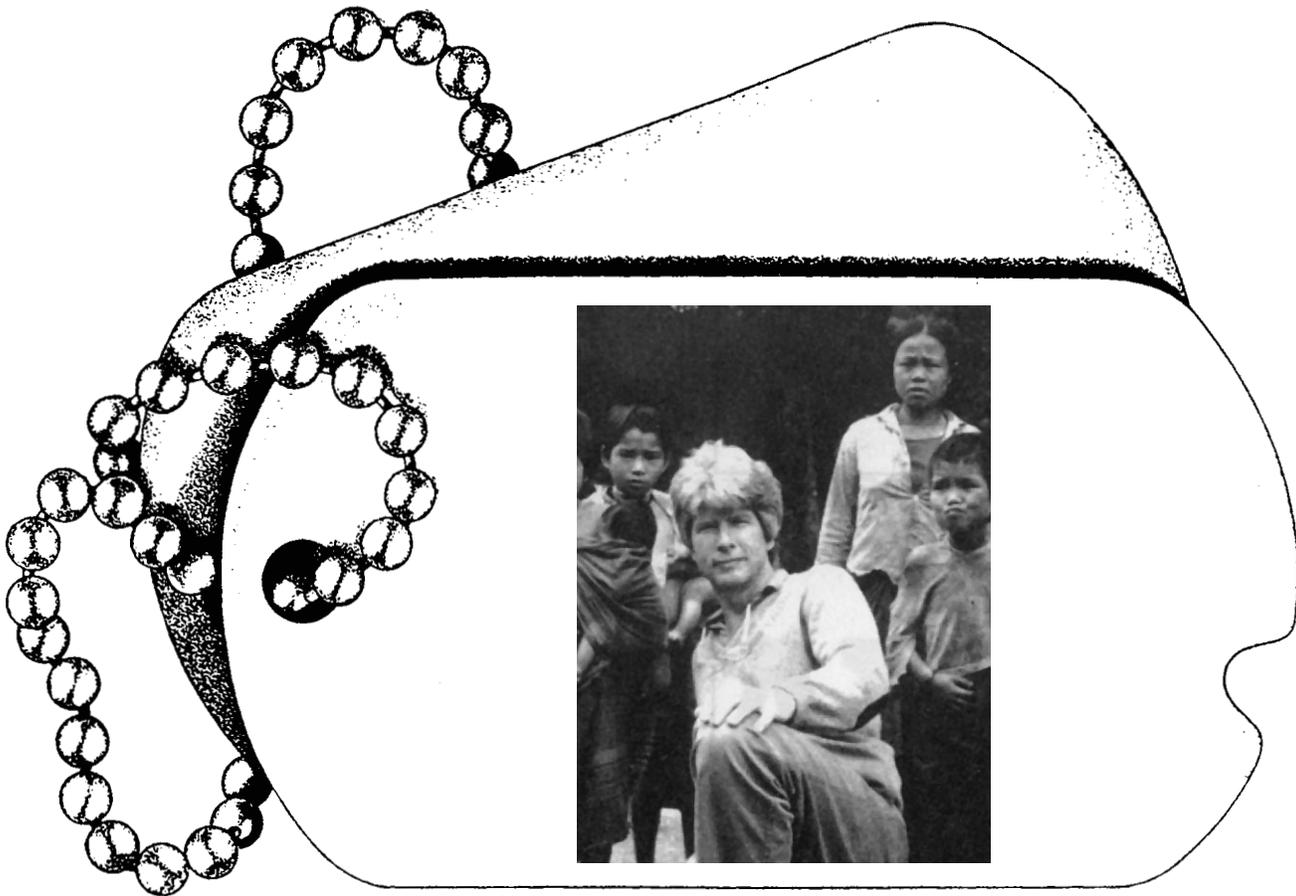
Was the invasion of Kuwait wrong? Yes. But if we will be the world’s policeman, we must also go to war over the fate of the people of Tibet, of the Slovenians and Croatians, of uncouneted peoples and nations which have been trampled by aggression. This we are neither willing nor able to do, and there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

—DANIEL DVORKIN, AIRMAN 1ST CLASS



# **OPERATION LAST PATROL**

**AUGUST 1972**  
**Republican National Convention**  
**Miami, Florida**



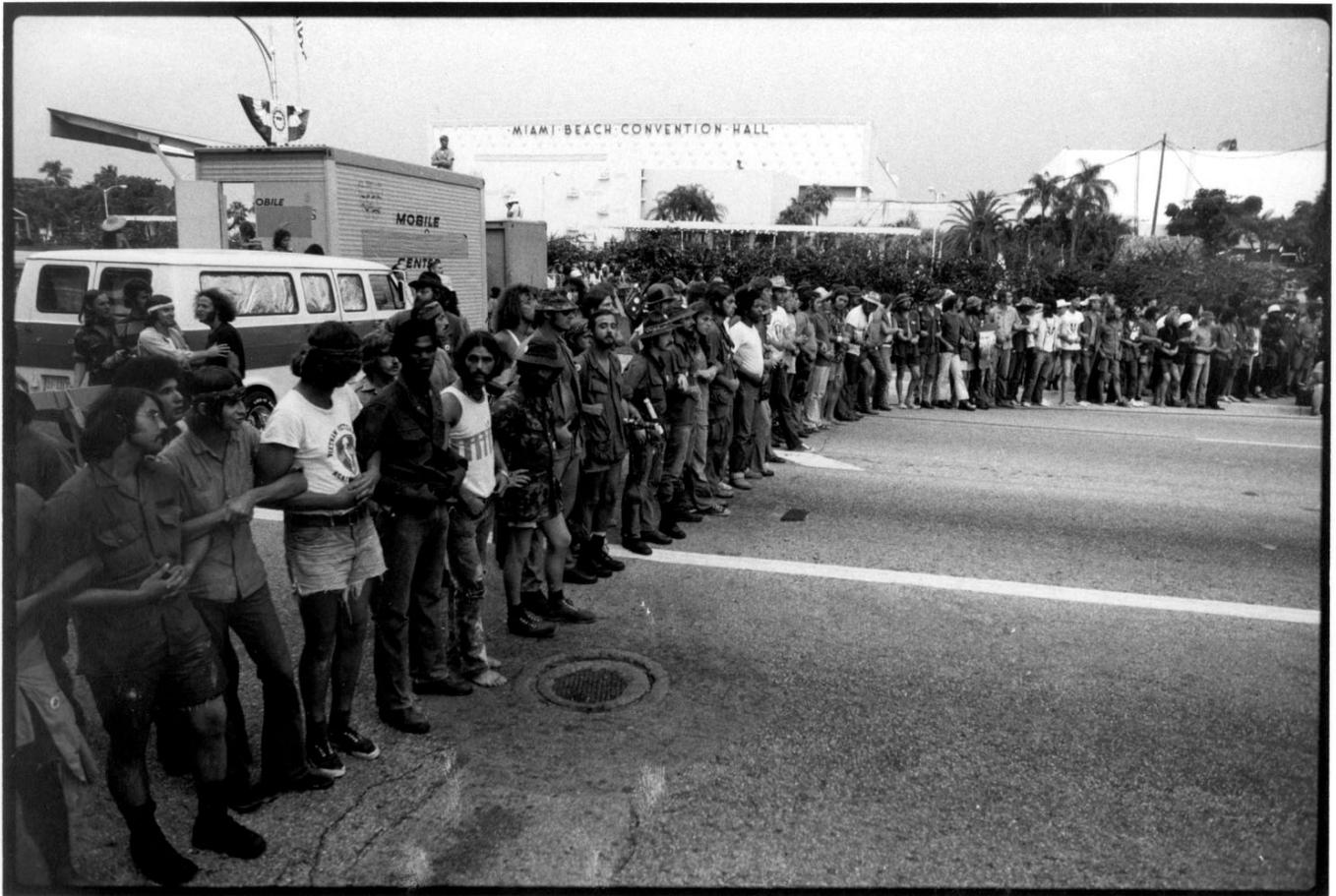
**PHOTOS BY PER-OLOF ODMAN**

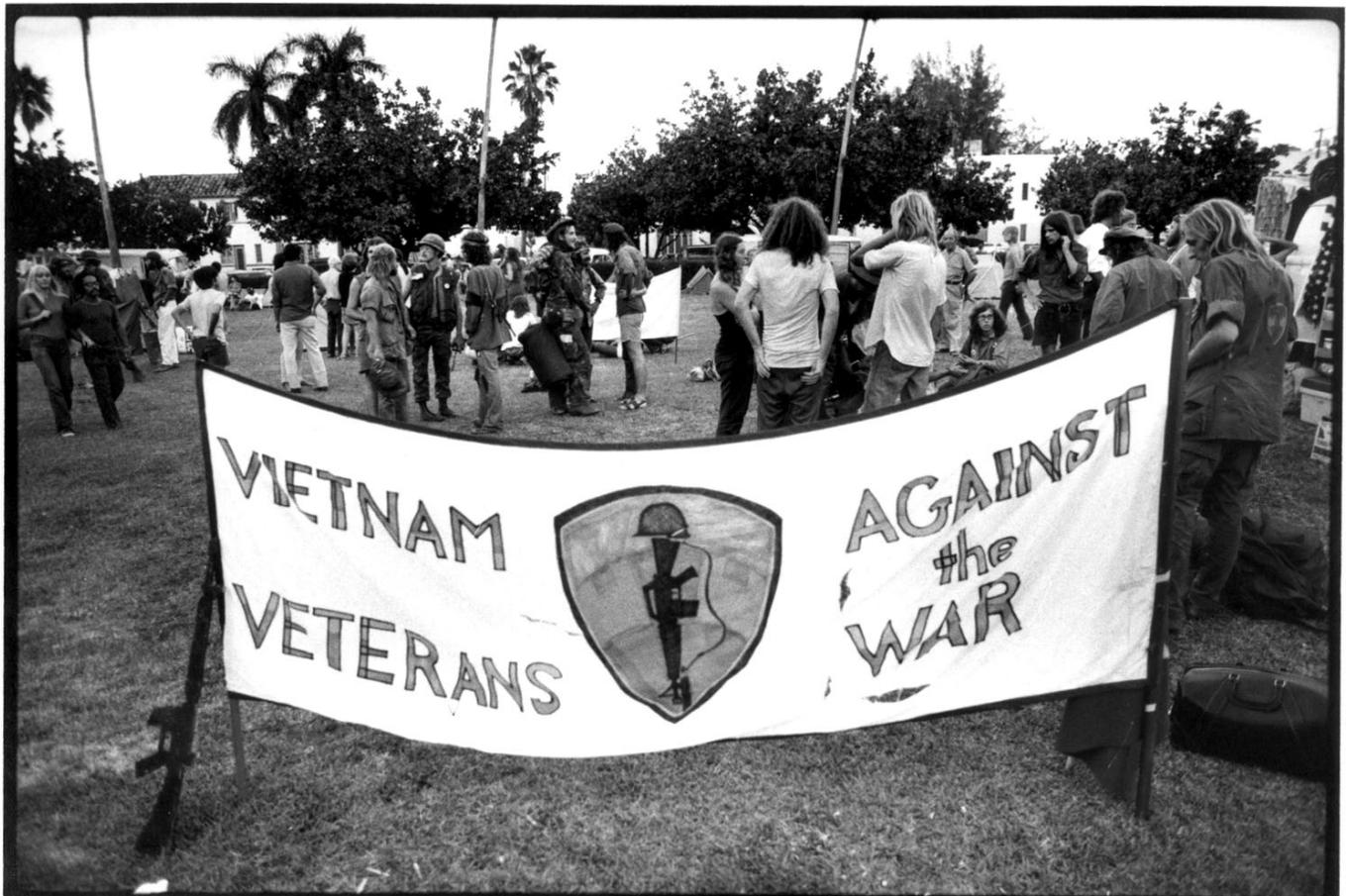


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PHOTOS BY PER-OLOF ODMAN





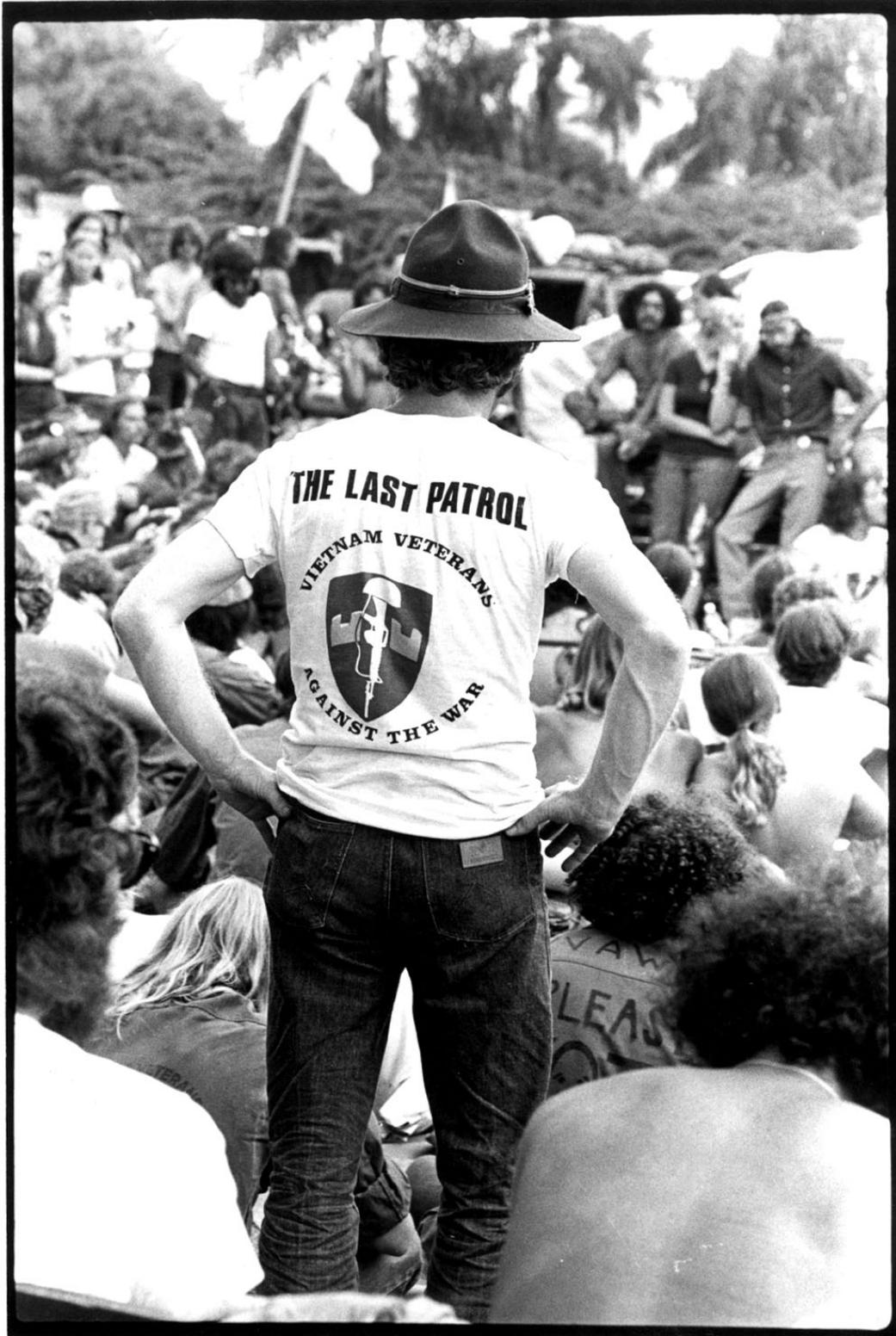


PHOTO BY PER-OLOF ODMAN

# **THE VETERAN**

## **VVAW'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER**



**A SELECTION  
OF ARTICLES FROM THE  
PAST 10 YEARS**

# FALL 1996: After Action Report: Shut Down the School of the Americas

BY BEN CHITTY

Early in the morning of Tuesday, November 15th, Army veteran Louis De Benedette walked onto the base at Fort Benning, Georgia, and—along with Jesuit priest Bill Bichsel of Tacoma, Washington—chained shut the doors to the U.S. Army's School of the Americas. Both men were quickly arrested, along with three other people passing out leaflets: Will Prior, Vietnam veteran from Las Cruces, New Mexico, John Lennehan, peace activist from King's Bay, Georgia, and Fred Mercy from Spokane, Washington, also a Jesuit.

The act capped three days of fasting and vigil at the main gate of the base. The protest continued the next day. Bichsel and Mercy knelt before a sign outside the School, while Bichsel threw some of his own blood on the sign. The pair were arrested again. Later in the day, the protesters held a memorial service for the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her teenage daughter, murdered in 1989 by Salvadoran soldiers including nineteen SOA graduates, and four American women, three nuns and a lay sister, abducted, raped and murdered in 1980 by Salvadoran soldiers including three SOA graduates. After the service the protesters approached and embraced three counter-protesters across the street.

"A good action," reported DeBenedette. "We closed the place down for about twenty minutes—the MPs had to find some bolt cutters. The Army was embarrassed, as it should be, and the School is very upset with us." He noted that the School did not seem very popular

among the military police who detained him. De Benedette traveled to Fort Benning from New Haven, Connecticut, partly, he said, in honor of his friend Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano, a human rights activist disappeared by the Peruvian army in 1990. He is godfather to her four children.

De Benedette and the others were charged with criminal trespass and interference with government property, and given "ban and bar" letters. The pair, re-arrested Wednesday, were again charged with criminal trespass. Bichsel was also charged with conspiracy to commit malicious mischief: apparently defacing the sign (mischief), using his own blood (malice) from a vial he had prepared beforehand (conspiracy).

The action was planned to mark the fifth anniversary of the Jesuits' murder in El Salvador. It may also set the tone for the campaign to close down the School. The last Congress twice defeated amendments offered by Congressman Joe Kennedy of Massachusetts to defund the School, and the next Congress will probably do no better. But Army veteran Patrick Liteky—convicted of throwing blood in the School in 1990—described the act as "an interim victory." "It was a symbolic act," he observed. "It disrupted business as usual. That was our intent." Roy Bourgeois, Vietnam veteran and Maryknoll priest, also convicted in the 1990 protest, added: "We will never give up, until the doors are closed, finally and for good."

# SPRING 1997: Why Are We Still VVAW?

BY JOHN A. LINDQUIST

If you have been in VVAW for any length of time, you have heard the question before. At various times in our history the question has come up: Why don't we change our name to Vietnam Veterans Against War? Some people have even suggested we change it to Vietnam Vegetables Against the World. I'm going to review part of our history and try to answer this question at the same time.

In June 1967, six Vietnam veterans marched in an antiwar parade in New York City behind a banner that said "VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR." This was the official beginning of our organization.

After our first year of working against the war, VVAW decided to join in the Chicago protest at the Democratic National Convention in August 1968. We functioned as medics and joined in various other aspects of the demonstrations during that week. The police riot that occurred there blew our minds, and not much else was done by VVAW until 1969.

In 1969, the My Lai killings became public, and VVAW again moved into action. The veterans of VVAW thought it was important to educate America about the true nature of the war in Indochina and to expose the lie that My Lai was a one-of-a-kind incident. We wanted to expose the war by giving testimony about crimes we witnessed and policies of the war that were standard operating procedure, such as free fire zones, H&I fire, strategic hamlets, and search-and-destroy missions. Not many GIs were crazy killers, but we knew we wanted to end the war and bring our brothers and sisters home. As warriors ourselves we could speak out with the truth about our war.

These local Winter Soldier investigations (WSI) reinvigorated VVAW and helped lead up to Operation RAW (for Rapid American Withdrawal), a mass march from New York City across New Jersey to Valley Forge, PA. Along the way, VVAW members and friends performed guerrilla theater, helping to bring the war home to the people of America.

From Operation RAW we organized the national WSI in Detroit (January 31-February 2, 1971), and this helped to build for VVAW's most well-known event, Operation Dewey Canyon III in Washington DC, April 19-23 1971.

These five days amazed us and the nation and pissed off Richard Nixon. Fifteen hundred veterans from all over the country lobbied Congress, marched in the streets, educated the people, returned a three-foot high pile of medals, and, on April 24, led the largest antiwar protest in America's history.

The Gainesville Eight trial of 1972-73 pitted VVAW against the power of the FBI and Richard Nixon. They beat us down to three hundred members, but VVAW survived. Our struggle for survival galvanized us into a fighting force waging a battle for peace and justice. During this time we had our first brush with changing our name.

Building up to the National Steering Committee meeting (NSCM) in Placitas, New Mexico in April 1972, some mem-

bers from Chicago and California floated the idea of changing the name from VVAW to VVAW/WSO (Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization).

Their idea, in a nutshell, was to get out of the "veterans business" and really get into the role of being "anti-imperialist." Fortunately for the organization, the final decision about the name change had to be voted on again in one year's time.

By October 1973, VVAW had declared war on the VA. Across the country we were occupying VA offices and fighting for decent benefits for all veterans. In the midst of all this activity, the idea of changing our name became as popular as a fart in a submarine.

As the 1970s marched on, the fight for universal unconditional amnesty, discharge upgrading, post-Vietnam syndrome, and freedom for Gary Lawton and Ashby Leach drew heavily on our veterans' roots.

Our experience as veterans, warriors, and good organizers also prepared us for one of our longest struggles, the push for testing, treatment, and compensation for Agent Orange (1978-1984).

It started in Chicago in March 1978, when news broke the story of Maude DeVictor, the mother of the Agent Orange struggle. We began the battle at the Spring NSCM meeting in Chicago, and we carried it to Washington, DC more than once. We first created an information packet to educate veterans and their families, the "Agent Orange Dossier." With this we began to build a movement, organize with other veterans, and demonstrate.

We held national meetings in St. Louis and Washington, DC. We occupied the Capitol lawn in Madison, Wisconsin, and marched in Washington, DC. We held Dewey Canyon IV in DC in 1984, and once again slept on the mall. We marched and demonstrated all over the country on this issue.

With the help of Victor Yannacone we helped organize and sign up veterans in the Agent Orange lawsuit against the chemical companies. We did not win a total victory, but this epic battle will forever be a major part of the history of VVAW.

Between 1984 to 1997 VVAW has been small but active. We worked to stop the war in El Salvador and Nicaragua, we helped to organize some of the largest demonstrations against the Persian Gulf War, and we still work for decent benefits for all veterans and normalization of relations with Vietnam. That battle was finally won in 1995 when the US finally recognized Vietnam. Our public speaking in schools and universities about the war in Vietnam also continues.

When we go about our work, we proudly use our name Vietnam Veterans Against the War. On our trips back to Vietnam, our button and name are recognized and respected. Till the last one of us dies, or we dry up and blow away, our name will not change.

*John Lindquist is a former VVAW National Coordinator. He's a Marine Vietnam Vet who lives in Milwaukee and works for the Department of Sanitation.*

# SPRING 1998: Medical Mission Possible: Vietnam

BY REGINA ANCOLA-UPTON

In November 1997 I traveled to Vietnam for the Kansas City based Medical Mission Foundation. I was privileged to be part of a group of 26 medical professionals, including physicians, nurses, and technicians from all across America. Our mission was to perform plastic surgery on poor and underprivileged children at the Da Nang Hospital (Quang Tach) and Quang Son Clinic, and to deliver much-needed medical supplies and equipment.

During the tiring 18-hour flight over the Pacific, I wondered what challenges were awaiting us in this country that had endured a thousand years of cruel Chinese imperialism, followed by a hundred years of brutal French colonialism, followed by fifteen years of an unjust and immoral American War, followed by over two decades of international isolation. What we found were very warm welcomes from the hospital staff and patients—and health care facilities and resources that were less than basic.

Yes, it was a challenge to perform the surgeries and provide the care that our long-deprived patients required. Yet working side by side with our Vietnamese hosts we overcame the obstacles (language, few operating rooms) and repaired the cleft palates and/or cleft lips of twenty-eight Vietnamese children and a 29-year-old adult's cleft palate.

On the last day of our mission, which had added a new dimension to our lives, the physicians and staff of Da Nang Hospital bid goodbye to each of us during a simple luncheon. Their carefully prepared and delivered speeches touched everyone, and feelings of sadness and

gladness mixed together to make us cry. In his parting words, one of the Vietnamese physicians told us, "Each of you has sacrificed your time to share your talents...Treasure the experience, and thus, the meaning of life."

It started before him, but it is evident that since President Clinton's lifting of the unjust and immoral embargo, Vietnam is moving rapidly to liberalize its economy and attract foreign investment. After centuries of war, occupation and partition, a united Vietnam is emerging as Asia's most exciting new frontier for business and tourism.

We made the most of our free time, and our tour guide, Song, patiently guided our city-to-city bus rides through mountainous passes, past magnificent temples and ruins, and along the white beaches.

The Vietnamese people are warm, friendly, and cosmopolitan. And Vietnamese culture is undergoing a renaissance, marked by the reappearance of traditional dances and unique musical instruments unseen throughout the war years.

Upon seeing a disabled veteran of the American War, proudly wearing his tattered field jacket and selling replicas of NVA pith helmets, I wondered if he might have fought against my husband in '69. I wondered how things could have been if the American government had allowed Vietnam's national unification elections, scheduled for July 20, 1956, to take place.

*Regina Upton, RN, CCRN, is a member of VVAW's Kansas City chapter, mother of VVAW member Nikki Upton, and wife of VVAW's Midwest Coordinator Doc Upton.*

# FALL 1999: United States Touts War – 12 Million Rally for Peace in Colombia

BY ALYNNE ROMO

Twelve million Colombians—one in three—turned out for October 24 pro-peace demonstrations under the slogan, “No Mas” (no more). Rallies in 18 cities and 800 towns called for progress in the peace talks and an end to violence against civilians. Although Colombians are hoping this unprecedented anti-war movement will light a fire under negotiations, there are minority factions within the guerrillas and government who still want war. And our government agrees.

Led by conservative Republicans, Congress is falling for Southcom’s plot to send one billion dollars annually to police Colombia for the next three years. Human rights critics have fought the funding because Colombia’s military and its attached paramilitary groups are accountable for over 70 percent of the human rights abuses and the military maintains a system of impunity.

## Will It Stop Drugs?

The drug trade permeates all sectors of Colombian society including money-laundering bankers, bribed politicians, paramilitary groups that were started by the military/narcotrafficker alliance, peasants and the guerrillas.

Some in the U.S. government always alleged that guerrillas were involved in drugs. Col. John D. Waghelstein, writing in *Military Review*, explained that the way to counter groups that support Latin American rebels is to put them “on the wrong side of the moral issue” by creating “a melding of the American public’s mind and in Congress” of the narco-guerrilla connection. In reality, it is only recently that the rebels got involved and it is thanks to the United States.

A few years ago, coca was grown in Peru. Efforts spearheaded by the United States to put Peru’s coca-growers out of business created new opportunities for Colombia’s peasant farmers to replace their existing crops with the more profitable coca. At first, the coca was grown near cities. But with anti-drug operations pushing cultivation into the countryside, it landed right

in guerrilla territory. Rebels levy a “tax” on all goods trucked through their turf, including coca and processing supplies. That tax increases the cost for coca-paste producers and prompts them to send paramilitaries into rebel areas. The rebels, in turn, reap huge financial rewards from the taxes, and although some rebel leaders maintain their ideological orientations, others appear to enjoy their new power.

Our government has made no indication that it understands these contradictions. It plans to end drug production by scorching the earth while paramilitary groups “drain the water from the fish.” Although paramilitaries guard huge drug production facilities, the United States says nothing.

If you know anyone who buys the idea that another \$3 billion will fix this problem, you might want to point out to them the last \$3 billion yielded zero net drop in the drug supply. Despite aerial defoliants, Colombian coca production has risen 260 percent, and drug profits are so high that the average drug organization can lose 70-80 percent of its product and still be profitable. The annihilated Medellin and Cali cartel were replaced by other traffickers. And drug treatment is seven times more effective than domestic policing, ten times more effective than interdiction and 23 times more effective than attacking drugs at the source.

And you might add that the now-muddy civil war kills civilians. Colombia has 100-200 massacres a year. Its human rights workers, community leaders and peace advocates are targets. Its labor leaders account for over half of labor unionists killed worldwide. Catholic church aid workers are victims and at least 35 Protestant pastors have been assassinated. Over 100,000 people are dead and 1.5 million people are refugees.

The United States has incarcerated a generation of minority youth here at home. This “war on drugs” serves no good purpose. Congress needs to spend that money wisely before we O.D. on destruction.

*Alynn Romo works with the Colombia Support Network.*

# SPRING 2000: Veterans Support Vieques

BY DAVE CLINE

Last fall, the VVAW Clarence Fitch Chapter became involved in the movement to end bombing in Vieques after learning about it from Puerto Rican members and friends. In November, several of us went to a demonstration in Jersey City. We noted similarities with the plight of Agent Orange, Gulf War and atomic veterans. We also knew that many Puerto Rican veterans were involved in the movement and felt a duty to stand with them for peace just as we had been together in war.

We decided to start an effort to rally veterans of all nationalities in support of Vieques, drafting a statement called "Veterans Support Vieques" and getting leaders of the veterans' community to sign on. The original version was issued with thirteen signatures, and the number of names continued to grow as we circulated it at VA hospitals, vet centers, online and at meetings. It was also printed in several newspapers, including *The Stars & Stripes*.

We were invited to attend a meeting called by *Todo Nueva York con Vieques*, *Todo El Barrio con Vieques*, the Vieques Support Campaign and other groups. People at the meeting welcomed our initiative and asked us to conduct a press conference on December 7 (Pearl Harbor Day) to highlight the fact that Americans still remember that "day that will live in infamy," yet the bombing of Vieques, which also began in 1941, has never ended. That press conference was covered on Spanish-language television and in the *New York Daily News*.

We participated in several demonstrations at the Federal Building and circulated a response to the American Legion national commander's public demand that the President order a resumption of bombing to ensure "national security." Our response pointed out that the Pacific fleet has no comparable training site, yet no one claimed a threat to national security there. The statement concluded: "As the Legion's national commander, you should be standing up for veterans' rights. The people of Vieques are fighting against the same problems that too many vets face, and they should be supported in their just struggle. Instead, you are walking point for the Pentagon."

We learned that a Puerto Rico chapter of Veterans For Peace had been organized, so we contacted them and proposed sending a veterans' delegation to Vieques. They agreed to host our visit. Carlos Zayas, Luis Mendez, Wanda Colon and others put together the itinerary, and the trip was on for March 15-20.

The delegation, mainly from the New York-New Jersey area, included Steve Williams from Black Vets for Social Justice; Jaime Vazquez, a Vietnam Marine vet and former Jersey City councilman; Gideon Rosenbluth, a WW2 vet and long-time labor activist; Carlos Vazquez, a Vietnam-era vet who is vice-president of his municipal workers' union; Anthony Guarisco, director of the Alliance of Atomic Veterans (AAV); and myself, a national coordina-

tor for VVAW and the delegation leader. Accompanying us were photographer Dan Steiger and filmmaker John Nastasi.

When we arrived in Puerto Rico, we spent several days in San Juan. A press conference about our visit received extensive media coverage. We met with a number of officials from the Popular Democratic Party including Sila Calderon, mayor of San Juan and their candidate for governor. The mayor of Carolina provided us with a van for transportation.

On the third day, while waiting for the ferry to Vieques we were recognized and greeted by many people. A number of vets on their way to the San Juan VA hospital came up to talk to us about the problems they had with the VA or to thank us for supporting them. We met Carlos Zenon, a leader of the fishermen, who has been involved in this fight since the Seventies, along with his father and his sons—three generations fighting to defend their island.

Upon our arrival on Vieques, we were met by New York City Councilman Jose Rivera. We met many others including Ramon Rodriguez, a senior citizen who showed us a Navy document dated 1943 giving him 48 hours to vacate his home when his land was confiscated. In 1950 he was drafted and sent to fight in Korea with the segregated all-Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment.

We stopped at the home of Rolando Garcia, a 28-year-old man who had worked on Camp Garcia for three weeks, painting near a depleted uranium dump. A few months later, his hair began to fall out until there was no hair left on his body. Medical tests revealed that there was uranium in his stool. Anthony Guarisco told him about the atomic vets' experiences with the health effects of radiation exposure and promised to ask the AAV to provide assistance.

We met with leaders of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, including Ismael Guadalupe, Robert Rabin, Doctors Rivera and Soto and others. That night we went to the Peace and Justice Camp at the gates of Camp Garcia where we were welcomed at a community rally and given the honor of changing the sign recording the number of days there had been no bombing. That night the number was 334.

The next morning we took fishing boats to the camps. Minutes after we were ashore, a Navy helicopter flew over the area, recording our presence and monitoring the number of people in the camps.

We traveled to most of the camps and saw the destruction of the earth. The area looked like a war zone, with bomb craters everywhere full of filthy, discolored water. One hill used for napalm strikes was completely charred. Unexploded live ordnance lay everywhere.

Freddie Toledo, who had been with the 82nd Airborne in Vietnam, told me that he and several others had made  
*(Continued on next page)*

# Veterans Support Vieques

*(Continued from previous page)*

it their mission to mark live bombs and mines for the protection of others in the camps. He also proudly showed us a deuce-and-a-half they had assembled from four trucks formerly used as targets—now the primary means of transportation between the camps.

Many people stayed at the camps for extended periods, and others came on weekends. At the Independence Party camp on the Carribean side of the island, we sat down with Reuben Berrios, the party's candidate for governor who resigned his seat in the Puerto Rican senate to stay in their camp. When asked why the Navy seemed so adamant to stay, he said it had nothing to do with national security, but instead imperial arrogance.

We stayed that night at Cayo La Yayi. Hector Oliveri made us members of the collective, and Jaime Vazquez presented them with a small replica of the Statue of Liberty in the hope that America's ideals of liberty and justice for all would prevail. That night we went to sleep on the beach, listening to waves wash up under the moonlit sky. It was hard to imagine that such a tropical paradise was the site of so many years of naval bombardment and devastation.

After two days in the camps, we returned to the main island where we met with Dr. Jose "Che" Paralitici, a leader of *Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques*; and Don Ricardo Alegria, director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, who at 82 is a legend for his many years of work to defend and preserve Puerto Rico's culture and history. Both encouraged us to continue our efforts.

Seeing the civil disobedience camps were the center of the resistance blocking the Navy's return, the Justice Department gave orders to end the occupation after 381 days. On May 4, armed FBI agents and U.S. marshals conducted pre-dawn amphibious raids. Over 200 people were handcuffed, removed and detained but not charged with any crime. Coast Guard ships and helicopters patrolled the surrounding waters while the camps were destroyed. A Navy spokesman immediately announced they would resume bombing as soon as possible.

The response throughout Puerto Rico was immediate. There were massive demonstrations at Fort Buchanan and other military bases. Students shut down the schools. Utility workers went on a one-day strike and the governor responded by calling out the National Guard. Picket lines went up in front of government buildings and workplaces. People were demonstrating everywhere.

Since then, a new civil disobedience campaign has developed. Every week there are more arrests as groups slip through the fences to return to the bombing ranges. Hundreds of people have been arrested, charged with trespassing and ordered not to return. The number of arrests

will continue to grow as more and more people put their bodies on the line for peace.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has joined in the fight. As an environmental lawyer, he has gone to Vieques several times to gather evidence for lawsuits against the Navy by the Natural Resources Defense Council. Support has come from people in Korea, Okinawa and the Philippines who are also fighting against American military bases, and from Tibet's Dalai Lama.

At a Memorial Day ceremony in San Juan, over 250 veterans returned military medals with a signed statement that said in part, "We are sending our National Defense Medals back to you, Mister President, commander-in-chief of the armed forces. From the perspective of common defense, that medal doesn't mean anything to us anymore. How can we otherwise respond to the absurdity of this mutual defense agreement when at this moment of aggression and belligerence, our ally has become the hostile aggressor?" The medals were delivered to Illinois Congressman Luis Guterrez, who agreed to present them to President Clinton.

In New York City, the National Puerto Rican Day Parade was dedicated to nationalist Albizu Campos and the people of Vieques. It became a popular demonstration of support for that beleaguered island, with a large delegation of Viequeses leading, many pro-Vieques contingents, and thousands of signs among the spectators declaring Peace For Vieques and Navy Out Now. Unfortunately, a group of young men sexually assaulted women in Central Park after the parade. These attacks have become the focus of most press coverage, obscuring the pro-Vieques message.

Although the Spanish-speaking media have provided fairly consistent coverage, English-language reporting has been virtually non-existent until recently. Most North Americans still don't know the difference between Vieques and Viagra. The American media's dismal failure to inform the public has left many progressive people unaware of an important movement that needs and deserves their sympathy and support.

Puerto Rico has been an American colony since it was seized during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Puerto Ricans were granted citizenship in 1917 and have had to fight in all this country's wars since then, but instead of the respect and rights that other Americans expect, they continue to be treated as second-class citizens, and their land remains a military colony. They are taking a stand against this oppression. We have a responsibility to assist their struggle for justice, dignity and peace. NAVY OUT OF VIEQUES! NO MORE BOMBS!

*Dave Cline is a member of the Clarence Fitch chapter of VVAW and a national coordinator.*

# 2001: Vietnam Veterans Against the War Statement on September 11 Attacks

The terrorist attacks on September 11 horrified and outraged people throughout this country and the world. Within hours, the World Trade Centers' twin towers and part of the Pentagon lay in flaming ruins with many thousand injured, missing or killed. Firefighters, EMS workers, police and ordinary citizens mounted a heroic rescue effort but sadly, the death toll is now approaching 7000\*.

After the initial shock and disbelief wore off, angry voices began calling for retaliation and revenge. The President declared war against international terrorism and Congress quickly voted to give the White House unrestricted authority to respond. But who was responsible? Who are we going to war with?

Government spokesmen quickly pointed the finger at the Al Qaeda network and its leader, Osama bin Laden, living in Afghanistan. The President demanded that the Afghani government surrender bin Laden and his lieutenants or face attack while the Pentagon began deploying troops, aircraft and ships to the region.

Events are moving quickly and directly toward major US military action against Afghanistan. It is time we take a look at the road the government is taking us down. Will war bring those responsible for these criminal attacks to justice? Can massive military action protect us from further attacks?

We agree with Congresswoman Barbara Lee that "military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States." The use of massive military power will only escalate the cycle of violence, spreading more death and destruction to more innocent people with no end in sight.

Afghanistan has already been destroyed by 20 years of foreign occupation, civil war and religious repression. Both the British and Soviet armies were unable to conquer that country. We see many parallels between Vietnam and Afghanistan but the lessons we should have learned from the war in Vietnam are being ignored today.

We are an organization of veterans of the armed forces of this country. We have been to war and have seen what military power can and cannot accomplish. We know what war does to those who fight it and those who live where it is fought. We hear our government loudly pledge support for our servicemen and women as they are sent into battle but have seen it turn its back

on many when they returned, suffering physical and mental wounds, from the Vietnam and Gulf wars.

We speak out of duty to our country and the world, solidarity with those serving in the military and love of our families and friends when we take this stand:

We condemn the criminal attacks of September 11 and demand that those responsible be held accountable and brought to justice.

We mourn for the victims and offer our heartfelt sorrow and sympathy to the families and friends of those we lost.

We condemn bigotry and violence against Arabs, Muslims and immigrants which threaten these communities because of their race, nationality and religion.

We oppose efforts to curtail our basic civil liberties and democratic rights and must defend the Constitution from those who are undermining it.

We do not believe that militarism and war will provide justice or security and oppose major US military intervention in Afghanistan or other countries.

On a more fundamental level, our country has to address the reasons behind the violence that has now come to our shores. The seeds of this anger and hatred were sown over many years.

For over a century, Western corporations have dominated the Middle East to profit from its oil. For the last 50 years, the United States has supported Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and has helped prop up corrupt regimes in some Arab countries. The continued American troop presence in Saudi Arabia and the suffering of the Iraqi people under economic sanctions has added to this resentment.

As long as US foreign policy continues to be based on corporate exploitation and military domination, we will continue to make more enemies in the poor, underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We can achieve enduring security and lasting peace only through domestic and foreign policies based on social and economic justice. That will come about only when the American people demand it.

*September 27, 2001*

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\* under 3,000.

"Estimated number of Afghan civilians killed by U.S. bombing last year: 3,950" — *Harper's Magazine*, March 2002, *Harper's Index*, page 13

# FALL 2002: VVAW Catalyzes Teach-In

BY JANET CURRY

With school year 2002-03 less than two days old, St. Louis-area high school history teachers Rebecca Taylor and myself stole a moment from the all-school introductory assembly. We must have Barry Romo (VVAW extended-family member and campus sponsor of Amnesty International), I insisted, and Taylor knew that we must take a day before the 11 September anniversary if we wanted in any way to frame student space for asking questions. Together with art teacher Chris Vodicka, campus sponsor of Gay Straight Alliance, and with clear support from the principal, the Teach-In plans were underway.

In addition to Romo, participants included two Iraqi speakers, both born and raised in or very near Baghdad, and Larry Baker of the high school's history department. Close to five hundred students and faculty attended, with such resounding faculty responses as: "One of the best assemblies I have ever attended," "You are awesome; thanks for organizing," and, "There are times that Clayton doesn't feel like the average high school and, thanks to you, today was one of those days!" Student reaction was overwhelmingly positive, with many paper topic commitments born that day, and with extra attention paid to the breaking news on George W.'s phone solicitations to French, Chinese, and Russian heads of state.

Essential to this effect were the authentic Iraqi voices. Both speakers laid out compelling descriptions of Hussein's persecution of the Kurds, the deeply impoverishing consequences of the sanctions for the people of the country, and the tight hold Hussein has over the media. Beyond this point, however, both speakers urged that U.S. bombing of Iraq would deepen the people's misery, that war is not a computer game, and that civilian casualties would be brutal and enormous in number.

Larry Baker supplied certain textbook points regarding Bismark's rules of engagement, the artificiality of certain national boundaries in the Middle East due to British imperialism, whether war can be considered an extension of diplomacy, and such American options as containment, coalitionism, and confrontationism. Interestingly, Baker's comments slid to the left with each new hour of presentation. He was certainly listening as well as presenting. As he processed the U.S. sneak-attack bombing of Vietnam with 150 B-52s per day, delayed-fuse bombing of hospitals, the 50,000 Vietnamese children born with massive birth defects since the war (due to U.S. defoliant sprays), the Iraqi speakers' experiences of containment as squeezing the heart and life from the people, not the leaders, Baker spent less and less time exploring the alternative of war.

It was Romo's contribution, though, which combined the most gripping accounts of war on the ground, the most comprehensive and incisive analysis of U.S. military extensions of power over the past 40 years, and completely on-

target answers to student and faculty questions. For many who came to the event dominated by the fear of Hussein's nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons capabilities, it was worth hearing Romo's point that the only time Hussein had ever used weapons of mass destruction was as a U.S. ally against Iran.

Barry led rapt listeners through accounts of Vietnam and the war's aftermath of veteran suicides, through Colombia, and through Afghanistan. He stated that the number of civilian casualties to U.S. bombing in Afghanistan had by December 2001 surpassed the number of Americans who died on September 11.

At least one history teacher was not catching the connections. "See what you can do to keep the Vietnam speaker on Iraq," she said to Curry, "because that's what the kids are interested in." Romo's response: Bush is now pursuing Iraq for reasons that do not include his compassion for the Iraqi people; few military experts other than the Viagra Generation's chickenhawks are advocating U.S. mobilization because we lack the necessary allies; and the United Nations is the path to resolution of this issue. Question the media, because no one is objective: each of us has to dig deeper for the truth. Look for the attempts to dehumanize people that any U.S. administration happens to dislike at the moment—the dehumanization that young people are taught in military training. Look for it, and don't fall for it.

As September 11 arrived, the school had arrived at a format for its recognition: a moment of silence in honor of the 9/11 dead, the Pledge of Allegiance, twenty minutes of discussion of such questions as "How has 9/11 changed the country?" "What has been done to make sure terrorism does not strike again?" and "Are you willing to give up civil liberties in exchange for added security?" Two students who had attended the teach-in convinced the principal to broaden the moment of silence to include recognition of those who have died around the globe this year in violent and preventable ways. These students are preparing a counter-essay to those read at school on 9/11 claiming a new unity within the United States. They will be citing Amnesty International's condemnation of U.S. cluster bombing in Afghanistan, and they will recognize Afghan civilian deaths and the number of kids this year murdered in St. Louis as lives no less precious than those who died in New York, Washington, or Pennsylvania.

Zoe Curry, my third-grade daughter, spoke up for the Afghan people in her own classroom's 9/11 observance. She must have been listening to all this preparation, if not to direct instructions regarding cleaning up her room. She has good priorities. It is a good time to be a VVAW extended family member.

*Janet B. Curry is a high school history teacher in the St. Louis area.*

# **SPRING 2003: Petition from Veterans Rejected at White House**

**BY JAN BARRY**

Taking a petition to Washington signed by more than 2,000 veterans opposed to a preemptive war in Iraq is one thing. Getting someone to accept it is much more difficult.

"We cannot accept anything," said a police officer at the White House. "Put it in the mail."

As bombs exploded in Baghdad and battles erupted across Iraq, more than 400 military veterans and family members demonstrated Sunday in the nation's capital demanding the safe return of our troops. Months of effort to collect signatures on an Internet petition and deliver the message to the Bush administration and Congress seemed undone by the abrupt military assault launched just days before.

Nonetheless, a determined group of veterans and family members gathered near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at noon to deliver a sobering message. Wearing black armbands in mourning for casualties of this brand-new war, attired in military hats and shirts adorned with military ribbons and medals, and carrying American flags and protest signs, the veterans' group was nearly encircled by television camera crews and mounted police.

To a mournful tune on a bagpipe and the haunting beat of a drum, a five-veteran delegation marched with a wreath to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This scene was repeated at the construction site of the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial and the Department of Veterans Affairs headquarters.

Gathering on the Ellipse by the south lawn of the White House, the marchers sent a five-person delegation to deliver the Veterans Against Iraq War petition to President Bush. Two Vietnam veterans, a Gulf War vet and a female veteran, accompanied by Daniel Ellsberg of Pentagon Papers fame, approached the security fence and spoke to a police officer on duty in front of the gate.

"We would like to deliver this petition to the president," Stewart Nusbaumer, a Marine veteran who lost a leg in Vietnam, said, leaning on a cane. The lone officer gently but firmly declined to accept the red folder containing the petition with 49 pages of signatures.

"Is there anyone here who can accept it?" a television cameraman interjected. "No, we cannot accept anything," the officer replied. "If you want to, you can mail it."

That's the way Operation Dire Distress went. The White House refused to accept the petition. Congress was out of town. Squadrons of armed cops, many in SWAT team flak jackets, others on horseback and motorcycles, surrounded the veterans as they marched through the streets of Washington near the White House.

But when a heckler taunted the demonstrators with obscenities and provocatively charged the line of marchers,

mounted police quickly moved in and pushed the young man back onto the sidewalk and warned him to desist. "He called me a faggot," said Jaime Vazquez, who was wearing a Marine sergeant's coat bedecked with combat medals. "That's verbal assault." Then Vazquez shook off his anger and resumed his peacemaking duties as a parade marshal.

After a silent procession through the war memorials on the mall, the marchers broke out into cadence calls as they marched up 17th Street towards the White House.

**VETERANS ARE HERE TO SAY  
BRING THE TROOPS HOME TODAY  
WE DON'T WANT THE IRAQ WAR  
PEACE IS WHAT WE'RE MARCHING FOR**

Next to the Executive Office Building, a spontaneous chant erupted and echoed among the government buildings, surely reaching the adjacent White House.

**BUSH WENT AWOL  
YOU CAN TOO**

Among the forest of signs: "I served in Vietnam, my son served in the Persian Gulf, Bush serves the oil industry." Another one said: "Our son is a Marine, don't send him to war for oil." A third said: "We are patriots, we served, did you?"

A large banner near the head of the march said: "Support our troops, bring them home." A small homemade placard said: "Honor vets, stop this war."

Veterans came from as far away as California. One man drove from Cleveland after hearing about the march on C-SPAN, which broadcast a teach-in at American University on Saturday that kicked off the weekend of protest. A woman veteran flew in from Atlanta. A Gulf War vet flew in from Utah. A bus full of veterans came from New York City. A vanload of vets arrived from St. Louis. Many wore combat insignia from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War.

The theme of the Operation Dire Distress march was that the highest patriotism means speaking out against misuse of the men and women in our military to conduct an illegal, unnecessary war. Addressing the assembly on the Ellipse, Vasquez, director of veterans' affairs for Jersey City, New Jersey, pointed out that America's founding fathers challenged the government of their day. "Patriotism means challenging our government today," he said.

At the teach-in at American University on Saturday, retired admiral Gene LaRocque said that now is the time to stand up for the right to dissent, to save democracy. Bobby Muller, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, brought the audience to its feet with a call to go out and educate the American public about the  
*(Continued on next page)*

# Veterans Petition Rejected at White House

deadly reality of the Bush administration's dumping of diplomacy to launch a war of aggression. Gulf War vet Charles Sheehan-Miles spoke about the death and destruction in Iraq that was never shown on television at home.

To express their distress, veterans threw military memorabilia into a green body bag, including combat medals and unit insignias. "We are not going to leave stuff here at the White House," announced Dave Cline, president of Veterans For Peace, "because the president's not listening to us, and he'll just throw it away." The body bag and its contents will be taken to future speak-outs as a symbol of our nation in dire distress.

Thirty-five veterans fanned out to speak with members of Congress and their aides from a number of

states. A copy of the petition was presented to an aide for Senator Jon Corzine of New Jersey, to be read into the Congressional Record, during a veterans' lobbying effort on Capitol Hill. The petition addressed to President Bush was mailed to the White House.

*Jan Barry was VVAW's founding national president, 1967-71. A co-editor of "Winning Hearts & Minds," he is a journalist based in New Jersey.*

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*Veterans Against the Iraq War — [www.vaiw.org](http://www.vaiw.org)  
The video of the Operation Dire Distress teach-in at American University is available for purchase.  
It is three hours and 39 minutes long.  
The cost is \$24.95 plus shipping. It can be found at <http://store.yahoo.com/c-spanstore/175679.html>*

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## SPRING 2004: VVAW Participation in March 20, 2004 Demonstrations

*The following is a synopsis of some of the activities VVAW was involved in nationwide on March 20, 2004 in opposition to the current war of the Bush administration.*

### **DENVER, COLORADO CHARLES ELLISTON VVAW**

The day started out cool, but clear and sunny. By 10:30 a.m. about 40 people had assembled at the flagpole of the Auraria Campus in downtown Denver for the 11:00 a.m. rally. I began to think the event would be anticlimactic compared to last year's march in February. Then the crowd grew rapidly, and by the time the actual march began, I would guess at least couple of thousand peace activists were in attendance. Media estimates aired on NPR this morning were placed at "thousands" of marchers.

There were four active VVAW members in attendance. Several other veterans approached us during the day to offer their support and appreciation. Many members of mainstream and alternative media were busy interviewing one VVAW member who showed up in a full-dress, Class A uniform.

We marched from the campus into the downtown financial district, passing the offices of Halliburton along the way. I was surprised at the relatively light police presence. Their function was—correctly—mostly traffic safety and flow. We were not granted a parade permit, so we were constrained to remain on the public

sidewalks. Parade organizers advised us that riot squads and SWAT teams were in readiness, but I never saw any evidence of this. Perhaps not surprising, since the crowd was law-abiding and peaceful, if colorful and somewhat noisy.

After Halliburton, the marchers proceeded through several blocks of the downtown area and then paused at a memorial to "The Unknown Soldier." Several rally organizers from Denver peace groups along with the four VVAW representatives placed flowers at the base of the memorial. Although the memorial is adjacent to a public sidewalk, in a publicly-accessible plaza, there were temporary signs posted declaring the site to be "Private Property—Trespassing Prohibited."

The march organizers advised us that we risked arrest and incarceration for trespass by placing the flowers at the memorial. Some of our members have been jailed previously for acts of civil disobedience, and those who had not decided that the symbolism, and the possible publicity arising from arrest for such a peaceful act, justified the risk. Pleasantly, the authorities took no action, and the march continued to a large plaza in front of the Federal Building for the closing rally.

At the rally, several speakers talked about the experiences of their children or other relatives who had served or were currently on duty in Iraq. Others discussed the folly of using preemptive war as a means of projecting U.S. foreign policy. The "Radical Cheerleaders" gave a rousing performance, adding a lighter touch to the  
*(Continued on next page)*

# SPRING 2004: VVAW Participation in March 20, 2004 Demonstrations

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generally somber proceedings. Much emphasis was given to the now widely-recognized misrepresentations of the Iraqi WMD threat by the Bush administration.

On the way back to the parking area, the four VVAW members officially in attendance—Don and Ray Wood, Terry Leichner and myself—decided that we now had enough active members to begin having periodic local meetings. The goal is greater organization and greater visibility within the community as opponents to the administration's counterproductive and inappropriate foreign policy. At future rallies, we plan to wear our old uniforms and carry a VVAW banner. By doing so, we will demonstrate solidarity with our active-duty brethren, and showing our status as former warriors will add credibility to our voice for peace.

## **ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS** **STANLEY CAMPBELL** **VVAW**

Rockford Peace & Justice Action Committee's International Day of Protest started well, with wonderful songs, a poem by Christopher Sims, and prayers and speeches. (I gave a speech about how veterans who oppose war should be supported, and a friend immediately invited me out to lunch this week, saying, "Is that what you meant?") Over 75 people rallied at the church, and when we stepped off for the march, there were 83.

Five veterans for peace led the walk to State and Alpine, joined by a lively drumming section. (I think they were members of the local Bread Not Bombs, and they kept up a supportive beat the whole day).

We had two interlopers from Right to Life, but they were not disruptive and almost fit in, except one had a bullhorn and harangued us from across the street.

The three local TV stations covered us.

Afterwards we invited folks back for soup, salad and desserts, which were gobbled up while David Stocker serenaded us. At least 18 people signed up for the mailing list, two of which were vets, one a Vietnam vet from 1970-71—my era! We were very happy to have attracted new folks.

## **MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN** **DAVE KETTENHOFEN** **VVAW**

The Milwaukee day was sunny and warm with a brisk northwest wind. Whatever the sun gave for heat, the howling wind stole away. The demonstration began at noon and featured musicians, poets and speakers.

Close to twenty Milwaukee VVAW members took part in the demo here. Total participants have been estimated

at between 800 and 1200. A couple of dozen pro-Bushies had a counter-demo across the street but left after a short time. There were speeches and a march to the Federal Building.

Our display was to be a ninety-foot diameter peace symbol made of American flags. Each flag had a sticker attached with the name, hometown, age, unit and date of death for each U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

Near the end of the program, VVAW national officer John Zutz spoke. He entreated the crowd to remember those servicemembers who had died. He reminded the protesters that 58,000 died over ten years in Vietnam, and that over 570 had died in one year of Iraq, and that both wars were based on lies.

He also informed the group that some of our leaders would have them believe that 570 is an insignificant number. He then told the group he was only allowed two minutes to speak, and offered to call for a minute of silence for the dead. He remarked that if they were to observe a minute of silence for each of our dead the group would be standing quietly for over nine and a half hours. (And of course that wouldn't include "coalition" troops or Iraqis.)

After this moment of silence, Zutz invited all demonstration participants, especially veterans, to participate in the installation of 575 flags to give a visual display of what this number looks like.

Three television stations showed up to film the project and interviewed both of us. There was a very positive response from passersby during the afternoon.

## **CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, ILLINOIS** **MEG MINER** **VVAW**

The Champaign-Urbana community held a rally/walk for peace on March 20. The event began at the Urbana Middle School gymnasium with a talk by a local Iraqi businessman who had recently visited his family in Iraq. Some community folks read poems and sang songs. The event concluded with a candlelight remembrance of all who have died in Iraq in the last year, followed by a walk up to the courthouse about 6 blocks away. I spoke at the courthouse with two other people, and local folk singers performed.

## **CHICAGO, ILLINOIS** **BROOKE ANDERSON** **VVAW**

Barry Romo spoke at an earlier faith and peace church event in downtown Chicago that was very crowded. He shared his time with a young mother who had two sons in the military, one a 19-year-old Marine in Asia and one in  
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# **SPRING 2004: VVAW Participation in March 20, 2004 Demonstrations**

*(Continued from previous page)*

the 1st Armored in Iraq, age 20. Fighting back tears, she told how her oldest son had contacted her after their first ambush. How, when he came home on R&R, he stood at the door with sand and blood on his fatigues, 15 pounds lighter. She told the crowd that no mother should have to send their child back to war.

At the rally point before the big march, VVAW's Bill Davis spoke and kicked ass. A group from Champaign-Urbana traveled up to Chicago and joined with the VVAW contingent in this two-mile march of four to five thousand protesters.

There were all kinds of anti-war groups, including Chicago neighborhood groups, Palestinian solidarity networks, and lots of just everyday people. The craziest part is that there were so many police. It seemed like there was probably one police officer for every protester. They were mostly Chicago PD, but there were also some County officers. During parts of the march they were shoulder to shoulder along the edge almost as far as you could see, and in some parts three or four deep along the side, with multiple helicopters in the air and police everywhere filming all the participants. The police had on full riot gear: helmets, visors, shields, full body armor including boots and gloves, shields, nightsticks, all kinds of weapons. They seemed better-outfitted than the troops in Iraq.

During the rally at the end of the march, it was almost impossible to hear the speakers clearly.

Afterward, a small group went back to Barry's place to hang out for a while. A Marine vet, only recently back from Iraq and with two weeks to go, came back with us.

## **EUREKA, CALIFORNIA**

**BRIAN WILLSON**

### **VVAW**

In Eureka, California, Humboldt County, 280 miles north of San Francisco along the Pacific coast, over 4,000 marched one and a half miles through city streets on a warm, beautiful sunny day. Proclamations from the County Board of Supervisors and the Eureka City Council supported the march. About 50 members of northern California indigenous tribes, along with more than 60 members of VFP (from Garberville Chapter 22

and Humboldt Bay Chapter 56), led the march. It ended at a concluding rally at the Gazebo in Old Town Eureka. The rally featured two hours of speakers, theater and music, the sound system completely powered by eight stationary bicyclists generating electricity along with a solar module.

## **FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA**

**DOUGLAS NELSON**

### **VVAW**

A half dozen or more of the 1200 participants in the Fayetteville/Fort Bragg action were VVAW members, including two of us who wore VVAW T-shirts. We have marched before and we will march again!

## **LANSING, MICHIGAN**

**ARMY STEIBER**

### **VVAW**

The good folks from Lansing put together a great march to the Capitol featuring speakers, music and workshops.

I was introduced as representing both VVAW ("the first veterans' group to oppose war") and Vets For Peace. I was the only veteran on the program and led the group in cadence on the Capitol steps. I don't have the raspy voice of Dave Cline, but the crowd loved it. I added a few verses covering schools, the national debt, Gulf I vets, and Spain.

After that there were a variety of workshops. I showed Country Joe's "Vietnam Experience" video. Moved a lot of people. The combination of music and images can be very powerful. A person from the Michigan Peace Team covered Iraq. We then discussed the similarities of Iraq and Vietnam, and the effects on the troops, their families, and the country.

## **FARMINGTON, NEW MEXICO**

**JOSEPH KNIGHT**

### **VVAW**

About 25 peaceniks showed up for a two-hour rally in Farmington. There were only two VVAW members in attendance, but that was enough to hold our banner. It was a sunny spring day in the 70s, nice beat on a tomtom, good vibes—and we only got flipped off a few times.

# FALL 2005: VVAW Joins with VFP Members for Katrina Relief Work

BY WARD REILLY

When I left the Crawford, Texas demonstration, I didn't think I would see many of the people that were there again until September 24 in Washington, but I was wrong.

Bill Perry of VVAW was one of a handful of vets that escorted Cindy Sheehan to Crawford, on the "White Rose," the Impeachment Tour bus of Veterans for Peace (VFP) #116, a California chapter. The "White Rose" was scheduled to tour the south on the way to the demonstration in Washington, DC on September 24, but Hurricane Katrina changed their plans.

I live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and while we were hit fairly hard by Katrina, we got off easy compared to the areas of my state more to the south. At the same time that the Camp Casey demonstration was coming to an end in Crawford, Katrina hit and completely destroyed New Orleans with floodwaters when the levees failed in several places.

Imagine a city of about one million people losing every job and every business overnight, and only then can you begin to picture what has happened down here. I was lucky to be without power for only five days, and I was soon back online; only one tree came down in my backyard, missing my house by several feet. But New Orleans was wiped out completely.

Camp Casey had been well-supplied, and the VFP team decided to head to south Louisiana to help, bringing all the leftover supplies from the Crawford action with them. The "White Rose" had a satellite dish, and the VFP team headed for Covington, Louisiana, directly across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans, and established the first communications in the area.

Over the course of the next two weeks, in a relief effort that is still happening, VFP #116 teamed up with myself and hundreds of volunteers from all over the country in an unbelievable grassroots relief effort, completely bypassing the inept government and the \$50 billion wasted on Homeland Security that did nothing.

Because 40% of Louisiana's National Guard troops and 75% of their equipment were in Iraq, there was no first response made by our National Guard, and our citizens were literally left to die, stranded on off-ramps and

rooftops as the Bush administration did *nothing* during the critical first four or five days.

To date, we have had 250 volunteers show up, distributing the more than 3,000 packages that have been mailed to me in Baton Rouge from every state in the union, getting food, clothing and untold quantities of dry goods directly to victims all over southeast Louisiana and southwest Mississippi. Tractor-trailers filled with goods from Chicago, California, New York, and elsewhere also brought enormous quantities of relief goods.

VFP members Gordon Soderberg, Pat Tate, and Dennis Kyne (and a few others that I regretfully can't remember) have done an astonishing job of organizing a pipeline of communications and supplies. They have been treated with hostility and suspicion from FEMA and even the Red Cross, who sit around and do almost nothing, while our team of veterans and helpers do a remarkable job in getting real aid to real people in need.

Michael Moore even got involved and helped us raise much-needed money, money that red tape has denied us access to. Everything has been done "out of pocket," which is nothing new to this bunch of heroes.

Cindy Sheehan also altered her tour to lend support on September 14, and her presence alone was a real morale helper, as it had been in the upper 90s every day since Katrina struck, and the work was hard. Woody Powell, the former executive director of VFP, also came down and pitched in for five days.

When this effort is all said and done, a proper thank-you will be forthcoming, but I just wanted to let you know that VVAW and VFP have gone above and beyond to help our wounded state, and we owe the volunteers much gratitude.

It will be months, if not years, before New Orleans recovers, but we will be back! Make Mardi Gras, not war!

*Ward Reilly is the Southeast national contact for VVAW. He was a volunteer infantryman serving in the famed 1st @ 16th (Rangers) of the First Infantry Division from 1971-1974, spending a thousand straight days in Germany with the Big Red One. He joined VVAW originally in 1972, and re-upped in 2001.*

**VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC., P.O. BOX 408594, CHICAGO, IL 60640  
773-276-4189 • WWW.VVAW.ORG**