



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION

NEWSLETTER

827 West Newport, Chicago, Illinois, 60657; (312) 935-2129

No.10

JULY 16

General Information



SITE OF NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING CHANGED

The site of the National Steering Committee Meeting has been changed from Gainesville, Florida to St. Louis, Missouri. Details on the place for the meeting will be sent to you as soon as possible. All regions submitting proposals for dissemination should send those proposals to St. Louis VVAW/WSO, 1023 Allen Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63104.

The reason for the change is a result of the change in the beginning date for the trial of the Gainesville 8. Now that the trial will begin on July 31st, with the support demonstration ending on August 4th, the separation of time between the two would be minimal and would require many people to travel back and forth to Gainesville twice in one month. When the date change of the trial was announced and the National Collective discussed the change of date for the demonstration, one of the topics was the change in the SCM. We then polled the regions, with 2/3 of the regions voting to change the site and the date. More information on this change will be sent soon.

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NEW SITE: ST. LOUIS, MO

NEW DATE: AUGUST 23 to 27

Voting Yes

New Mexico-Arizona
California-Nevada
Colo-Utah -Wyoming
Connecticut-R.I.
Maryland-Washington
Idaho-Montana
N. Ill-Iowa
S. Ill-E. MO. -Ark-Okla
Ohio-Ind-Kentucky
Kansas-W. Mo-Neb-ND-SD

Louisiana
Michigan
Wisconsin-Minnesota
New York-N. NJ
Oregon
W. Md-W. Va-E. Pa.

Abstentions

Georgia

Voting No

Alabama-Miss-Tenn
Delaware-W. Pa.
New England

Not Yet Voting

Washington-Alaska
North And South Carolina
Texas
Florida

COME TO GAINESVILLE



SCENARIO

TUESDAY - check-in

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY - Leafletting, Petitioning, Vigils
Visits to VA Hospitals, Support
For Farm Workers Picket Line
Other actions to be announced

FRIDAY - People's Fair - Exhibits of Various VVAW/WSO Programs
Chapters are Encouraged to Set Up Exhibits
of Their Chapter Activities.

SATURDAY - 10:30 - March
12:30 - Rally - Plaza of the Americas -
Speakers: Tom Hayden, Virginia Collins
Anthony Russo, VVAW/WSO Member
Entertainment: Pete Seeger



Directions to Gainesville - (Once in Gainesville call -(904) 372-3175

East Coast - I-95 South to I-10 West to US 301 South to State 24 to Gainesville

Mid West - I-75 South to Gainesville

West Coast - I-10 East to I-75 South to Gainesville

Food - If people want to eat, the best and surest bet is to bring your own. Arrangements for food are in the planning stages and the prospects of some free meals are slim. SO BRING YOUR OWN !!

Medical - A medical team is being put together consisting of competent nurses and military medics. If you know of a medic that knows his/her first aid, call (904) 372-3175, and they can make arrangements to join the team. Quacks need not apply.

Security - A security team and network is being put together in Gainesville. It is important to note that each region should be responsible for providing their own security team for use in the campsite. The team being put together in Gainesville will concern itself mainly with over-all campsite security. This team will not be a police force. If all regional security teams are competent, security will be totally unnoticeable.

Dope - There will be no dope at the campsite.

Information Center - The Press Bureau will act as the information point for the action. The address is: Adams, 307 SE 2nd St., Gainesville, FL 32601. Telephone: (904) 372-3175. If you have any further information needs contact this office.

General Information - This action is being organized by a team of people that are totally separated from the Gainesville Defense Committee. There are representatives from Alabama, California, Kansas, Illinois and Wisconsin. Brian Adams and Bart Savage of the National Collective are there also. It is stressed that this demonstration is in support of the Gainesville 8. There has been a perimeter set around the Court-house in which we are not to cross. Everyone realizes the importance of being prudent and therefore it shouldn't be necessary to say that we are going to Gainesville for a serious action. We are going to defend VVAW/WSO and we will act accordingly. The scenario is being built around showing to the people of the country that VVAW/WSO is not an organization that plans to violently disrupt anything.

Regions or chapters that are working on specific programs and would like to set up a booth at the People's Fair (i. e. GI programs, Discharge upgrading,) should contact the Information center to make arrangements for a display site. Everyone should be reminded that Gainesville is in a hot, humid climate with insects. So bring your bug spray and stay cool.



Statement of Alfonso Ray Riate

(Sgt. Riate is one of the POWs recently charged by Col. Guy. Upon the suicide/murder of Larry Kavanaugh, the Pentagon ordered that Guy's charges be dropped. This statement was read at Riate's homecoming celebration on July 12, 1973).

Let me say first that I appreciate the support demonstrated by all of you here tonight and by many others in the Santa Rosa community, the State of California and the entire country. I am sorry that I am unable to be here personally tonight but I am happy for the opportunity to say a few words through my mother.

As you know, the Navy finally dropped the charges in my case. I do not know why the Navy decided to drop charges but I believe the decision, like other decisions of this terrible war, was simply a political one. The Navy wanted to see what kind of reaction there would be from the country. The Navy waited, I suppose, to see whether the people of this country would tolerate criminal prosecutions for us after our long time in the prisons of North Vietnam. I believe that the Secretary of the Navy finally read the political wind and dropped the charges. That action, of course, came too late for my close friend, Army Sgt. Abel Kavanaugh, who committed suicide under the pressure of the charges and his fear that after all this, he would again be separated from his wife and a child he had only just begun to know.

I think it is important for me to say something about the charges that POWs were tortured. I was not tortured while I was in North Vietnamese prison camps, even after two escape attempts shortly after my capture. I do not know of others who had been tortured, and I know that the policy of the North Vietnamese was not to inflict torture on prisoners. They themselves had suffered enough. After seeing the death and devastation brought by American pilots particularly, I am appalled at the double standard foisted on the American people.

It is OK for pilots to leave napalm jelly on the faces of children in the name of democracy. But when a mother who has seen her family destroyed by American bombs throws dirt at a pilot who is being moved we are told that that is torture. If you want real stories of torture, look to South Vietnamese prisons.

Why was I a POW? And why did I speak out against the war? I volunteered to serve my country as a Marine and I fought on the ground -- where I could see the Vietnamese people. After a short time I became sickened at what the American government was doing to Vietnam. I saw the hate in people's eyes -- the people I was told we were defending -- when I walked into villages. I was captured while on a patrol trying to recover the bodies of Marines who had died earlier. And I spent almost six years as a prisoner of war.

By the time I was captured I believed the war was a terrible and horrible wrong. And I, like many other POWs made statements to the American people, telling them that I had seen what was going on and that it was wrong. I was only one of many voices in the United States, in Vietnam and throughout the world who protested our involvement in Vietnam. But I am proud of any part I may have had in convincing the American people that the war must be ended.

I am sad, however, that it took so long to end and that we, the American people, continue in the false name of liberty the bombing and destruction of Asian people. Now it is the Cambodians who come under the fire of United States weapons.

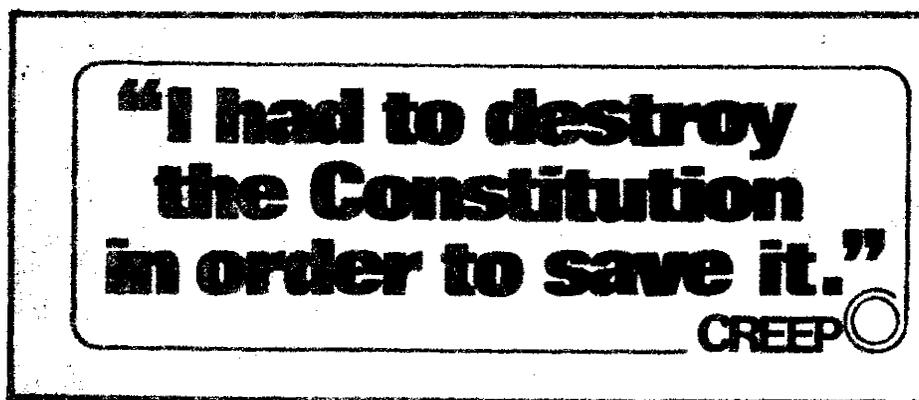
Colonel Guy never saw the destruction he and his fellow pilots wreaked on the people below. And pilots flying every night over Cambodia never see the destruction they cause. But I have seen that destruction.

I believe that all of us must work -- to the extent that we can -- to change the administration's view that we can and must conquer the world. I am grateful to you for coming to this rally, but I ask all of you to work for a far more lasting tribute to all of the POWs. I ask all of you to work to see that the bombing of Cambodia stops and that the United States stay forever out of the internal struggles of Asian countries. That, I think, is the greatest tribute that can be paid to me or to any returned Prisoners of War.

Regional Reports

From Alabama - The regional office has moved. The new address is: VVAW/WSO Regional Office, 1317 14 Avenue, Tuscaloosa, Ala. 35401. Phone: (205) 345-9919. CBS television did a story on the clinic at Bogue Chitto and Operation County Fair. The clinic isn't sure of when the show will be aired, but keep looking in the TV guide of your newspaper. Several people from California en route to the Gainesville demonstration brought a van filled with medical supplies. For more information on Operation County Fair, contact the Regional Office, phone listed above.

From Philadelphia - The chapter is selling bumper stickers like the one below. These actual size stickers sell for a dime each. Larger stickers cost 25¢. If you would like to order these write to VVAW/WSO, 2440 Kensington Ave, Phila, PA 19125.



From Green Bay, Wisconsin - The chapter has begun a women's group. The following are excerpts from a letter received by this office.

A few weeks ago a small group of woman got together to discuss the possibilities of getting more of the Green Bay women involved in VVAW/WSO. The women and a few men sat around and got to know each other better. Everyone agreed that women are needed in VVAW/WSO. We plan to have more meetings to deal with how women can work within VVAW/WSO; PVS and how it also affects our daily lives through our brothers; Sexism; and women's special health problems. For more information write: VVAW/WSO Green Bay, 1108 Cherry St, Green Bay, WI 54301

From California - The California region held their regional meeting and the following chapters report on their work.

East Bay - working on an anti-TASC program (federal methadone), involved with Chino Defense (see June Winter Soldier), working on Discharge upgrading, with PVS Twice Born Men.

San Francisco - working on Discharge Upgrading program, women's group 'Ourselves' active, making amnesty bracelets. The chapter is picking up new membership.

South Bay - making Watergate buttons, working on Operation County Fair and amnesty, has PE classes and women's group.

Orange County - working on Operation County Fair, PVS, puts out newspaper with other group, working on amnesty, training military counselors.

Redwood City - Working on re-organization of chapter, distributing Winter Soldier newspaper and working through the media.

Regional - Republished newspaper, Favorite Sons, working on getting a charter through Sen. Cranston, putting together a state-wide coalition concerned with amnesty. For more information on any of the chapters or for copies of Favorite Sons, write VVAW/WSO, 3503 W. Pico Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90019

From New York City - The chapter has moved their office to VVAW/WSO, 135 W. 4th Street, NYC, NY 10014. New phone (212) 473-9397. The chapter is working on amnesty.

National Reports

A Letter from Starke Prison, Florida -

In the last newsletter we told of the upcoming trial of 14 black brothers at the Florida State Prison in Starke, FL. Since that time we have learned that the trial was postponed until the first week of October. The brother asked that we write letters to the Miami Herald, the St. Petersburg Times and to Senator Lawton Chiles demanding an investigation of the incident that led up to the trial of the fourteen and also about the conditions in the prison. The following letter was received by us from one of the fourteen brothers. If you have not written yet, please do so.

Greetings,

Be unto you, Friends of the Struggling People.

A fellow oppressed, but struggling brother, gave me your address and informed me to write you concerning the oppression we, the Black Inmates are under here at the Florida State Prison.

Black inmates are the victims of the barbaric inhuman treatment of their white keepers, while confined to the Penal Institutions of the State of Florida. Where Blacks are the overall majority of the inmate population, but the minority in prison personnel and none in the Division of Corrections' Administration Department.

Black inmates are subjected to the tyrannical rule of the prison administration plus the constant harrassment of the prison guards and is defenseless against the prejudice shown toward them in Job Assignment, Disciplinary Actions and Religious and Political Beliefs.

Myself and thirteen other black inmates (which the prison administration prefer to call a group of Black Militants and Revolutionaries), are now confined to the maximum security section of the Florida State Prison under various criminal charges, such as; assault, arson and riot, as participants in a disturbance that occured in the institutions' Garment Factory, April 30th, 1973. Where 90 or more of the inmates working at the time of the incident, 41 inmates were placed on administrative segregation (maximum security). All inmates placed on segregation were black. Fourteen inmates were singled out from among the 41, and as I stated, various charges were filed against them.

We, the fourteen black inmates are subjected to the injustice of being tried in Bradford County, whose total economy resources are interwoven with the prison system. Being that this legal lynching is being spearheaded by the "racist prison system" there is no possible way for justice to be done in our behalf.

In conclusion, on behalf of the struggling brother, let it be sufficient to say that it is never entirely possible to eliminate the possibility of error in life's struggle. The chances and risks to be taken are no greater in proportion than those taken when we continue to live (exist) under the devastating disadvantages of tyranny and fascism. Liberation acts are always waged upon precarious grounds...the life of the man is uncertain. He travels a road of scalding grief...he is found in the heat of battle...where the water is deepest and the load is heaviest. We, the fourteen, have only one life and mean to live it as men.

Respectfully yours,

Letter To VVAW/WSO from the Vietnamese

(The following letter was received by Barry Romo from Tran Trong Quat of the Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People, in Hanoi. Barry met Quat while he was in Hanoi last December. We include this letter here so that you may understand more, the regard that the Vietnamese people have for VVAW/WSO.)

Dear Barry,

June 26, 1973

Thank you very much for the Winter Soldier, beautiful photos and other materials you sent. It is hard to believe that 6 months have passed since you left. All of us here keep deep in our hearts your time with us.

Since then, several American delegations came here. Of course, none of them have the terrible experience of being under the B-52s bombing as you did. We think that your experiences in South and North Vietnam make you understand deeper how is the price of peace and why the Vietnamese people cherish it and why they are resolute to struggle for the correct implementation

Here, we have been following your activities in the VVAW. The fact that Nixon wants to make the American pilots heroes of the war while hundreds of thousands of Viet Vets who had really shed their blood for Nixon's Vietnam policy are mistreated and jobless show how hypocritical is Nixon.

But his "pilots" scheme will continue because Nixon still wants to justify why he continues the war for four years during his presidential term and to have further warlike schemes in Indochina.

That's why we highly appreciate your fight not only for the Viet Vets rights but also to prevent another war by the correct implementation of the Peace agreement while there is tendency to forget the Vietnam tragedy and US responsibility.

We wish you courage and success in your fight which is surely still very hard. Send our best greetings to Al Hubbard, Joe Urgo and other friends in the VVAW. If you ever meet Joan Baez, Telford Taylor and Michael Allen, please, send them our regards too.

With love and friendship,

Tran Trong Quat

Information Requests

Winter Soldier Subscriptions

In the last newsletter we asked that each chapter begin a subscription drive for the Winter Soldier paper. We ask again this newsletter, because we feel that if each chapter could get 5 to 10 subscriptions, particularly from libraries and institutions, then we will have no problem continuing to publish the paper. As it stands now, we need the money. So if you can please, get some subscriptions, we would all benefit by it.

Pictures of VVAW/WSO Actions

In the last issue of the newsletter we asked for pictures of demonstrations. The response was fairly good. We mention it again and ask specifically this time for pictures of any support demonstrations for the upcoming Gainesville trial. If your chapter is having a demonstration please take pictures and send them to us as we would like pictures for the next issue of Winter Soldier.