



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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June 2015

Dear Friend,

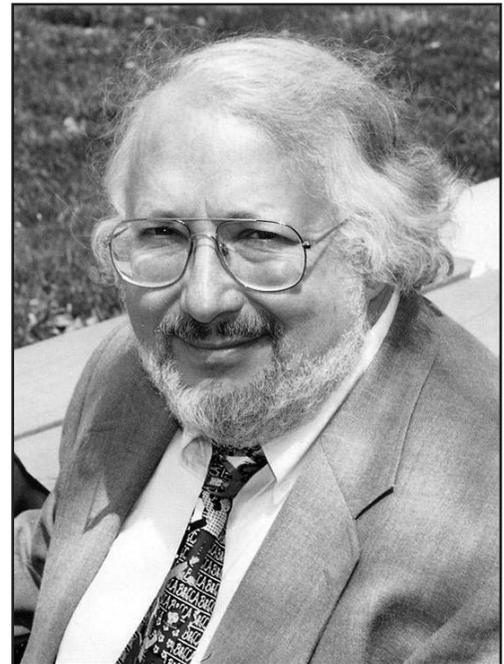
Thank you for your continued support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Without you, we could not continue the important work that we began in 1967. Over the last forty-eight years we have carried out the struggle for veterans, peace and justice. My name is Bill Branson and I am a VVAW Board member.

As the US "commemorates" the fiftieth anniversary of start of the Vietnam War with official projects like the Department of Defense's Vietnam War Commemoration, there has been significant re-writing of history to sanitize the legacy of the war for this anniversary. But the real legacy is the death toll, on both sides, both during and after the Vietnam War.

During the war, at least 58,220 US soldiers were killed. The Vietnamese estimate that 3.4 million soldiers and civilians were killed in the north and south. Countless more have died since then, from exposure to Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals to the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

These numbers are staggering. And when one of our own passes away, it truly resonates deep inside. At the end of April, Dave Curry died. Dave was a member of VVAW since 1972 and was a national VVAW leader for many years. He was a professor emeritus in criminology and criminal justice at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. After returning from Vietnam, Dave earned his PhD at the University of Chicago and took a position at the University of South Alabama in Mobile.

While he was in Mobile, he counseled vets at a local outreach center. During that time, he was setup, charged, and sentenced to 34 years for possession of a very small amount of drugs. Through a lengthy appeal process, his sentence was reduced to five years and probation. He was later pardoned by President Clinton. Dave Curry will be remembered for his professional work on gang violence and for his commitment to fighting for the rights of all veterans. His family has asked for memorial contributions to be made to VVAW. You can visit his guestbook online at vvaw.org. Also look for more articles and remembrances in the fall issues of *The Veteran*, VVAW's free semi-annual newspaper.



As VVAW nears 50 years of organizing for peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans, we can look back at our dedication and work to see that we have always organized based on power, not weakness, to create positive systemic change. We were never limited by our injuries, whether physical or mental. Our experiences as soldiers and as veterans gave us strength and in turn provided us the power to organize. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW

exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Vietnam and our experiences helped many others to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW started the first rap groups to deal with traumatic after-effects of war. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

VVAW still plays a critical role in the Veterans struggle. We must keep fighting for the rights of all veterans to have access to health care, regardless of discharge status or geographic location. Over a year after the VA scandal broke, there is still so much that needs to be improved on. And while system reform takes time, more must be done. The VA is the largest health care system in the United States and the demand has been growing. Vietnam-era veterans are now beginning to seek out care from the VA for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), conditions related to Agent Orange exposure and much more. We have to keep organizing for VA care to become more accessible and to provide more comprehensive, long-term care, across the country, for veterans of all wars. Our country has to raise the standards for our health care and the consequences for when the system fails to provide that. The insidious right-wing efforts to "privatize" the VA must be diverted to strengthen the VA. Whistleblowers must be protected. Employees must have a voice in administrator's reviews. We vets must have a seat at the table.

We hope you will stay with us in our struggle for peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans. Check out the Memorial Day issue of *The Veteran* at vvaw.org. Share your issue with others. Join us online on our Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/vvawinc. Speak to high school classes about your experiences. Share your VA experiences and ideas for improvement and reform. We need your participation to help reform and rebuild the Veterans Health Administration, from the bottom up.

We understand the demands on everyone's limited resources. We are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level. Your donation enables us to carry on VVAW's legacy through issues of our free semi-annual newspaper and sustain our continued efforts to achieve decent benefits for all veterans. We thank all of you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Bill Branson

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at www.vvaw.org.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

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