VIET' VETS SITUATION MISSTATED IN MEDIA

Vietnam veterans sure hit the headlines during the National Salute, but riding the tide of "vet awareness" was some propaganda some vets may have missed. And it's just possible that if this propaganda barrage is successful, we may well find the Vietnam veteran and our experience being used to push the next generation into following in our footsteps.

The image of the Vietnam vet has been pretty poor for a number of years. In part this came from the government because vets didn't rush home from combat in Vietnam to lead cheers for the war; instead we told the American people what was happening over there. So vets ended up being pictured as druggies, half-crazed (or more than half), malcontents, hippies, to say nothing of baby killers in the hope that whatever we said (that the government didn't want said) would be ignored.

Through the '70s the government tried to sweep Vietnam vets under whatever rug was convenient. Always there was the hope that perhaps if the vets disappeared, so would the war, and if people didn't remember the war, it might be easier to get involved in the next one.

The plans didn't work. Vietnam vets continued to be visible reminders of the war we had fought. The problems of vets, whether post-traumatic stress or unemployment or poisoning by Agent Orange, these didn't disappear either, and the demands of vets against the VA (which was supposed to take care of our problems) drew an increasing amount of sympathy from the American people.

A new game plan was needed, and the Reagan Administration came up with one. While Reagan & Co could hardly decide on a VA chief, they could come up with the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (you may have one in your city—it's off the ground in some places, just starting in others). The program is designed to "change the image of the Vietnam veteran." Vets who have "made it"—the Vietnam vet millionaires, the lawyers, the people who own their own companies—are banding together to give "opportunities" to the individual vet. Their common goal: To honor the validity of service to country.

And that's the bottom line; change the "image" of the Vietnam vet and you can find the vets who will support a massive defense build-up and another war. No Vietnam vet will object if this program, funded through ACTION with our tax dollars, actually finds a couple of Vietnam vet jobs; so far, as best we know, the program has only made a little media noise and started to hire program directors. Next comes the intention of taking on the "negative myths" about Vietnam veterans.

Point man for the bunch of Reagan symps seems to be one James Webb, author of Fields of Fire, Annapolis graduate and self-appointed spokesman for reactionary vets. Years ago Webb made a total ass of himself trying to build Vets for Nixon, and has been rewarded with various little government jobs. His name popped up in some of the considerations for a VA Director but his total lack of qualifications made that move impossible, even for the Reagan Administration. But should the government need a "good Vietnam vet," Webb seems eternal-

Webb's contribution to the National Salute was an article which appeared in Parade Magazine—you know, the one that gets inserted in your Sunday paper. Parade is hardly big on think pieces; it does, however, reach 25-30 million people, and Webb knows how to try to reach that audience.

Maybe you read the article; a lot of people did. It's the story of a couple of people Webb served with in Vietnam; they were wounded, came back to the U.S. and, after a period of problems, made good, more or less. But the real thrust of the article is to turn the story of Vietnam vets upside down, to show that, except for a few mal-

Turn to page II
VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) was formed in 1967 to initiate the march of those who wanted to end the war in Vietnam and end involvement in Indochina. Its basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we believe in the inviolate right to dissent against unjust war, whether by the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, by the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. We support the right of all men to be the arbiters of their own destinies, and we have the responsibility to protect those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have persistently demonstrated our belief in the power of ideas in fighting for the things we need, have been proscribed, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give us what we need only when forced to do so—that we get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when we, as a group, combine our numbers and our voices, we can make ourselves heard. VVAW has been at the forefront of efforts to bring an end to the war and has been a leader in the movement for peace.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625

NATIONAL COORDINATORS
Bill Davis (312) 386-1413
Barry Romo (312) 327-5756
Peter Zastrow (215) 725-0043
John Lindquist (414) 963-0398

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Membership Form
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VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are veterans of the Vietnam war, we want all veterans of all ages as well as interested non-vets—to join us, help build the vets' struggle. Membership requirements are participation in the life of the organization, and payment of $1 per month to the national organization with a $5 initiation fee.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect a local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordination is planned. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

BY-LAW OF VVAW
1. The name of the organization shall be Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
2. Membership in the organization is open to all veterans (regardless of discharge) and to non-veterans interested in joining together to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other wars and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the $5 initiation fee, and monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national guidelines, may be added by local chapters.
4. Local VVAW chapters will decide on their own chapter structure, by-laws and dues. Chapters will, to the best of their ability, work on the national programs of VVAW plus whatever local campaigns they decide on which are not in opposition to national programs.
5. National meetings of the organization, open to all members, will be held at least once yearly. A National Steering Committee is made up of the national officers, the regional officers, & an elected representative from each chapter shall meet as necessary. Such meetings may consist of phone calls to the chapter representatives if necessary.
6. National officers are elected at national meetings for a period of a year. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, for speaking on behalf of the national organization, and for the publication and content of THE VETERAN and "The Guidon."
7. Regional coordinators, as needed, will be elected at national meetings to serve 1 year terms; regional coordinators will facilitate and coordinate regional activities, and the building of local chapters, and provide input from chapters into the national office.
8. Policies, programs and positions of VVAW nationally will, as much as possible, be decided at national meetings. If that is not possible, such decisions will be made by the National Steering Committee or, in emergencies, by the National Office.

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Mike O'Connor
3308 May St
Wheaton, MD 20906
(301) 933-7757

South
Ellen Monroe
185 W. Washington
Athens, GA 30601
(404) 353-1218

Midwest
Dennis Groll
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Madison, WI 53703
(608) 227-1110

West
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AGENT ORANGE

The four-day National Salute, although attended by only a small portion of the 2.7 million Vietnam vets, brought together a surprising number of veterans of our former comrades. Several hundred vets took the forms necessary to join the Agent Orange class-action lawsuit from a VFW booth manned by members of the VFW chapters. Other hundreds stopped by the booth to pick up Agent Orange information and say hello.

On November 30 the Washington DC VFW Chapter held a informational picket in front of the VA before the beginning of the quarterly meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Health-Related Effects of Herbicides (ACHREH). The newspapers have begun making more and more articles about Agent Orange and its toxic component, dioxin--including news of state side dioxin contamination. But we are not satisfied that our work is now done. And we

sure as hell aren't satisfied with a belated parade in our greens, beer glasses raised in toasts by war survivors or the dedication of a memorial to the dead. 1983 must be the year of the veterans' Agent Orange offensive.

The battle goes forward on many fronts. This year, in June, the federal class-action lawsuit against the chemical manufacturers of Agent Orange begins trial in New York, and the epidemiological study ordered by Congress (Public Law 95-151) over three years ago should (finally!) begin. Some 16 states have now established Agent Orange disease commissions, legal efforts have begun in a number of state courts and increasing numbers of veterans' organizations and members of Congress are calling for recognition of and compensation for at least some of the symptoms of Agent Orange poisoning.

Despite some action, however, the battle is far from won. The lawsuits, even if vets initially win, will drag on for years. The Agent Orange epidemiological study, although now to be done by the Center for Disease Control (specialists in this type of investigation) will be delayed while the protocol is redesigned.

Some state Agent Orange Commissions have better funding, more substantial support services for vets or more ambitious projects than others. Texas and Minnesota, for example, will be conducting their own smaller epidemiological studies. Current statutes of limitations will hinder veterans' legal efforts in both state and federal courts and the increasingly sup

Turn to page 19

VA Won't Test for Asian Diseases!
SCHISTOSOMIASIS AND MELIOIDIOSIS

Once again the Veterans Administration is playing dirty little tricks on the Vietnam veteran. As if chemical poisoning wasn't enough, we now have to worry about little-known Asian diseases which rot our bodies but do not produce symptoms until years after exposure. In fact, the VA will not recognize these diseases today except that World War II vets who served in the Philippines, India, China and Burma recently started dying from the effects of melioidosis and schistosomiasis.

For those of you not yet familiar with these diseases, here is a brief description. Schistosomiasis: a liver fluke transmitted from diseased snails through stagnant water (rice paddies) into your body via anus, abrasions, cuts or wounds. The tiny fluke finally settles in your liver after travelling through your blood system and breeds like mink. After about ten years or more you start to get pains, mostly in your legs and arms. But by then the damage is done. Bye-bye liver! A good description of schistosomiasis and its treatment and eradicaton by the Chinese government is in the book 'Away With All Pests' (you see, schistosomiasis can be treated).

Melioidosis you also catch by wading through rice paddies. This is a fungus caused by decaying human feces. It also gets into your bloodstream and sometimes causes malaria-like symptoms. A test for melioidosis was recently developed by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta but because of the cost the VA isn't testing Vietnam veterans, just WWII vets.

Since early this year the VFW has taken an active interest in these diseases and the national staff has tried several times to get a response from the VA on proposed screening and treatment. All the VFW has gotten so far are some pretty surly answers. If the VA won't make an honest reply to a national organization with political clout, what kind of answer do you think they'll give a solitary veteran?

Why won't the VA screen and test for these diseases? Recently, VFW managed to get a copy of the VA Chief Medical Director's letter dated March 8, 1982, Subject: Melioidosis. This docum
Twice The Struggle

VETS BEHIND WALLS

Prison Organization for Veterans' Affairs (POVA) is a body of dedicated civilians and incarcerated veterans working towards eradicating problems which vets face; it's located at the DC Correctional Complex at Lorton, Virginia. It was established by and for incarcerated vets in June, 1974, under the name Incarcerated Veterans Assistance Organization (IVA). At that time the primary objectives were to assist incarcerated vets to get discharge-upgrading, educational benefits, apprenticeship training, legal assistance and housing and employment upon release. In 1975 the prison chapter changed its name to POVA and was incorporated on December 30, 1975.

Since the inception of POVA, they have been successful in developing links with the VA and the University of the District of Columbia. POVA was instrumental in initiating the apprenticeship training program which was recently applied to the establishment of the Culinary Arts (cooking) School. The American Veteran Committee has researched and prepared 23 cases for veterans with less-than-honorable discharges; thus far 14 vets have received upgrades, several hundred have been assisted by getting advice, researching information and filling various motions for relief. The Housing and Employment Committee has filed hundreds of emergency applications trying to get some form of job for residents once released. As part of the 1982 program POVA is establishing an "Incarcerated Veterans Family Assistance Project," and seeking funding and/ or contributions, and filing claims for Agent Orange victims.

The popularity of POVA has spread throughout the prison communities across the country. Mail from other incarcerated vets asking for information attests to the good work that POVA has done. Nevertheless, the success and operation of POVA depends largely on the resources provided by the institution such as free mailing, office equipment and supplies, stationery, typing paper, envelopes, etc.

Because of the criminal cutbacks in the human services section of federal and city governments in the infamous trickle-down theory, inmate programs are all but shut-down. For sure, POVA has had more than its share. Due to the slow renovation of the building that housed POVA offices, it has been very difficult to carry on business as usual. Needed services are not available at a time when help is truly needed.

Reaganomics, which serves to speed up the extermination of poor and working people in this country and around the world, has made it virtually impossible to maintain any semblance of organization: and that's especially true if the organization is designed to deal with problems brought on by this system which is built on profit and pays only lip-service to the needs of the people. Reaganomics has taken another step against persons incarcerated justifying cutbacks in services to those incarcerated at the same time that mandatory and harsher sentencing is being promoted in the name of "justice."

We've bled for this country!

While on the subject of prisons, there are reasons why Americans by the millions hate such a system--an institution to try to deal with some of the symptoms of our economic system. As a deterrent or a rehabilitation or as a crime-control measure, prisons have failed. For all imprisoned offenders, it is counterproductive, a "school of crime" that has proven to be like a prisoner's sense of self-worth and their ability to function responsibly in the community. In fact many of the "Communities" to which a prisoner returns share the problems of the prison: lack of safety, sub-standard housing, poor-to-no educational opportunities, brutal police control, poor-to-no health facilities, and little-to-no voice in changing things for the better. In spite of the fact that some new prisons are cosmetically more attractive, the social and psychological realities of prison life haven't changed and are, in fact, getting worse with more overcrowding, more corruption, etc. Newest prisons feature various forms of technological gadgetry which eliminate any sense of personal privacy and greatly reduce human contact, all because it cuts down on personnel costs and eliminates human error.

But prisons, at present, let us off the hook by providing the illusion that we are doing all we can afford--or at least something about crime. We lead all nations in our rate of imprisonment with the exception only of the Soviet Union and South Africa. The rate continues to climb, though there has been no reduction in the rate of crime. Check this: at the cost of $50,000 or more for each new cell built, not to mention the maintenance costs that at times are in excess of $25,000 per year per prisoner, it is clear that it is cheaper to pay people not to commit crime--just like a farmer is paid not to grow food. Just suppose that instead of paying maintenance costs of $25,000 per year per prisoner, we gave them a job paying that much instead--but no, that seems like an only too reasonable suggestion that might be a start!

I think we should stop building prisons, jails and juvenile detention facilities until we have a thorough review of that entire justice process in order to determine how all of its components work, and how the system either serves or fails to serve the cause of justice--for instance, why is it that this system of "justice" incarcerates Blacks at eight times the rate it does whites? The reason for this must be heard and understood. Also, we should implement fully all reasonable alternatives to incarceration, mainly because incarceration is so unproductive. And, quiet as it is kept, production is one of the factors in our economic recovery. It is now known that incarceration is used in this country as a tool of oppression, in the same way that war is used.

Whatever the reasons for POVA's existence, someone must accept the responsibility for assisting those who have and are paying their so-called debt to society. Almost every family of the working class has someone in prison. So I'll close with an appeal: we have bled for this country: on the battlefield you are forced to give your all. Now we are back home and it looks like we are getting nothing but a hard way to go: this must stop--Now.

--Rick Clemmons (a long-time member of VVAW, presently of the Washington DC Chapter, who spent time in prison before organizing the prison support group.)

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No Draft, No War
PROSECUTIONS FALTER

Many members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War have said that, when the hostiles swarm over the beaches of California, or attempt to seize New York City, we, as veterans will rejoin the military and do what we can to repulse the enemy. We will not have to be drafted—we'll do our patriotic duty and defend our homes and families with all the strength at our command.

At the heart of the issue of registration and the draft, this is why VVAW is so opposed to both: we know that if the government or the situation is such that we can see the need, we'll respond and so will others. If there is a just war that must be fought, even though we have no interest in fighting any kind of war at all, we will do it.

The government has not been doing so well with its registration for the draft in the last couple of months. After some initial "victories" (that's a hard word to describe jailing a young man who resists registration) the government has been having some problems. Most recently, a federal judge in Boston refused to jail resister Ed Hashbrouck: instead, Judge David S. Nelson sentenced the registration resister to a two-year probation and 1000 hours of community service (which will hopefully be used to further the cause of resisting registration). According to the Judge, "I cannot agree that this offense and the circumstances of this offense merit incarceration, unless I care to make a political statement."

Perhaps a more damaging case for the government's attempts at registration was decided in Los Angeles when David Wayne, a prominent local resister, had charges dismissed and the draft law declared invalid by Judge Terry Hatter Jr. Charges against the four resisters already convicted could be overturned if Judge Hatter's decision is upheld on appeal.

Among the features of the registration law that the Judge found objectionable was the obvious fact that Wayne, as an obvious and visible resister of registration, was picked out for selective prosecution.

Further, the Reagan Administration failed to turn over government documents which would show how decisions on who to prosecute were arrived at. Further, White House counsellor Edwin Meese was not a part of the trial as the government used executive privilege to keep Meese away from the trial and away from testifying how the Reagan Administration was deciding which of the nearly 1 million registration resisters should be prosecuted.

As of mid-January 1983, 6 registration resisters have come to trial; four have been convicted. But with the last two attempts being utter failures, the overall attempt of the government to scare others into registering has not been very successful. Even the government admits to 585,000 non-registrants, and most anti-registration observers believe the figure is much higher than that. The government's failure to bring in convictions against Wayne and Hashbrouck will not make these non-registrants flock to their local registration points.

The Reagan Administration campaign to try to frighten American youth into registering ran into a number of obstacles. And first among them is Vietnam and the experience that Vietnam vets brought home with them.

While it's not easy to imagine, had vets come home from Vietnam and been given great public welcomes, thousands of dollars, tax breaks, guaranteed jobs—had been able to live in the lap of luxury, perhaps some of us would have changed our idea of Vietnam. But now we saw how badly screwed up the war was and, to make it worse, we saw and experienced how badly vets were treated once we got home. The slogan about "used once and then thrown away" was and is something more than a slogan—it was and is the truth.

Many Vietnam veterans have willingly taken a strong stand against the draft and against registration (the "pre-draft") since many of us have already experienced what the draft can mean. But more important than the stand of veterans is the plan-in-the-works, "on-the-couch," position taken by draft-age men and women. All of those prosecuted by the government at this point are those who have taken some of the strongest and loudest stands in opposition to registration. While vets (and VVAW) have done what we can to make suggestions and support the stand, and offered to do whatever else might be useful, we have learned from our own struggles that those immediately involved must finally lead their own fight.

There are plenty of reasons for opposition to registration over and above the fact that Reagan—who never bothered to get drafted at all—was all out against registration (until he was elected, of course). Anyone who says that registration does not lead directly to the draft is missing a cog: simply there is no other reason for registration. There's a considerable doubt that even having all 18-year-olds registered would increase the speed of national readiness one iota.

And even if registration would make it a week or two faster to get troops into training, there's little likelihood that this phenomenon would have any use whatever in the event of a national "emergency." A nuclear war is not likely to hinge on the speed with which troops can be moved to the battlefield months after the "war" has begun.

Despite government denial, registration points directly toward another Vietnam-type intervention, not toward any all-out conflict. And registration is a useful tool to keep track of 18-19 year olds and weed out potential trouble-makers. With registration, a 16-year-old is at least reminded of the possibility of joining the military which, despite the loud applause for the success of the "all volunteer" military is still something that the government would like to see.

Opponents of the draft have, for years, pointed out that it is not only unfair, that the poor end up fighting the war for the rich. There were always all points of loopholes—going to divinity school (like David Stockman), going to college at all (which kept hundreds of thousands out of Vietnam), or involved in entertainment (like actor Reagan or maestro John Wayne). Not true, any more, says the government; in any new draft there will be no exemptions. But even if this is true it will hardly make the draft "fair"—which Congressman's son is not going to have an in for a nice job in Washington instead of the jungles of El Salvador? Or which child of a millionaire corporate executive will not be able to buy the doctor to prove his disability?

Vietnam veterans will continue our fight against registration and the draft, just as we continue our fight against more than Vietnam. We will do what we can to add our voices and experience to those of draft-age men and women. And we will broadcast the recent victories to show that the government threats are empty.

(Graphics from the newsletter of the Committee Against the Registration and the Draft (CARD))
VIETNAM: THREE BATTLES

S.L.A. Marshall is justifiably the most noted military historian of the past 30 or 40 years. An ex-brigadier general, Marshall still managed to maintain a remarkable ability to talk to and, more importantly, listen to the troops; the sympathy with which he treats their experiences shows throughout the book.

Vietnam: Three Battles has recently been reprinted in paperback by Da Capo Press. It was originally published in 1971 as Fields of Bamboo: Three Battles Just Beyond the China Sea, a time before works about Vietnam had become salesy, so the subject is disguised in the title.

Except for the people who fought them (on both sides), there is nothing significant about the "Three Battles" in the title of this new printing of the book. For Marshall to try to get across his concept of the essence of the war, big battles were needed, and for grand comparisons or picturing great vistas—these were not Marshall's strong point: but no one could improve on his ability to let the small actions of the individual's reflections mirror what was happening worldwide.

Partly this was the result of Marshall's method of telling the story of the war. In this book his subjects are the battles, part of the 1st Air Cavalry Division's "Operation Thayer/Irving" which was conducted near the South China Sea to the east of An Khe in the summer of 1966. Marshall was there during a part of the campaign, riding around with the division commander, stopping at firebases or other points of interest, making sketches and doing some interviews with the troops on the ground. But the meat of the material is drawn from collecting the survivors at a later time, getting them all together and going through the operations, step by step, getting the recollections from each as to what he remembers, what he did, what he thought or what he felt at the moment. The technique was effective.

The result is an after-action report, but with a whole lot of meat on the skeleton report. (After-action reports were filed on every significant and insignificant action by the U.S. military in Vietnam, and gave the sparsest possible description of the previous day's activities.) Marshall added names, description, words, feelings, thoughts. The KIA of an after-action report becomes, in Marshall's book, a man with a name, a family, a wife, a daughter, a son, the event during which he died.

As a result, the events of the few days each in Dong Tre, Trung Luong, and Hao Hoi became a mosaic of microcosms through which to examine the war. And this Marshall does, again and again. While he wastes few words and little time on events aside from the actual battles, he does draw some overall ideas, the following from a troops-eye view of their activities: "It was an exercise in frustration, an ultimate test of combat morale when soldiers know they are losing their jungle boots and their bodies while risking malaria, the bite of the bamboo viper, attack by man-eating tiger, and the rancor of the leaders—which is perhaps the smallest hazard of all—to do nothing that common sense says is truly worthwhile."

Mistakes are not treated lightly, and the higher ranking the official making the mistake the harder Marshall comes down on him. Heróics are treated heroically, though it often is clear that the heroic act is as much a mistake as anything else. The ridiculous is certainly there—the company commander who, having lost his glasses, tries to rescue a troop—who turns out to be a dead log. Useless tragedy is all around as men die for no reason except the happened to be standing where a round happened to go. Many of the KIA—on both sides—are the result of chance rather than plan. Each of the three battles begins, more or less, as a mistake: U.S. forces get shot at and combat follows. By the time the U.S. forces are sufficiently revved up to arrive in force, the enemy has split (and this is the last Cav, noted for getting to the scene immediately. Some companies are run into the ground; others see nothing in the way of combat even though they're in approximately the same place at the same time.

The greatest value of the book is its truth. Since it's written in the words, almost, of the people who fought the war, it reflects what happened. It's in the order of the way things took place, only slightly rearranged, so sometimes it is confusing, but that's exactly how it was.

Because he is the author and because he was in a helicopter flying over much of the scene, Marshall has a better picture of what was going on overall. But he makes it clear that those immediately involved often had no sense of the "bigger" picture (which may have meant no more than what the next company was doing), and that this was a mixed blessing: "Where ignorance is bliss," he says, "tis sometimes jollier not to be wise."

Time and time again the battles happen almost without variation: they start, they go on, they end; people fight, are heroic or not, stupid or smart, scared or fearless. They live or die or are wounded and disappear from the story; they don't ever really "win" a battle since there's no way to judge that. The book provides a good glossary of terms for those who were not in Vietnam or the military. But it provides, far more than that, a good sense of the fragments of experience that fighting in Vietnam was like. It brings back a lot—the lost feeling, the futility, the wonder at what people could endure and what we went through, the moments that we talked about for weeks. The book is not one man's experience like so many of the more famous Vietnam books on the market today. It is a collective experience, so was Vietnam. To explain to someone who wasn't there what it was like, there's not much better.

Pete Zastrow, WWA Chicago

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BEST ‘NAM SONG YET

Billy Joel’s new album, “The Nylon Curtain” is an excellent album. Surprisingly, among hits like “Pressure” and “Allentown,” it is one of the best Vietnam songs out. “Goodnight Saigon” combines good music with lyrics that tell the story of a vet’s tour in ‘Nam.

We met as soul mates
On Parris Island
We left as inmates
From an asylum
And we were sharp
As sharp as knives
And we were so young
To lay down our lives.
We came in spastic
Like harmless horses
We left in plastic
As numbered corpses,
And we learned to
Travel light
Our arms were heavy
But our bellies were light.
We had no home front.

We had no soft soap.
They sent us Playboys.
They gave us Bob Hope.
We dug in deep.
And shot on sight.
And prayed to Jesus Christ.
With all of our might.
We had no cameras
To shoot the landscape.
We passed the hash pipe.
And played our Doors tapes
And it was dark.
So dark at night.
And we held on to each other.
Like brother to brother.
We promised our mothers we’d write.
And we would all go down together.
We said we’d all go down together.
Yes, we would all go down together.
Remember Charlie?
Remember Baker?
They left their childhood.
On every acre.
And what was wrong?
And who was right?
It didn’t matter in the thick of the fight.
We held the day.
In the palm
Of our hand.
They ruled the night.
The night seemed to last as long as six weeks.
On Parris Island.
We held the coastline.
They held the highlands.
And they were as sharp
As sharp as knives.
They heard the hum of our motors.
They counted the rotors.
And wanted for us to arrive.
And we would all go down together.
We said we’d all go down together.
Yes, we would all go down together.

**********

NATIONAL OFFICE REPORT

The National Salute and Vietnam Memorial

According to the media, now that the National Salute to Vietnam Veterans is over and the Memorial is dedicated, the Vietnam vet has really been welcomed back home. But the presentation of some of the events surrounding the dedication seemed a little strange.

The reading of the names of the dead was hailed as a remarkable patriotic act of remembrance, but it was hardly the first time it had been done. Fifteen years ago, the 25,000 names of those who had died in Vietnam were read by the Peace movement. The dead were remembered and a call was made for the war to end. At that point, the media did not take the event seriously and in fact condemned the readers for “subversion.” But because we were not listened to in 1968, by 1982 there were over twice as many names. Let us hope that we will not have to read the names of our children on some wall in another 20 years.

While the Memorial itself was received very well by most Vietnam vets, a group of left and right-wing kooks attacked it. The Revolutionary Communist Party, with kids pretending to be vets, turned their backs on the Memorial during the dedication. At the same time, the right, led by author and Republican darling Jim Webb is demanding the addition of a flag and an heroine (?) statue. Concerned more with their own political future, the vets with our dead friends, this bunch would gladly use the blood of the Vietnam dead for their right-wing political purposes. We say Leave the Memorial Alone!

VVAW’s participation in the Salute as well as the Vets Day activities which took place in towns and cities across the country were a fitting end to VVAW’s year of 1982. Sparked by “Operation Dewey Canyon IV” in Washington in May, the organization saw and felt a new interest and new vitality, all of which made possible the activities around Veterans Day.

FINANCES

One aspect of the organization’s activities, however, continues to put a damper on all the rest we hope to do: finances. VVAW is financed, for the most part, by internal dues and donations. No Rockefeller or DuPont pays for THE VETERAN, or our buttons, T-shirts, etc. Unfortunately some chapters act like there was some fat cat funding us; they have not paid for the papers nor turned in membership dues for months. And what this does is increase the financial burden for the rest of the organization. The VVAW Charvat in Milwaukee has a long history of paying for papers, often in advance, paying dues, and being available whenever the National Office has to ask for a special donation; other chapters have a less enviable record. Accounts must be brought up to date.

In addition to this, we need extra funds in order to replenish some of the materials which are now exhausted: we need to reprint and update “Recollections,” make up some new T-shirts and patches. So the National Office is asking for a voluntary Valentine present of $10 from each working member and $2 from each member now unemployed. Beyond dues and debts this should enable us to deal with new materials and printing of THE VETERAN. It’s especially important that chapter and regional coordinators take this request seriously.

VVAW invites contributions of stories, poems, articles or letters. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the opinion of the organization.

VVAW/1982
R.O.Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625
REFLECTIONS ON THE NATIONAL SALUTE

"What Am I Doing Here?"

As we approached Washington, D.C., the question crept into my mind again: "What am I doing here?"

The National Salute to Vietnam Veterans was finally here. Some called it the 10-years-too-late welcome home parade. Some saw it as the country's honor to Vietnam vets. Some said it was America's thank you.

Why was I there? I didn't want a salute. I'd been home more than 15 years and those I loved had made me feel more than welcome. I needed no honor for I had done nothing more honorable than staying alive for 10 months. What did I do for what? Saving Keokuk, Iowa from hordes of shoeless, undernourished peasants?

No, once again I was in that Vietnam Vet vise. One side saw me as the other there. No one remembered, thanked, honored or saw the scarred 19-year-old, ten thousand miles from home, doing a rotten job—sometimes brutally, sometimes heroically. No one questioned whether that job ever should have been done at all.

Everyone saw the SEAL, the Purple Heart, the two Silver Stars. No one ever saw me or what I had lost at Nam Dong, Lang Vei and Cam Lo.

Why was I there? To buy the Vietnam Commemorative knife at $120? To buy the Vietnam Commemorative plate at $95? To pay $20 for the entertainers' salute? To buy my piece of the rock for $19.95?

Let's have a war, they said—and make some money. Let's bury the dead, they said—and make some money. Let's honor the dead, they said—and make some money. Let's welcome the vets, they said—and make some money. It was a typically American production. With six dollars in my pocket, that wasn't why I was here.

We paid for the monument. It was we who were awkwardly saying "welcome home" to each other. They were just using us again—to make money. They were using us again—to sell another war. That's not why I was here.

Was it to turn my back on that black marble "V" at the right moment, like the RDP? I knew too many of the names on that turn to next page
Can Say It Like You Guys!

the only thing we can do to keep sane and humane. I wasn't too worried about the patriotic bullshit—you expected that. I was wondering more about how will other Vietnam vets receive us?

The bus ride down was different. Normally we don't celebrate in the bus going to demos. Coming home, yes. This ride we celebrated on the way down like we normally would on the way back. We all had that churning in our gut.

Black Vets for Social Justice, Vietnamese Veterans of America—Brooklyn Chapter, and VAW—NY—a great cross-section of vets. Five standing on the bus. Think of it—THE very same people who used to say that we were not real vets were now sponsoring a "day" for us. Hypocrites! It wasn't your fault, they say. We knew, sucker—it was yours! It's clear that they want to buy our silence with this one day. Fifteen years of abuse, physical and mental wounds that can't heal. Shit job situations, Agent Orange. This one day and all is well. What gall! Why should we be silent about the draft or sending other guys like us off to fight in El Salvador or Beirut only to be treated like we are! Screw you! Bring the boys home—NOW!

We got down to DC and it was sure cold enough. But the day felt different. What we were about took on a different meaning to me—something special. After killing some time we regrouped and went over to the spot the Washington VAW vets had set up. Remember this day is for honoring our fallen buddies, we're told. We don't want no hassles. Silence was the tone. The word would be passed when we were to march. We stood on the side with our banners bending strongly in the wind, standing out our legacy from Vietnam. No More Vietnam Wars! We Won't Be Fooled Again. We Need Jobs. Test, Treat, Compensate Agent Orange. No official word about any of this!

Vets passed in order by state. Everyone looked like everyone else. Friendly jokes back and forth about marching. Who were you with? Where were you at? Handshakes. Welcome home! Smile. Special cheers for all from Jersey and Ohio. Special cheers for Native Americans. Maybe the people who came up with this day were in charge of the parade, but it was OUR day.

Some guys saw others they knew. I met one guy from the Crotch who was in Starlite in August 1965. He stayed until June 1966. He was in trouble.

“Ours Salute”

Fifty-five Vietnam veterans, friends and family, wet and tired, were greeted by the empty, cold, wind-swept city of Washington, DC. It was still early in the morning on this day of November 1992. And the day was particular, because this was the day that our nation had chosen to "Welcome Home" its veterans of the Vietnam War. Most of us have been home about 14 years. Fourteen years of unemployment or menial jobs. Fourteen years of abuse, indifference and denial by the Veterans Administration while a chemical time bomb called Agent Orange ticked away inside our bodies. Fourteen years of watching our communities deteriorate, their life-blood sucked away by years of neglect. Money that should have been used for housing and economic growth went instead to bombs and destruction.

We hadn't come to DC to be welcomed home, certainly not by a government that continues to ignore our basic needs while wasting billions of dollars to cover up their screw-ups and build for another war. There were a lot of hugs and tears as we scanned the growing sea of fatalities for a familiar patch if not a face, as the city came to life.

“What years?”

“What company?”

“Do you remember...?”

These words were uttered over and over throughout the day. Welcome Home was OK too, veteran to veteran—then, it meant something. We've
CONTINUED.

Nobody....

ble. We gripped hands tightly. I couldn't think of anything ap-prise to say. He sucked it in. He was gone. Soon it'll all blow out. Hope he's with peo-ple who love him. After that he'll look for vets. Hope he doesn't self-destruct.

The end of the parade was now in sight. After the 82nd and 101st, we'd go. I grabbed one end of a WAW banner. We were on our way. HONOR THE DEAD—FIGHT FOR THE LIVING; the banner is stretched out over my head. Hell No! Our Sons Won't Go!

Then, a while later, Test, Treat and Compensate—Agent Orange (we'd alternate chants throughout the march).

Down Constitution Avenue.
Maybe 70 to start. Maybe 200 of us when we finished! I turned around just near the end. I couldn't believe it. We got first salutes from some of the guys in the 101st in front of us; from women of all ages, black and white; even a friendly ges-ture from 2 American Legion WW II vets. Our ranks swelled due mostly to vets who circled back and joined us after their state had finished.

Over to the grounds... The Monument—insubstantial. Ashman, John F. A budding friendship; care packages from the states never shared. Dec 23, 1685. Merry Christmas!

I always get that special feeling about going home. I was truly proud of what we did. We had said these things before but it was special. I celebrat-ed all the way home.

People had run away to Cana-da and I never had any problems with that. Some guys had gone other to the Vietnamese; much later on I could deal with that. But us—we went over and came back. We stood up for what we had learned were responsible. We marched down Constitution Ave on this special day.

This is what we are—determined and proud. Like Kathy said, "No-body can say it like you guys! I always told you that!"

Jim Hoagland
7th Marines
Chu Lai, Aug '65-June '66
VFW, New York

CONTINUED.

OUR SALUTE

been through two wars together, over there and over here, and it was a show of solidarity. We knew in our hearts that neither was really ended. Certainly not by any parade no matter how important it was to keep the president from playing cowboy on his ranch in California.

We came to Washington to honor our brothers who never came home. Those 58,000 names embedded in black marble, dug into the side of a hill between the Washington and Lincoln Memorials. It was a phenomenal tribute to the sickness of war.

We were also there to honor our brothers whose names didn't get on "the wall." Veterans who came home broken and sick, left to die by the Veterans Administration.

"Not Cost effective."
"No scientific proof."
"Just a rash."

All catch-all phrases echoing the company line as our brothers wanted away, losing their minds, their families and their lives.

Yes, we came to honor the dead, but also to fight like hell for the living. We are from groups like Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Black Veterans for Social Justice. We've been home for 14 years walking point for our fellow veterans. We've been fighting for jobs, decent housing and treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims by the VA. We've been fighting to rebuild our communities, restructure our society's priorities and most of all--no more Vietnamese!

We stood on the corner of 17th and Constitution with a message for our brothers--we are still here, working point and taking the heat. We cheered them as they marched by; they had paid their dues and we loved them. They cheered us too--they knew we were and what we've been doing, and they loved us. Not everyone can stand up and hold a banner. Not everyone can walk point. We've had our casualties, but we're still here.

We joined that parade with our banners and were cheered every step of the way. We were proud to be there and no one could take that away, not those in the reviewing stand who refused to recognize us, most of whom couldn't begin to know what we feel, nor the scum who followed us all day trying to live off our blood and our name, passing out rhetoric that has long blurred them to reality.

We cried at that memorial but we weren't ashamed. We will continue to walk point, bringing honor to our dead and fighting like hell for the living.

--Danny Friedman
New York VVAW

wall. They had paid too high a price for me to turn my back on them now. I didn't turn when the RFO's were crashing--insuring their places on that wall--and I wouldn't turn my back now.

But it wasn't all a sham. As I wandered through a maze photo display titled "Missing in Action" I couldn't help back the emotions any longer. A Black brother was walking in the opposite direction--tears filled his eyes. Without a word we slapped palms, hugged each other, cried--sharing that hurt and frustration we had shared in a daze jungle at different times and different places, so long ago. That could be why I came.

Sunday--20 minutes before we left for the long drive back to Georgia--I got up the courage to step into the arms of that black marble "V." My son and my wife stood a little distance away as I traced the names with my fingers--Lentini, Rossi, Chambers, Swetz, Downey. My wife and a friend hugged me as we all wept.

As we moved up the hill, back to the World, my son walked up. He was crying. He was only 13--he didn't know any of them.

"They all died for nothing, didn't they?"
"I don't think so. Some of them died for me."
"Dad?"
"Yes?"
"You'll never have to look for my name on a memorial like that."

I suddenly knew why I was here...

-Elton Manzione
-VVAW
-Atlanta, Georgia

Nut Group

ASK QUESTIONS!

Beware of a nut group calling itself Vietnam Vets Against the War (AVA) or "anti-imperialist." This group, controlled by the Revolutionary Communist Party was taken to court and stopped from misusing VVAW's name; the court order said that they would, in all their activities or publications, make clear that they were not associated with VVAW.

But their word, like their politics, proved unreliable. They occasionally use VVAW's name and have attended events with a bunch of kids who pretend both to be vets and to be VVAW. If you see them, stand clear: they are not VVAW.
WE MADE SOME NEW FRIENDS & THAT NEVER HURTS

I got to Washington on the evening of Wednesday, November 10th. I spent most of the next day on the phone, contacting the media about a forthcoming VFW press conference on Saturday.

On Friday I went to the VFW booth in the hotel and count my time extremely well spent. Although this was not an organizing venture, it was an excellent change to do outreach to many veterans.

Back in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) first started talking about the National Salute, our impression was that the only vets who were going to come were the "three-piece-suit" types--those who had done well after returning home. Boy, was that wrong.

There were tremendous numbers of long-haired, unemployed, guys with anti-war attitudes. On Thursday I was told, about 700 vets signed up for the class action suit; unfortunately, the list was stolen overnight, along with a number of other items from the VFW booth and from other displays in the area.

On Friday, I personally spoke with about 75 vets who had children with birth defects and a larger number who had skin rash and other Agent Orange manifestations. We were able to get an additional 50-75 names for the class action suit. Many vets came past and said, "Hey, you mean you guys are still around...I was a member back in '70/'71!" many still had their old membership cards.

We passed out a lot of membership forms, class action information, and copies of the paper. Very few people were anti-VFW; on Friday, I had 3 negative or smart-ass remarks while I also had an overwhelming number of friendly and sympathetic responses.

Saturday was parade day. Our contingent, including people from Chicago, New York, DC, Maryland and Georgia was at the end of the parade. What that meant was that in reality, we served as a kind of initial reviewing stand for all the participating vets' groups.

Our banners--No More Vietnams, Jobs for Vets, and Test, Treat & Compensate Agent Orange--were given the thumbs-up sign, the fist, smiles, waves, and cheers by a majority of the vets going past.

We started marching, we also chanted--most appropriately "Test, Treat, Compensate Agent Orange" and "Hell No, Our Kids Won't Go." To this there was also a good response and infiltration, came and lined the route and from the vets themselves. We reached the Memorial site and our VFW group fell out rear of the dedication. Here too, we were received very warmly with only two negative responses I noticed, and literally hundreds of warm and friendly remarks.

Jack Mallory from Pennsylvania suggested that VFW could have earned enough money to buy the rent of the National Office for a year if we had only charged $2 each for each photo of the No More Vets banner made especially for the event. More shots were taken of that banner than anything else except the Memorial Wall itself. And a number of media people, both freelance and affiliated, came and talked, taking pictures of the banner and interviewing us.

Although the "vets" front group for the Revolutionary Communist Party was present and trying to pass themselves off as VFW, they didn't succeed: it was fairly clear that most of their people were too young to be vets and too loopy to talk sense. Those folks did manage to confuse almost invariably came to us and asked about them so we were able to set the record straight.

My summary of this event is that it was an excellent outreach opportunity. While we weren't there to accomplish a specific task but to provide information and make new contacts, I think we did quite well. For my part, I'm glad I went. There is a need for us to have at least a presence at something like this, even if we're not setting the time to organize. I also think we've made some new friends, and that never hurts.

---Annie Luqinhill
Chicago VFW

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Vietnam Vets

contents (that's us!), Vietnam vets wholeheartedly support their government and whatever plans that government may have.

In the remaking of the Vietnam veteran image, Webb attacks a number of statistics--what he calls the "negative myths" about Vietnam vets. "Membership in Vietnam Veterans Against the War," he says, "never exceeded 7000 of a potential 9 million." Not quite true: VFW has its membership rolls from the early '70's with a shade under 25,000 names of vets who had joined the organization. But Webb's figures are worse off than this: there were only 2.7 million Vietnam vets, 7.2 million Vietnam-era GIs, we doubt Webb's figures from the VA or some other government agency. Webb seems to have taken the two figures and added them together to create his ridiculous 9 million. (In fact, of course, the VFW does not require that our members be Vietnam vets or any other kind of vets but only to be interested in--and active in--the "vets movement," the potential membership is much, much higher).

Webb has a bunch of other statistics to toy with. He goes on with a Harris poll from 1980 saying that two out of three Vietnam vets say they would serve again even knowing the outcome of the war. The survey got a lot of press when it came out, but what it said is not quite what Webb came up with. Only about 35% of the vets said they would refuse to serve in another Vietnam-type war (and, as vets, these are people who know exactly what "refusing to serve" means). Others did not say they would refuse; that is one hell of a long way from saying they would serve. In short, Webb had his researchers working overtime to find the best ways to lie with statistics.

Other of the figures are simply pulled out of hunger. There is no difference in drug use between vets and non-vets of the same age according to a study. Who the hell knows, and where the hell do such statistics come from? And even if true (which no one can say) are they the same drugs used in the same way, or, finally, have Vietnam vets managed to overcome whatever drug habit may have messed up their lives immediately after returning from Southeast Asia?

Or Webb's prisoner figures which show, he says, that Vietnam vets are less likely than non-vets to be in prison. Some states don't even keep vet sta-
tistics, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons admits to coming up with figures that will keep people happy. In short, no one is really very sure. Although the experience of VFW says that there are one hell of a lot of Vietnam vets still occupying cells in state and federal prisons around the country.

Who are the Vietnam vets? Are the vets of 1982 wearing their three-piece suits, praising Reagan and owning their own companies? Are they proud of what their country did in Vietnam and ready to re-up, or send their sons, to do the same thing all over again?

We know that somewhere around 800,000+ Vietnam-era vets are looking for jobs, plus any number who have been stopped looking and are no longer carried in the figures. We know that over 500,000 Vietnam vets came out of the war with less-than-honorable discharges. We don't know how many of these are among the vets without jobs). We know that hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Vietnam vets with problems of PTSD or Agent Orange that may be living a normal life almost impossible.

There certainly are Vietnam vets who have been successful, by anyone's standards. There are many, many more who are struggling and not necessarily wealthy but happy. And there are certainly some Vietnam vets who would willingly volunteer for the next war, or who will insist that their children enlist in the military so they can become "men!" But to paint all Vietnam vets with this kind of brush is simply a lie. And to think that a four-day celebration in Washington can replace 10 years at least) of ignorance and neglect is simply governmental wishful thinking.

Vietnam veterans--except for a favored few--are not willing to buy what the Reagan Administration is trying to sell about vets and the military and the next war. Vietnam vets do have some serious problems and we're not helping at all by doing nothing to help solve them. One of our problems, however, is not again believing everything that our government tells us; our spokesmen are telling us; we don't get our facts, and it got us used and then thrown aside. When we say "We Won't Forget," we mean us, and our kids, and our kid's kids. And we're serious when we say No More Vietnam. Vietnam vets have fought before for things most of us didn't believe in--we can put up a hell of a fight for things we do believe in!
VVAW's Veterans Day activities were not confined to the National Salute in Washington, DC. Actions took place in a number of cities—all places where a VVAW action on Veterans Day has become part of the local tradition. Even more important were the cities where VVAW activities on Veterans Day have not been seen for a number of years.

SAN ANTONIO, TX

In San Antonio, VVAW participated in the traditional parade, on an official basis, for the first time. As regional coordinator Tom Wetzler reports, "Vets Day was a success for us. A few new members and there was good local TV coverage of our banner/issues. A heavy equipment company donated two jeeps for our use and that greatly helped our visibility. It seems that people who hold the parade were forced, as a result of our strong stand last year, to admit us this year. There was also much support by rank and file members of old vets groups for including us if not support for our views. The reaction of the crowd was good, overall, and an interesting "before and after" effect occurred with our group appearing behind a Jr ROTC marching unit."

Motorized San Antonio VVAW

**=* ATHENS, GA

In Athens, Georgia, the VVAW Chapter split its energy between the local and national activities. Maintaining a significant presence in Athens during local Veterans Day activities, the chapter still made it to DC for the National Salute. Before leaving for Washington, Athens VVAW under the leadership of regional coordinator Elton Manzione staffed an information table in downtown Athens. A petition calling for acknowledgement of VVAW demands around Testing, Treatment and Compensation for Agent Orange exposure, as well as Jobs, the need to Save the Vets Centers, and No More Vietnamese accumulated over 700 signatures. Athens also held two showings of the film "Only the Beginning" which reached another 100 interested persons. Over 100 people met and spoke with VVAW members during the activities.

Vets' Day Actions

Like the experiences of other VVAW chapters nationwide, Athens VVAW had previously been denied participation in the traditional parade on Vets Day. However, people did march anyway on a street corner. Athens VVAW was invited to "join in" by the American Legion Command whose contingent was passing by. Join in they did and were met by cheers of recognition along the remainder of the parade route.

VVAW Athens has maintained the momentum generated from the whole week and is currently strengthening ties in the region, especially with VVAW of North Carolina.

Material from Athens VVAW

**=* LANSING, MI

On November 11, 1982, traditional veterans organization and Michigan's Commanders Group made an attempt to honor Vietnam veterans at a dedication ceremony for a "Multi-Conflict" Memorial in Lansing. However, the Lansing Chapter of VVAW was there to remind the traditionalists and the American public that the country's obligation to Vietnam veterans has not been fulfilled by the construction of a useless multi-conflict memorial.

VVAW made it clear that the real need of Vietnam vets must come in the form of Test, Treat and Compensate Agent Orange Victims, Save Our Vets Centers, and No More Vietnamese. Lee Channing from the VVAW National Office made it quite clear during a morning press conference that we do not need placbos but effective programs which will benefit the veterans' community.

The action was a major victory for VVAW in Lansing and the combined efforts of 15 participants made our demands well known. The main issues surrounding our action evolved around not being able to speak at the ceremony and the fact that the Commanders Group so blantly excluded all Vietnam vets from the ground-breaking ceremonies for the Memorial. Our picket line and press interviews made it clear that we were not happy with the type of alienation from community activities and, needless to say, the Commanders Group was not happy with our presence. But, of all the vets groups that attended the dedication, VVAW had the most impact on the community, proved by the excellent press coverage we received.

--Paul Ray Jensen Lansing VVAW

**=* MILWAUKEE, WI

In Milwaukee, VVAW focused activities on a five-day effort directed toward enrolling participants in the class-action suit against the manufacturers of Agent Orange. The week was highlighted by the presence of Mauve DeVictor, "the mother of Agent Orange." (Mauve was the VA worker who first talked publically about vets suffering from exposure to the defoliant.) The five days worth of activity were a success not only because of the veterans who signed up for the Agent Orange suit, but because of the public exposure which came as a part of the actions.

Two views of the highly successful Mon-Valley action which resulted in a moratorium on any further foreclosures. Photos provided by: VVAW; Homestead, PA.
continued
AGENT ORANGE

Portion stands taken by some veterans' organizations and members of Congress remain a long step away from being translated into law. Moreover, chloracine and soft-tissue sarcomas (the only 'recognized' symptoms of Agent Orange exposure and only two of the potential medical problems (not to mention the necessary work on health effects of other herbicides, pesticides, tropical diseases, etc.).

What has happened regarding Agent Orange in the last few months?

Under bright lights and C-SPAN TV cameras, the 13th quarterly meeting of the ACHRE was held in August, 1982. It was quite a show. More people in the audience, more public (many universities) were present and some very bad news for Vietnam-era vets. In all, 2,000 people attended the meeting, including a full decade of foot-dragging on this crucial issue! Perhaps they thought that the extraordinary delay wouldn't be noticed since 20 other projects had been funded. These included monographs, an updated Veteran's Administration bibliography, fatality studies, and an interesting--if not exciting--study of some 400 sets of identical twins, one twin serving in Vietnam. Some of these projects would have been done right the first time, but weren't because the VA was so damned slow to move on. These latter include cleaning up the flawed AO registry.

Some members of Congress reacted with concern over the delay of the epidemiological study. In mid-January, Sen. Thomas Daschle, chairman of the Congressional Vietnam-era vets caucus, suggested that the delays from the VA's inability to face the ultimate decision of compensating veterans and their families. Rep. Margaret M. Heckler pointed out that the $4 million National AO research budget is "an incredibly small amount" of the VA's total budget of $140 million. Daschle went on to suggest that adequate justification now exists (from studies of Dioxin-exposed children) to provide compensation to AO-exposed vets for chloracine and soft-tissue sarcomas, and that the epidemiological study should be done by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

In October, Robert NIMO--who had referred to Vietnam veterans as wanting to be "codded" and who had compared the effects of AO to "teenage acne"--recently was granted a high-profile position in the VA. Harry N. Walters, Walters, a West Point graduate and noncombat vet who served only 3 and a half years on active duty, is an unknown quantity on the question of Agent Orange.

Also in October, the Government Accounting Office, now known as the investigative arm of the Congress, released a study of VA procedures regarding AO resulting from a study of 2 years and 14 selected VA hospitals. The GAO found, in fact, that often the AO registry was incomplete, the AO registry severely flawed, and an unrealized time limitation placed by the VA on AO claims. But the GAO was not the only federal agency critical of the VA's efforts. The National Academy of Sciences, in early November, called for major revisions in the protocol for the epidemiological study. The VFW, also in November, broke ranks with other "traditional" veterans' organizations to endorse Rep. Daschle's proposal for compensation.

Oncology, a sister of this activity going on, when the ACHRE met for the 14th time on November 30th, 1982, there were fewer self-satisfied smiles: but unfortunately, no TV cameras were present to record the exchange of aspect. Dr. Donald Custis, Chief Medical Director of the VA, admitted during preliminary comments that the VA deserved some criticism. The GAO had presented a summary of its criticism report and an ACHRE representative urged that the VA speed up the AO examinations by also scheduling them on evenings and weekends as during the workday.

Representatives of the six state AO (or dioxin) commissions made these recommendations: 1) that Rep. Daschle's legislative proposal be improved; 2) that the VA's exams be concerned with the "total Vietnam experience" (including other chemicals and diseases); 3) that the exams be expanded with more attention to liver function and condition of spermatogonial testes) and 4) that the CDC should conduct the epidemiological study.

Two recently widowed wives of Vietnam veterans, who believed that their husbands' health problems may have been AO related, spoke to the human concerns of the problem, namely that speed is as essential as scientific accuracy to studying AO. The VA figures are that 10,000 people are now seeking compensation. The Department's actions toward the CDC were underway for the CDC to take responsibility for the epidemiological study early this year, but that the VA will remain the consultant funding, and that the VA will remain responsible for the other projects it has begun. It is up to us, however, to keep up the pressure this coming year and this how it can be done:

1. Apply for an AO examination and be placed on the Registry. Contact your nearest VA health-care facility. Approximately 100,000 are now on the registry and 13, 667 have filed AO claims (as of late Dec., 1982). A recent report indicated that some exams and registry data was incomplete, it would be wise to recheck with the VA, if you have already had an exam, to insure that they have your correct address and that your exam was completed.

2. Apply for the VA for healthcare if you have any possible AO-related symptoms. With the exception of certain health problems that are considered "covered" (TB, appendicitis, trauma injuries, etc.) Public Law 97-72 authorizes the VA to "provide certain health care services to any veteran of the Vietnam Era (March 9, 1964 through May 7, 1975) who, while serving in Vietnam, may have been exposed to dioxin or to a toxic substance in a herbicide or defoliant used for military purposes."

3. Contact the VA if you have had any skin disorders in "Nam or since. The VA Dermatology Department will test you and send you, at their expense, to a private clinic if your condition might be chloracine. The VA has established a chloracine task force for this effort, and chloracine is not a joke. VA representatives found out at an international conference in Salzburg, Austria back in October that "Chloracine may persist in 25-40% of cases, up to 30 years" when it had been "previously believed that it cleared in a few weeks."

4. Join the federal class-action lawsuit. Beginning next June, Yannacone & Yannacone as lead attorneys will begin their presentation in New York on this suit. Contact your nearest VVFW chapter or the VFW National Office for information.

5. State AO commissions. Several states are well advanced in various aspects of work. The State Board on Dioxin in check with your state health department or vets affairs department. If your state has nothing, do some probing. Things are moving in: Illinois, New York, Texas, Conn., Minn., New Jersey, Penn., West Virginia, Okla., Mass., Maine, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas and Ohio.

6. Urge your representatives and senators to support AO legislation.

TEST, TREAT and COMPENSATE AGENT ORANGE!

--Mike Sutton
VVFW Washington
The repression in El Salvador and Guatemala is carried out by elements of the army, national police, treasury police, paramilitary death squads, and opportunist goons, is itself difficult to understand. Acts of incredible barbarism have turned both these countries into besieged insane asylums where rational acts like charity and self-defense are punished by death. A self-willed ignorance of the all-pervasive carnage is one of the few mechanisms people have to assure at least temporary survival.

To understand the roots of rebellion in Central America, and to do justice to this complex issue, is also difficult. To study the history of Central America and the Caribbean is to come face to face with a master-slave relationship between the colonizing powers and their possessions. The "independence" of nearly all the Central American and Caribbean republics during the first half of the last century did nothing to change this relationship. Their economies remained tied to and subservient to the economic life of the major powers. As colonialism gave way to neo-colonialism, and later to multinational economic penetration, the wealth of the masters increased and the economies of the slave countries grew increasingly distorted. Any reforms aimed at correcting these distortions have inevitably been crushed.

Today, the arsenal that the elite employs (in addition to torture, mutilation, "disappearances," and psychological terror) to suppress dissent and maintain its privileged position, includes paid informers, control of the media, "bread and circuses" in the form of evangelical revivals and folk art festivals and sports toursneys, and the constant search to increase prestige through the efforts of public relations agencies. It is not coincidental that much of this arsenal— including torture techniques— was developed with the assistance of the U.S.

Our leaders, both in government and in the corporate world use the self-serving propaganda they have created in two ways. First, it serves to create an atmosphere which justifies repression within the colonized countries. Second, a steady flow of misinformation tends to discredit those groups that try to put the problems in perspective and offer some practical, just solutions. It's the "big lie" technique, delivered with a vengeance.

What we find then, when we read the history of Central America is a repetition of this theme: the wealthy sell their nation's land and resources to foreign capitalists who turn the best lands into cash crop cultivation and suck the country's mineral resources. The former becomes poorer, his parcel becomes smaller, and only occasionally does he find day labor. The cities swell with illiterate job seekers who flee in hunger and despair from the countryside. The wealthy class tightens its stranglehold on the country's economy only at a high cost of violence. Illiteracy, alcoholism, land expropriations, illness, starvation, unemployment and hopelessness become the price the poor must pay. And last some response is inevitable.

What is curious about this scenario is that it is applicable to nearly every country in Latin America. Any study of the region leads not only to a greater understanding of why rebellion has come about, but also to an appreciation of rebellion, of the necessity of revolution in light of the dreams of reform that so many martyrs have carried to their graves.

If we can't or won't study history, there is another, shorter, though more difficult road to understanding rebellion in Central America. Shorter, because all it requires is a firm conviction of what is just and equitable; difficult because it requires that we not only acknowledge what is right but commit ourselves to some action, some form of solidarity, to attain justice. Whether the victims are dismembered, deputized, burned to death, chopped to pieces, or sacrificed while still in their mother's womb, their deaths and suffering stem not only from the actions of their own power-hungry countrymen but also from our own lack of action. In Guatemala, as in El Salvador, the slaughter of innocents will continue until we in the U.S. have the courage to demand an end to economic and military aid to both these countries.

Jack Elder
San Antonio
VWV

El Salvador has once again been certified by the Reagan Administration as having made substantial strides forward in the area of human rights. This requirement, placed on the country by Congress before more aid would be approved, must be met every 6 months and is a considerable chore for the government of El Salvador and for the Reagan Administration which would have gladly aided Hitler if the opportunity had existed.

It is the El Salvadoran military that our tax dollars will be going to support. That and an organization which many Americans, if they knew the history, might think was less than perfect.

1932, when the population of El Salvador rose in rebellion, the military slaughtered between 20 and 25,000. But the military has kept going ever since. From World War II until 1979, the U.S. donated $16.7 million in military aid. Since then there's been an additional $398 million in military aid and another $257 million in economic aid (which the military can get its hands on).

El Salvador, the military officer corps is the path to obtaining money and power. Certainly, it is the military officers who control the seats of power. There are 500 officers in the various security forces—and 90% of these went to El Salvador military school. There, each officer candidate belongs to a "tanda" or graduating class which becomes a kind of local "clout" which will let you advance as you wish. It amounts to a licence to steal and, with connections with other groups of officers, do dam near anything you want to do.

This is the bunch which our tax dollars keeps in power (without U.S. support this group of hoodlums would have long ago been subjected to the people's justice and strung up). The military in the country controls the banks (which are nationalized), 15% of the best farmland, all export-import activities and a large chunk of U.S. aid, and this leads directly to some of the corruption which goes along with the Salvadoran military.

According to the former U.S. ambassador, "There are reports which I consider reliable, that some of the military officers are selling arms before they are even out of the crate to the revolutionaries because, at this point, a number of military officers are seeing the end of the road and they want to make sure they have something left when they have to flee."

U.S. dollars—and that means the money we are paying in taxes—are being squandered on a bunch of thugs, not only in El Salvador but in other right-wing regimes throughout Central America. U.S. governments might love it, but the people who have to live under these regimes are the same people who join the revolutionary armies trying to get rid of these governments. U.S. aid only helps to keep these governments in power—NO MORE AID!
LETTERS

"We're Being Conned!"

"7 deaths from poisoned Tylenol!"
The headlines scream and the nation is gripped by fear. "Dangerous criminals on the loose!" Says the news -- "How many more will be killed this year?"

How many died from the Utah testing?

"Contaminated mouthwash"
The media shouts that the Agent Orange story dies. JT does not reappear. "Three-Mile Island, Love Canal. And more..."

These casualties are "legal" to no headlines on that score. While lethal military supplies escalate.

Headlines feature "Tylenol!"
To divert us from the truly dangerous state.

"We're Being Conned!"
---Janet N. Neuman

Who is an 88-year-old, long-time VFW friend and supporter from Washington, D.C.

"Norman Mayer"
Was he right or was he wrong?
Was he weak or was he strong?
Did he do the right thing?

We all want to live with missiles in storage, but we are not so easily moved.

Stop the slide toward destruction in nuclear war.

Did he do the right thing?

Will someone speak out for humanity's sake.

Deep, deep inside him he felt a sharp ache. Did he do the right thing?

He gave his life for you & I. When we ask "Why did we do it this way? Why?"

But his troubles were over to worry no more. But others go on, our worries still grow.

Did he do the right thing?

And the war god Moloch, shall he prevail?

Or shall peace end this agony and travel?

Shall we do the right thing?

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"Humorless- Uninformed"

2nd Lt. Ronald Reagan, a transfer from a Cavalry Reserve outfit and listed on the Post Morning Table roster as Post Personnel Officer, when not acting in or narrating training films, liked to "liven up" his official reports to the C.O.

On October 28, 1942, after pulling all-night duty as the O.D., Reagan typed under General Orders, "In Inspection of Post: "Very poor place to make pictures. Recommend entire post be transferred to a site near 42nd Street & Broadway as possible. Also suggest several Westerns be made to round out the program."

This fun-filled non-conformist, who seeks to suppress Veterans' Benefits, goes on to note, regarding Irregularities & Disturbances: "Post attacked by three Regiments of Japanese Infantry. Led cavalry charge and repulsed enemy. Quiet resumed."


Write to George in c/o, Butte County Jail, 33 County Center Dr., Oroville, CA, 95965 and especially if you served in "C" Co., 1st Recon Bn., 1st. MarDiv. during 11-66-10-68. He needs assistance with his trial defense.

VFW

Campaign Update

VET CENTERS

During the month of November, 1982, a survey was conducted by the "vets centers" program, organized by the Director of Readjustment Counseling Service. The survey, which solicited information from veterans and their families, was intended to determine the future role of Operation Outreach. Unfortunately, the information compiled by the survey may never become part of the public record and Vietnam veterans---the national client---may be denied the information about their "projects.

In mid-January, VFW spoke by phone with Dr. Art Blank, Director of the Outreach program. Dr. Blank, generally acknowledged to be "on the side of the Vietnam veteran" and above the political clout that has marked the VA, deplored this decision. The unstated reason for the VA, which would have the whole program put under control of the VA Medical Center, was that it would give some heavy-handed VA administrator the ability to pigeon-hole, hide, stuff down some VA programs, and outright dismiss a lot of good people presently in the program, and a lot of Nam vets who seem to be a growing casualty of the Operation Outreach Wars.

While the survey just raises these scenarios as hypothetical cases, we should remember that just two years ago the Reagan Administration tried to bury the Vet Center program. As then, it will now take demonstrations and support from the vets to maintain the services.

With the Reagan Administration once again wheeling about to slash "our programs" to an obviously bloated defense budget alive, we must be realistic in assuming the worst from David Stockman and the Office of the Budget. No doubt the World War II VFW administrator will welcome the prospect of the demise of Operation Outreach.

But we can't allow that to happen. Support your Vet Center! Continue to investigate programs in the local centers, and demand input through your Congressional representatives on the issues that are ours---and demand to know what's happening with the centers, and demand input on the "vets task force" when it happens. We can't afford to get tossed again---Save the Vet Centers!
I used to have a friend named Shadow. I only knew him for a short time. I liked him though. He was an individual with a capital "I." They didn't like individuals. He was one and they didn't like that at all. So, they killed him.

We met at Viking compound which was off Highway 1, north of DaNang and just south of the village of Nam-O. We were both young—18 and 19, I think. We should have been in Intro to Something 101, but we weren't: chasing girls, but we weren't eating. But we weren't. We were in Vietnam as part of the American Army of occupation. I don't know about Shadow, I can't ask him now, but I once didn't even know there was a war going on when I enlisted. I'm pretty sure Shadow was a draftee, but as I said I can't ask him anymore.

Shadow had his quirks alright. He didn't talk much unless really prodded. The dogs really liked him though. Anywhere Shadow went there was at least one dog, usually more right behind him. I've always believed that dogs are pretty good judges of human character, and they were big for Shadow. Maybe it was his gentleness. Maybe it was because he saved part of his food for them or sheltered Lady when she had her pups.

Shadow was no trooper though. He was no enamored of the task our Army wanted from him. Like most of us, contrary to what we were told about our country's objective, saving the Vietnamese from outside communist domination, and by extension Mom and Sis from commie hordes who "might land in Cleveland," what we observed and did made no sense and was singularly lacking in nobility. What I couldn't understand at that point was, if we are saving these people from a fate worse than death (eternal communist enslavement), why was it they didn't like us and would freely admit they wished we would quit destroying and poisoning their country—and most of all, go home. I'm not sure if Shadow understood more of the situation than I did...we never got to talk about it.

I was on emergency leave to the "World," as we called it. I flew to the States on board an Air Force cargo plane filled with what we called stuffs, to attend the funeral of my older brother, when Shadow hit the bullet. Even here I can't be too sure, and of course I can't ask the most important participant in this tragedy. I remember what had been going on in the war between Shadow and the forces of death before I left. Now don't get me wrong; Shadow was no trouble-maker. He was hardly painting Viet Cong insignia on our bunkers. He didn't polish his boots a lot (yes, the American military is concerned about such mindless trivia even in war), his fatigue were not the picture of the model soldier either. He certainly was quiet though. Always had dogs following him around.

They started slowly—snide references and sidelong glances. Like any bully perceptive enough to know when a particular harassment wasn't working, they escalated. Extra duty was the preferred method of dealing with individuals snort of the stockade. Even they realized Shadow's disregard for their conventions was hardly criminal, foreclosing the possibility of jail. Extra duty meant working an extra two hours a day above and beyond one's normal duty assignment. Usually it was timed to ruin any time off a person had. That meant, on weekdays after working from 7 AM until 6 PM, doing whatever the lifer in charge felt like having you do between the hours of 8 and 10 PM. On Sunday, the one day off, working two hours in the afternoon. Initially, they had him doing odd stuff like cleaning the Commanding Officer's office. Shadow put in the time, but did not change himself in the desired fashion.

The last time I saw Shadow they had him painting those same shell casings he had planted. I was in a jeep heading for the airstrip in DaNang for a trip to the World. I didn't have time to talk to Shadow before I left, so I waved. He returned the gesture. I had a strange feeling that I didn't understand. I did not know at the time he would be dead and gone before I got back. He was.

One morning two lifers, one officer and one sergeant, were marching Shadow off for his third haircut of the day. (The "enemy" obviously had an aversion to killing GI's who needed haircuts.) Half way across the flight line, with the company watching, Shadow must have made the determination that it just wasn't worth it. To the horror of everyone, he casually pulled out of the pockets of his voluminous tropical fatigue, a grenade. He calmly held it before him and pulled the pin. Everyone froze except the lifers who made a desperate attempt to get out of range. (A modern American fragmentation grenade will kill everything within fifty yards and detonates within four seconds.)

The lifers didn't make it far enough fast enough. Shadow just stood there.

There wasn't much left. But, most importantly, they taught him.

Any lifer will tell you, it was a lousy war. Damn politicians wouldn't let them do their job.

I used to have a friend...