



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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Feb-March 1983

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 '70's 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 Veter-

ans 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 vets 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 eternally available.

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-

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Where We Came From, Who Are We, Who Can Join VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, El Salvador, or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have stood with veterans of all eras in fighting for the things we need, have been promised, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so--that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various war-like maneuverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

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Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Membership Form

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DATES OF SERVICE _____ BRANCH _____ UNIT _____

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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 vets of the Vietnam-era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to 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 local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Signature _____

BY-LAWS 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 eras and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the \$5 initiation fee and \$1 monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national requirements, 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, 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, aid

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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VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR



AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER

"AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER"--43 pages of information about Agent Orange including maps of areas sprayed and information on how an individual vet can work on his own case. \$2 each;

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BUTTONS

three-color VVAW insignia
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I would like to become part of the monthly sustainer program. I will contribute \$_____ a month. This includes a subscription to THE VETERAN.

CONTRIBUTIONS

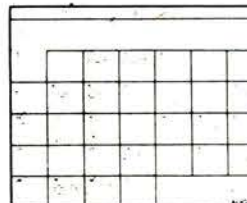
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The Battle Goes Forward AGENT ORANGE

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

On November 30 the Washington DC VVAW Chapter held an 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 carrying more and more articles on Agent Orange and its toxic component, dioxin--including news of stateside 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 96-

151) over three years ago should (finally!) begin. Some 16 states have now established Agent Orange or dioxin 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-

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



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 would 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 effect 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 eradication 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 WW II 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, VVAW managed to get a copy of the VA Chief Medical Director's letter dated March 8, 1982, Subject: Melioidosis. This doc-

ument established VA policy for testing (or not testing) for melioidosis. In the third paragraph is found the following: "A blue ribbon panel/agreed unanimously that screening tests for melioidosis are not appropriate....It is a well established principle in medicine that screening should not be done when treatment is either not available or not recommended for positive results."

What does this mean? Simply that since the VA can't find a treatment for melioidosis (and probably schistosomiasis as well), they'll not bother to test for it. If the VA did recognize the disease symptoms they'd either have to treat you or compensate you. By ignoring the problem--like they did Agent Orange--the VA hopes the veterans will go quietly away. Treatment and compensation cost a great deal of money; much more than President Reagan, Davey Stockman and the VA want to pay out. If there are too many claims to pay out, why then the next VA chief won't be able to redecorate his office.

The VA knows about melioidosis and schistosomiasis. These diseases can be treated and arrested. We should not be denied adequate health care simply because the treatment is too expensive. If we were good enough to fight their dirty little war, we are good enough to get decent health care.

Twice The Struggle

VETS BEHIND WALLS

Prison Organization for Veterans' Affairs (POVA) is a body of dedicated civilians and incarcerated veterans working together 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 (IVAO). 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 filing various motions for relief. The Housing and Employment Committee has filed hundreds of employment application forms to try 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 successful operation of POVA depends largely on the resources provided by the institution such as free mailing, office equipment and supplies, stencils, 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 an even colder stance 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 have 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 as rehabilitation or as a crime-control measure, prisons have failed. For all imprisoned offenders, it is counter-productive, a "school of crime" that has been proven to erode 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: lacks safety, has 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 re-

duce human contact, all because it cuts down on personnel costs and eliminates human error.

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 im-

sonment with the exception only of the Soviet Union and South Africa. And 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 solution!

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 or knows 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.)



Current Reading From VVAW

VETERANS SELF-HELP GUIDE
VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR
Psychological Problems & Vietnam Vets

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No Draft, No War PROSECUTIONS FALTER

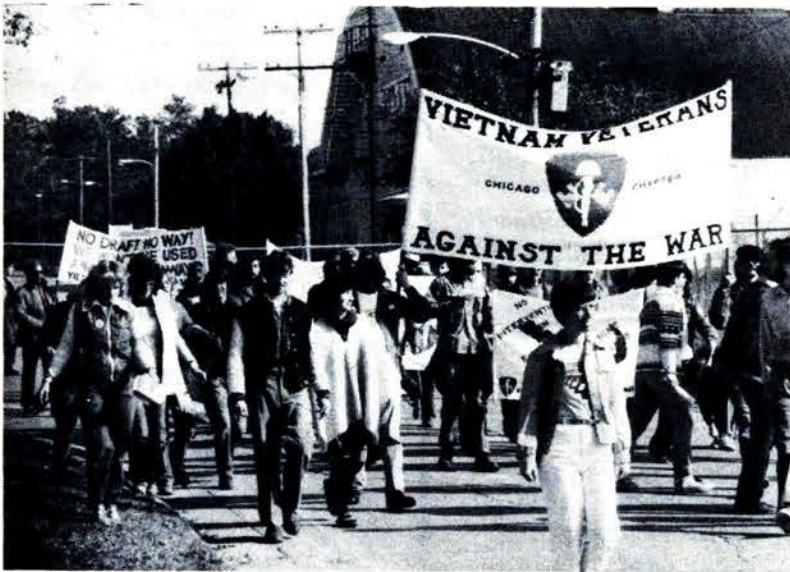


Photo by Lee Channing

VVAW Contingent at demonstration against the draft and intervention in El Salvador held at Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

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 Hasbrouck; 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 Wayte, a prominent local resister, had charges dismissed and the draft law declared in-

valid 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 Wayte, 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.

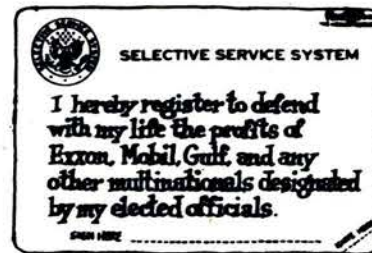
As of mid-January 1983, 6 registration resisters have come to trial; four have been convicted. But with the last two attempts being utter failures, the overall attempt of the government to scare others into registering has not been very successful. Even the government admits to 585,000 non-registrants,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

gine, 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 no; 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 put-your-ass-on-the-line 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 considerable doubt that even having all 19-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, the 18-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 innately unfair, that the poor end up fighting the war for the rich. There were always all kinds 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 macho-hero John Wayne). Not true, anymore, 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 Vietnams. 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))

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 important, 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 salesworthy--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 never needed. Drawing 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 or the individuals' reflections mirror what was happening war-wide.

Partly this was the result of Marshall's method of telling the story of the war. In this book his subject is three 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 operation, step by weary 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,

"VIETNAM: THREE BATTLES"

a man with a name, a family, with friends who remember him, and an event during which he died.

As a result, the events of the few days each in Dong Tre, Trung Luong, and Hoa Hoi become a kind of microscope 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 wearing out their jungle boots and their bodies while risking malaria, the bite of the bamboo viper, attack by a man-eating tiger, and the rancor of the leaders--which is perhaps the sorriest hazard of all--to do nothing that common sense says is truly worthwhile."

Mistakes are not treated lightly, and the higher ranking the officer making the mistake, the harder Marshall comes down on him. Heroics 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 they 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 1st Cav, noted for getting to the scene immediately). Some companies are run into the ground; others see almost 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 volition: 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, but so was Vietnam. To explain to someone who wasn't there what it was like, there's not much better.

Pete Zastrow

Brothers: Black Soldiers in the 'Nam by Stanley Goff and Robert Sanders.

The title and liner notes of this book were its main enticements. However, these basics are about as far as it goes. This is simply war stories of two men in Vietnam who happen to be black. Any notions the reader might have about gaining an insight into race or racism in Vietnam should be dismissed. Brothers doesn't address the subjects but instead offers a detailed and insightful "grunts'-eye view" of the war that is as colorless as it is accurate and enjoyable.

Goff and Sanders add many details to the descriptive pool forming from the increasing number of 'Nam books. The "M-60" section and certain "REMF" tales are particularly noteworthy. This is the strength of Brothers, but this reader feels that the awkward placement of gratuitous mentions of racial composition in a particular situation detracts from this otherwise effective narration.

Brothers can be recommended with the reservation outlined above; expect only a personalized recollection from each author that will expand awareness of the individual experiences which were Vietnam.

Lee Channing
VVAW Chicago

support vietnam veterans in their struggle to tell the truth of their experiences!

The next day we marched a few hundred meters up the trail and went right back into it again. We had to go into a running firefight. They'd fire up and then we'd get to the top of the hill. We set up on top of the hill. We had about 100 personnel. By the time we got down to about 60 people, this hill. There was a lot of fighting. I was a PFC. I was in this way. I was a North Vietnamese soldier. I was a man's body--which you should never do. Because his friend was killed. My squad walked down the hill and two M-79s became six of them. I was in the United States Army to get his citizenship. He was from Ecuador. He was in the 11th. Rooks and Shroth got back to the top of the hill. About that time the Vietnamese counter-attacked.

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Music

Billy Joel's New Album "The Nylon Curtain"

BEST 'NAM SONG YET

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As sharp as knives
And we were so gung ho
To lay down our lives.
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We left in plastic
As numbered corpses,
And we learned fast
to Travel light
Our arms were heavy
But our bellies were tight.
We had no home front

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We had no soft soap.
They sent us Playboy,
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 to-
gether,
Yes, we would all go down
together.

Remember Charlie?
Remember Baker?
They left their childhood
On every acre.
And who 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
And 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 waited 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 heroic (?) statue. Concerned more with their hack politics than 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 Chapter 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 some 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.



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REFLECTIONS ON THE NAT

"What Am I Doing Here?"

As we approached Washington, DC, 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 here? 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 of hell; thank you 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 killer; the other as hero. No one remembered, thanked, honored or saw the scared 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 here? 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 RCP? I knew too many of the names on that

turn to next page

"WE'RE ALL SURVIVORS"

What can one say about meeting guys you knew in a bad dream 14 years ago? Many have changed over the course of the years, some to the ultra-right, some to the ultra-left; but all have one thing in common--Vietnam--the bitter memories, and of the two nations from which they were outcast.

It was a very emotional time in Washington, DC, November 10th through the 14th, 1982. Meetings of men who had wondered whether the buddy they left behind made it out okay. The searching of faces, halting recognition, then hugs and tears of remembrance. "You made it!" "Yeah, but Bobby didn't and neither did Carlos." The silent pause as the men remembered what the names really meant. Then the tear-stained faces, their eyes lifted towards the sky, the quivering lips and emotion-choked voice saying, "A toast...to the guys on the Wall...they're here...with us... forever!"

Washington DC'ites really didn't know what the hell to think of the "National Salute" and all these middle-aged men in fatigues drinking the town to oblivion. Some said, "Why don't they let the war go, why do they have to relive every gory detail? Can't they see that no one cares?" The unified response was, "Yeah, we know, but then, you never did care." But maybe the National Salute will reverse the idea that the warrior was the war, and maybe the warriors will disregard the idea that the anti-war protestors cost the lives of their buddies. The former was the hope of many, the last a personal hope of mine.

The Washington DC Chapter of VVAW set up an information booth at the Sheraton-Washington Hotel during the two days of organizational welcoming programs. We had help with the booth from Chicago, Athens, Norman (OK) chapters. Many vets came to us in surprise that we were still around and active. There were approximately 100 to 200 past members who showed their old VVAW patches and ID cards. Many others voiced sup-

port and showed interest in joining VVAW. Of course we also encountered the vet who despised us and what we stood for, but they were a small minority. We handed out over 1000 membership forms during the two days.

Our Agent Orange class action outreach was very successful. We had about 900 people sign a list for further notification on the class action suit, and 350 of those took the paperwork to join the class action. Some of these were taking one set of forms back home with them to photo-copy for other vets who couldn't make it to the "Salute." We were speaking to 70-90 per hour and this was during slow hours.

One of the nicest compliments we received came from the president of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) Jan Scruggs, and what he said rang true for many of the other vets. "It's one hell of a party. I've been told by a number of people that the VVAW booth is the best booth for obtaining information on Agent Orange and that the people working the booth are sincere in their claim of being here to help the veteran regardless of affiliation. Keep up the good work."

On Friday afternoon I was told that four guys I had left behind didn't make it back. It took sometime for that to sink in because it meant from the time I got to 'Nam and left I had become the sole survivor of the LRRP team I was with. The only other one who made it back had died in the California penal system. As this sunk in it meant that I knew 35 names on "The Wall."

The parade on November 14th was organized on a state-by-state order of March. Since many vets could not remember fighting for a state regiment, they decided to march with the division they belonged to in 'Nam. VVAW mustered at the kick-off point of the parade and as the parade went by, many of the marchers raised their fists in a salute of solidarity as they read the banners we held.

VVAW pulled up in the rear of the march, but with our banners and chants we drew a goodly mount of applause. Some of the spectators along the way joined our march and some of the Gold Star mothers who had already marched returned to march again with VVAW. In all we had 100-125 people marching with us. Our chant on "Test, Treat, Compensate... Agent Orange" drew the respect of all the onlookers. John Beam, a brother from Baltimore, carried a sign which summed up the feelings of many: "I am a Vietnam Veteran. I like the Memorial. And if it makes it difficult to send people into battle again... I'll like it even more."

The week that many Vietnam



"Nobody Ca

I had mixed feelings about this day. From one minute to the next I would change from wanting to go and say what needs to be said, to not wanting to participate in "their" day.

I came back from 'Nam in '66. I hardly ever meet anybody from that time.

A call from a buddy. Are you coming? Sounds like you know you should. A reservation on the bus. Hopeful anticipation from my wife Kathy that I would go. Nobody can say things like you guys. A deep churning in my gut. I gotta do it.

Now I couldn't think of anything else. News on TV Thursday and Friday is full of patriotic nonsense. To me patriotism and us was always a big joke. Vets who go for it really have to force it. Facing the facts of our experience is

NATIONAL SALUTE

veterans had wanted has come and gone. It comes as no surprise that the conservatives thumped their chests long and hard about there being no more unwinnable wars. The activities and participants had a right-wing flavor, but VVAW did provide a kind of balance, and most people realized we are still fighting a war, only the enemy is the slow-moving VA. The VVMF must be commended for the determination to see that the activities came about without major problems.

For many it became a time to finally let go, to renounce the idea that they were losers. We all recognized long ago that we are survivors. What we lived through the populace has a hard

time understanding or accepting. We were not granted the opportunity our fathers were given as they returned from their war. Not all of us are successful; indeed, many who came to DC were unemployed. Still, they felt they couldn't miss the event because of their friendships with either the dead or the living. VVAW was respected and well received for our demands of "Jobs for Vets," "Test, Treat, Compensate Agent Orange Victims," "Save the Vets Centers" and "No More Vietnams." And for the central theme of VVAW's participation: "Honor the Dead; Fight Like Hell for the Living!"

--Jim Brodniak
Montana VVAW



"Our 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, 1982. 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 fatigues for a familiar patch if not a face, as the city came to life.

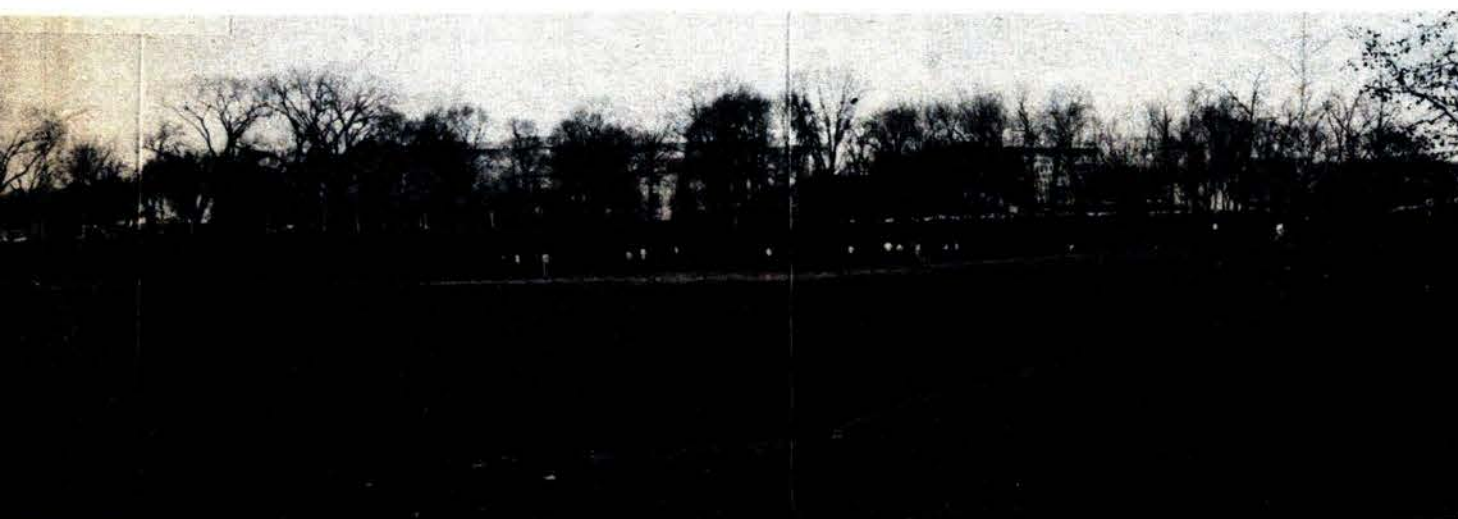
"What years?"

"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

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, Vietnam Vets of America--Brooklyn Chapter, and VVAW-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

know, 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 won'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 VVAW 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 every one 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 1968. He was in trou-

turn to next page

CONTINUED.

Nobody....

ble. We gripped hands tightly. I couldn't think of anything appropriate to say. He sucked it in. He was gone. Soon it'll all blow out. Hope he's with people 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 VVAW 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 fist salutes from some of the guys in the 101st in front of us; from women of all ages, black and white; even a friendly gesture 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--indescribable. Ashman, John F. A budding friendship; care packages from the states never shared. Dec 23, 1965. 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 this was special. I celebrated all the way home.

People had run away to Canada and I never had any problems with that. Some guys had gone over to the Vietnamese; much later on I could deal with that. But us--we went over and came back. We stood up against those we learned were responsible. We marched down Constitution Ave on this special day. This is what we are--determined and proud. Like Kathy said, "Nobody can say it like you guys! I always told you that!"

Jim Hoagland
7th Marines

Chu Lai, Aug '65-June '66
VVAW, New York



CONTINUED.

OUR SALUTE

been through two wars together, over there and over here, and it was more a show of solidarity. We knew in our hearts that neither was really ended. Certainly not by any parade not even important enough 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 wasted 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 Vietnams!

We stood on the corner of 17th and Constitution with a message for our brothers--we are still here, walking 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 who 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 around all day trying to live off our blood and our name, passing out rhetoric that has long blinded 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



CONTINUED.

What

wall. They had paid too high a price for me to turn my back on them now. I didn't turn when the RPG'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 hold 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 damp 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 embracing 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

-Athens, Georgia

Nut Group

ASK QUESTIONS!

Beware of a nut group calling itself Vietnam Vets Against the War (A.I.) 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.

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

P O Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625

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 VVAW press conference on Saturday.

On Friday I went to the VVAW 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 when 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 straight "three-piece-suiters," those who had done well after returning home. Boy, was that wrong. There were tremendous numbers of long-haired, unemployed, guys with anti-military 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 VVAW 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/'72; 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-VVAW; 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. When 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 both from the people lining the route and from the vets themselves. We reached the Memorial site and our VVAW group fell out in the 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 VVAW could have earned enough money to pay the rent of the National Office for a year if we had only charged \$2 each for each photo of the No More Vietnams 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 VVAW, they didn't succeed; it was fairly clear that most of their people were too young to be vets and too loony to talk sense. Those folks they 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 seizing the time to organize. I also think we've made some new friends, and that never hurts.

--Annie Luginbill
Chicago VVAW

Continued from page 1 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: VVAW 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 vets. No doubt being fed his 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, since VVAW 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; but that is one hell of a long ways 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 from hunger. There is no difference in drug use between vets and non-vets of the same age according to Webb. 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? And, finally, how many vets have managed to overcome whatever drug habit may have messed up their lives immediately after returning from Southeast Asia.

Or Webb's prison 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--though the experience of VVAW says that there are one hell of a lot of Vietnam vets still occupying cells in state and federal prisons around the country.

So, who are 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 looking for jobs, plus any number who have 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 (and no doubt 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 make 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 content with their lives--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 the government is doing nothing to help solve them. One of our problems, however, is not again believing everything that our government and its' spokesmen are telling us; we did that once before 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 Vietnams. 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--some places where a VVAW action on Vets 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 (10) 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 Vietnams 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.

THE FIGHT FOR THE LIVING VETS' DAY ACTIONS



Photo by Gary Crider

Athens, GA.; The VVAW contingent joins march: "We Won't Forget! We Won't Forgive!"

Like the experiences of other VVAW chapters nationwide, Athens VVAW had previously been denied participation in the traditional parade on Vets Day. However, posed to march anyway on a street corner, VVAW Athens was invited to "join in" by the American Legion Commander 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 vets 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 traditionals and the American public that the country's obligation to Vietnam vets 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 Vietnams. Lee

Channing from the VVAW National Office made it quite clear during a morning press conference that we do not need placebos 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 blatantly 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 Maude DeVictor, "the mother of Agent Orange." (Maude 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**

portive stands taken by some veterans' organizations and members of Congress remain a long step away from being translated into law. Moreover, chlorachne and soft-tissue sarcomas (the only "recognized" symptoms of Agent Orange exposure) are only two of the potential medical problems (not to mention the necessary work on health effects of other herbicides, Dapsone, 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 ACHREH was held in August, 1982. It was quite a show. More people in the audience, more charm generated by VA spokespersons--and some very bad news for Vietnam vets. The VA under questioning by Hugh Walkup of the National Veterans' Task Force on Agent Orange, admitted that they would not complete the epidemiological study until 1988 or 89, making a full decade of foot-dragging on this crucial assignment! Perhaps they thought that the extraordinary delay wouldn't be noticed since some 20 other projects had been funded. These included monographs, an updated AO bibliography, fat biopsy studies and an interesting--if exotic--study of some 400 sets of identical twins, one twin serving

in Vietnam. Some of these projects should have been done right the first time, but weren't because the VA was so damned slow to move on AO. These latter include cleaning up the flawed AO registry.

Some members of Congress reacted with concern over the delayed epidemiological study. In mid September, Rep. Thomas Daschle, chairman of the Congressional Vietnam-era vets caucus, suggested that the delay results from "the VA's inability to face the ultimate decision of compensating veterans and their families." Rep. Margaret M. Heckler pointed out that the \$5 million AO research budget is "an incredibly small amount" of the VA's total research budget of \$140 million. Daschle went on to suggest that adequate justification now exists (from studies of Dioxin-contaminated civilians) to provide compensation to AO-exposed vets for chlorachne and soft-tissue sarcomas, and that the epidemiological study should be done by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

In October, Robert Nimmo--who had referred to Vietnam veterans as wanting to be "cod-dled" and who had compared the effects of AO to "teenage acne"--resigned to be replaced by Harry N. Walters. Walters, a West Point graduate and non-combat 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 (GAO), 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 exams to often be incomplete, the AO registry severely flawed, and an unrealistic time limitation placed by the VA on AO claims. But the GAO was not the only federal agency critical of the VA. The National Academy of Sciences, in early November, called for major revisions in the controversial 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.

With all of this activity going on, when the ACHREH 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 change of aspect. Dr. Donald Custis, Chief Medical Director of the VA, admitted during preliminary comments that the VA deserved some criticism. The GAO then presented a summary of its critical report and an AMVETS representative urged that the VA speed up the AO examinations by also scheduling them on evenings and weekends as well as during the workday, and also whenever a Vietnam vet is hospitalized in a VA hospital.

Representatives of 6 of the state AO (or dioxin) commissions made these recommendations: 1) that Rep. Daschle's proposed legislation is appropriate; 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 the condition of sperm cells, and 4) that the CDC should conduct the epidemiological study.

Two recently widowed wives of Vietnam vets, 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 for its part, announced that negotiations with the CDC were underway for the CDC to take responsibility for the epidemiological study early this year, but that the VA will remain the conduit for 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 is 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 15,867 vets have filed AO claims (as of late Dec, 1982). And since the GAO 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 current address and that your exam was complete.

2. Apply to the VA for health-care if you have any possibly AO-related symptoms. With the exception of certain health problems that cannot be AO-related (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 (August 5, 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 Departments will test you and send you, at their expense, to an independent clinic if your condition might be chlorachne. The VA has established a chlorachne task force for this effort, and chlorachne is no joke. VA representatives found out at an international conference in Salzburg, Austria back in October that "Chlorachne may persist in 25-50% of cases, up to 30 years" when it had been "previously believed that it cleared in a few years."

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

5. State AO commissions. Several states are well advanced in various aspects of work around AO or dioxin--check with your state health department or vets affairs department. If your state has nothing, do some prodding. 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
VVAW Washington

Vets Join Fight Against Foreclosures

A group of unemployed steelworkers, including a number of Vietnam vets, marched outside the Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) offices to protest a sheriff's sale; signs said "No Work, No Foreclosures."

"We are facing the potential destruction of our communities with rising mortgage foreclosures. We will not allow this to happen," said Robert Anderson, spokesman for the Mon-Valley Unemployed Committee, a group first organized by laid-off steelworkers. The committee helped remove two unemployed workers' homes from this month's sale--one family was able to file bankruptcy to stop foreclosure, temporarily, and another family is working out a payment plan with their bank.

Ron Richards of McKeesport, whose home was one of those saved from the auction block,

said he tried for 9 months to work out a payment schedule with a savings and loan. He was laid off from Westinghouse in September and fell behind on payments. "We were making no headway, but once the delegation (from the Unemployed Committee) contacted them, they seemed more than willing to work out terms," Richards said.

Anderson said the Unemployed Committee's mortgage project was more successful than individual efforts because "It makes the problem more public. It lets them know it's not an isolated incident. It's an epidemic," he said. "If we all stayed individuals, we'd be strangled to death."

Material sent in by
Bob Anderson, VVAW
Homestead, PA

CENTRAL AMERICAN REPRESSION**NO MORE AID!**

The repression in El Salvador and Guatemala, carried out by elements of the army, national police, treasury police, paramilitary death squads, and opportunistic 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. But it is not an impossible task: it requires either some knowledge of the history of the region, or a well-developed sense of what is right and what is wrong. 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 tourneys, 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. Secondly, 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 sack the country of mineral resources. The farmer 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 its country's economy only at a high cost of violence. Illiteracy, alcoholism, land expropriations, illness, starvation, unemployment and hopelessness batter the poor until at 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 to not only a greater understanding of why rebellion has come about, but also 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 disembowled, decapitated, 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
VVAW



U.S. soldiers train Latin troops in counterinsurgency warfare at School of Americas in Panama.

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 Salvadorian military that our tax dollars will be going to support. And that is 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).

In 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's 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 damn 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 Salvadorian 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 crates 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

THE VETERAN welcomes letters, comments and criticisms. Please write. Also, send along any poetry, drawings, photos or stories you would like to see in the paper.

P O Box 25592
Chicago, IL 60625

"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

Is something we do not hear.

"Contaminated mouthwash"

The media shouts

But the Agent Orange story dies
IT does not reappear.

Three-Mile Island, Love Canal
And more--

These casualties are "legal" so
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 VVAW
friend and supporter from Wash-
ington, DC.)

"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 mis-
siles no more,
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
We ask "Why did he do it this
way, why why?"

Did he do the right thing?

His troubles are over to worry
no more,
But ours they go on, our worries
still soar.

Did he do the right thing?

And the war god Moloch, shall
he prevail?

Or shall peace end this agony
and travail?

Shall we do the right thing?

---Dave Lipner, Miami, FL.
(Dave, an 83-year-old self de-
scribed "peacenik" and vet of
World War I and II, wrote this

poem after another Miami Beach
activist, Norman Mayer, was
killed by police snipers after
holding the Washington Monu-
ment. Along with Mayer, whom
he never met, Lipner shares the
view that halting the spread of
nuclear weapons is "the most
important thing we can do now."

Lipner had one criticism
of the action which might serve
to answer the question he poses;
"He (Mayer) broke a rule the
Quakers taught me in 1932: Don't
protest on your own. The indiv-
idual acting alone is powerless.")

"Humorless- Uninformed"

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

On October 28, 1942, af-
ter pulling all-night duty as the
O.D., Reagan typed under Gen-
eral Observations In Inspection
Of Post; "Very poor place to make
pictures. Recommend entire post
be transferred as near to 42nd.
Street & Broadway as possible.
Also suggest several Westerns
be made to round out the pro-
gram."

This fun-filled non-com-
batant, who now seeks to sup-
press Veterans' Benefits, goes on
to note, under Irregularities &
Disturbances; "Post attacked by
three Regiments of Japanese In-
fantry. Led cavalry charge and
repulsed enemy. Quiet resumed."

Excerpts from Hollywood
Pilot: The Biography of Paul Ma-
ntz contributed by George Lang-
evin, an incarcerated Vietnam
Veteran.

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.

VVAW
A Non-Profit Tax
Deductible National
Veterans Organization.
Established in 1967.

Campaign Update VET CENTERS

During the month of Novem-
ber, 1982, a survey was conduct-
ed among vets' centers across the
country by the Director of Read-
justment Counselling Service.
The survey, which asked some
timely and important questions
about the inner workings and
problems of vet centers and their
future could play an important
role in deciding the future of
Operation Outreach. Unfortu-
nately, the information compil-
ed by the survey may never be-
come part of the public record
and Vietnam vets--the national
clientel--may be denied the in-
formation about "their" projects.

In mid-January VVAW spoke
by phone with Dr. Art Blank, Di-
rector of the Outreach program.
Dr. Blank, generally acknowl-
edged to be "on the side of the
Vietnam veteran" and above the
political crap that has marked
the VA during this and past ad-
ministrations, spoke without
the standard VA evasion about
the survey. His first point was
that the survey was, as of mid-
January, not completely com-
piled. Further, Dr. Blank said
that the survey was a project
of his own office to determine
what was going on in the cen-
ters and was never intended to
be "public" nor "official" be-
cause of its subjective nature.
Dr. Blank did allow that "some
of the information could possi-
bly be made available to a task
force that will be formed in a
few weeks to ascertain the fu-
ture of the Vet Centers." When
questioned on his personal opin-
ion on the future of the program
Dr. Blank stated, "The future of
the Vet Centers are in the hands
of Congress and top VA admini-
strators."

It's quite clear that this
final statement is true, but
there's a little more that isn't
mentioned: it is the responsi-
bility of the Vietnam veteran
community--individuals who
use the centers, members of
rap groups, organizations who
support Vets Center continua-
tion--all of us to bring the
fight to keep the program going
to members of Congress.

In the hands of vets' advo-
cates, the results of the sur-
vey could be a potentially po-
werful weapon. The survey,
comprised roughly of 15 pages,
asks most of the questions you
might expect about rumored and,
in some cases, substantiated
problems within the program.
Two major areas addressed in
the survey are the future of the
program and the relationship
with parent facilities.

The survey will undoubtedly

substantiate stories of neglect,
malice and bureaucratic bum-
bling by the "parent facilities"
(VA hospitals, regional offices
and out-patient clinics). Some
areas will truthfully report VA
wheels who attempt to tailor
the program to their personal
models and run the regions with
iron fists, remaining in the back-
ground while their "errand boys"
swing the club or hatchet.

The sections of the survey
on the future of the vets cen-
ters contain the obvious sugges-
tions that the program continue
as is, but more frightening are
the possibilities that vets cen-
ters be moved to VA Hospital
grounds with a variety of con-
trols put forth by various VA
Medical Centers. All of the
various options involve taking
from the centers the kind of
autonomy which has made them
successful. One suggestion
would have the whole program
put under control of the VA Med-
ical Center, finally disbanding
the centers and scattering the
people in them throughout the
VA system. This scenario would
give some heavy-handed VA ad-
ministrator the ability to pigeon-
hole, hide, stuff down some VA
sewer, 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 Out-
reach 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 Congressional ass-kicking
on the part of vets, to maintain
the services.

With the Reagan Administra-
tion once again wheeling about
to slash "our programs" to keep
an obscenely bloated defense
budget alive, we must be real-
istic in assuming the worst from
David Stockman and the Office
of the Budget. No doubt the
World War II VA vet administra-
tors will welcome the prospect
of the demise of Operation Out-
reach.

But we can't allow that to
happen. Support your vet cen-
ter; continue to investigate
problems in the local center,
and demand input through your
Congressional representatives
on the issues that are ours--
demand to know what's hap-
pening with the centers, and
demand input on the "vets
task force" when it happens.
We can't afford to get trashed
again--Save the Vets Centers!

RECOLLECTIONS

VVAW invites contributions to "Recollections"--stories or poems describing the military or Vietnam.

HARASSMENT: THE ENEMY WITHIN

"I USED TO HAVE A FRIEND"

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 Big Mac's, 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 for one 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 not 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 stiffies, to attend the funeral of my older brother, when Shadow bit 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 fatigues 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 short 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 ones' 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.

week. Two weeks is a lot. The guy was nothing if not determined. It cost him his life. The last thing they had Shadow doing was half burying howitzer shell casings around the perimeter of the compound, the better to trip over on the way to the berm when attacked. The casings had to be just so--I saw them make Shadow replant the ones that weren't straight. Everyone knows you can't fight a war without the decorations like shiny boots, haircuts and shell casings around the company area.

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 airbase 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 fatigues, 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....

Craig W. Geary
Washington, DC

The last thing I remember was that they had Shadow on extra duty for three months straight. A normal dose is one