



THE VETERAN

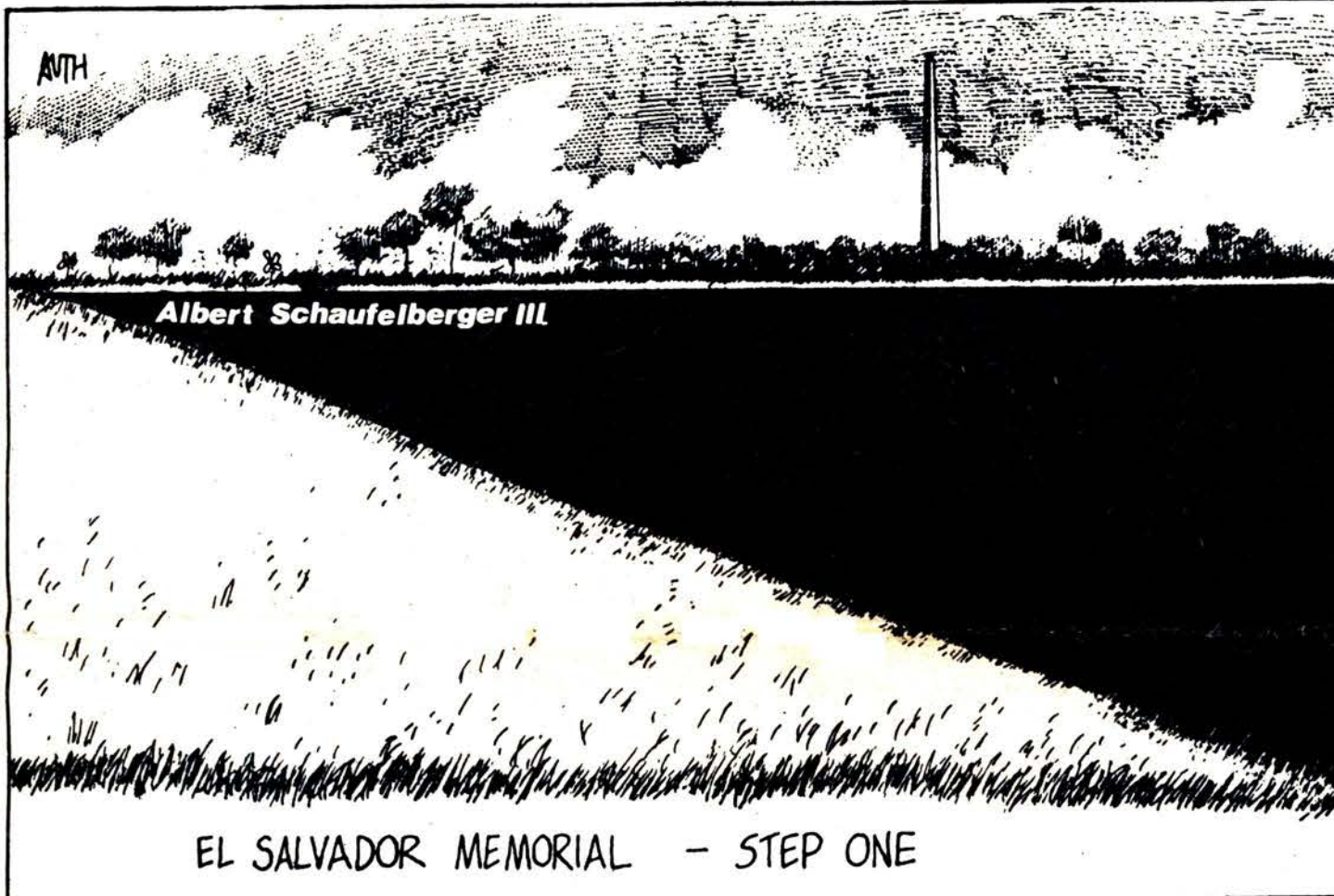
Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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CENTRAL AMERICA ANOTHER VIETNAM



In 1961, James T. Davis, 25, of Livingston, TN, was killed in Vietnam, the first American advisor to die in that war; when asked, his father did not know where Vietnam was. Fourteen years later, as Liberation Front troops seized Saigon, and after 57,000+ American military personnel had died, few if any remembered the name of the first to fall.

Fourteen years from now, after how many deaths of American troops, will anyone remember the name of Lt Commander Albert Schaufelberger III, the first American advisor to die in El Salvador?

It's been rapid-fire news

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from El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, the three Central American countries which corral much of the attention from Reagan and his cronies. So rapid is the news that before one event can be seen against the backdrop of Central American policy, another event pushes it off the front page and into the cubbyhole reserved for Central American affairs "experts."

What to think when the government of Nicaragua says that three American diplomats are actually CIA and are trying to poison the Sandanista government's foreign minister? (The answer is probably that they were trying to do just that--a couple of years ago it would have sounded insane, but since then we've heard about CIA plans to poison Castro's cigars or his beard.)

What to think when the U.S. government closes all six Nicaraguan consulates in the U.S.? (No one tries to say this was

anything more than spite.)

What to think when 110 Green Berets arrive in Honduras to train 2400 El Salvadorian troops? (The U.S. government can get away with this ploy because combat troops in Honduras don't count as part of the Congressionally limited numbers of troops in El Salvador--but they sure are close by.)

What to think when the U.S.-supported government of El Salvador says it may not have enough U.S. bucks to be able to afford promised elections but might have to hold off awhile? (There are loud denials from Washington, but this is probably what'll happen.)

And, at the hub of this spinning wheel of events, there's the death of an American advisor in El Salvador, apparently at the hands of anti-government forces. It sounds a lot like early Liberation Forces raids on U.S. forces at rest during the early days of U.S. involvement

in Vietnam--spraying a movie theatre with machinegun fire, for instance.

With the barrage of activity, however, it's still worthwhile to take a quick step back in order to see what, overall, is happening in the area. While details vary, the basic facts are the same: all three countries suffer from a history of exploitation by their own rulers (Somoza and his crew most recently in Nicaragua, the famous "7 families" in El Salvador) with considerable support and prompting from the U.S. government over a period of decades. U.S. companies (notably, United Fruit) made billions while the people who did the work made barely enough to scrape by. Hunger was and is a fact of life; poverty is another. For centuries the land belonged only to the rich and the very rich, though there has been parcelling out of land in Nicaragua, much talk about it in El Salvador (to keep the U.S. public and Congress happy) and no great change in Honduras. For years, the area has been ripe for revolution because conditions demanded a change, and because the entrenched power structure would allow no other method of change.

All this is a far cry from the Reagan version of Central America where the primary--if not only--source of trouble is neither hunger nor poverty, but the evil clutches of the Communists in Nicaragua (who support the anti-government struggle in El Salvador) and the Communists in Cuba (who support the government of Nicaragua) and, finally, the Communists in the Soviet Union (who supply and pull the strings on Castro's Cuba). Prodded by UN Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick and a flock of other Neanderthal advisors, Reagan has even replaced his right-wing Central America advisors and ambassadors to Central American countries with people described as

turn to page 11



FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)



Did you see where they gave Bob Hope a big party on his 80th birthday? The party was given by Ronald Reagan and various other people from the Neanderthal side of the political spectrum. They wanted to honor this great man who promoted war and got rich--a parlay that seems to be quite honorable among the wealthy.

I don't see where this man deserves any honor, but his birthday party did revive an alcohol-deadened memory cell in my brain. It was back in the 'Nam. Bob Hope put on one of those USO shows, and I got a chance to see it.

The show was really a flop. There were thousands of guys sitting there for about four hours. I was under cover, but most of them had come in from the field and had to sit in the sun and bake all the way through this bore.

When the girls and some of the entertainers came on, the GI's would shout and cheer, but over all, the show flopped. I almost--not quite, but almost--felt sorry for Bob Hope. This man was up there making jokes, and no one was laughing. I would say that on 2/3's or 3/4's of the jokes he got little or no response. On some of the "jokes" absolutely no one laughed.

I mean--Bob Hope was so out of touch. He would make jokes about the VC, about The World, and about patriotism and winning the war; and no one would laugh. The fellows would just be sitting there, baking in the sun. It was only when he made jokes about the things we bitched about--the food, lifers, monsoons--then he got a lot of laughs. Gradually he started to stick with these jokes. He'd still throw in a patriotic joke once in awhile and it just wouldn't get over. It was sad.

And you know what? They used to tape these shows and put them on TV back home. About 8 months later I was back in the World and I saw the same show on TV. Instead of being four hours long, it was now one hour. They edited out all the deadwood and it looked like good entertainment. Oh well. Maybe soon Bob Hope will be as dead as his jokes, and the GI's in El Salvador will be spared.

Speaking of entertainers, the thought occurs to me that there is a particular type of entertainer missing in our society today. Maybe you remember when Kennedy and Nixon and Carter were president: you had comedians going around the country, selling albums and making big bucks by pretending to be the bumbling president.

To the best of my knowledge no one is doing this with Reagan in a big way. I think that there



are two reasons for this. First, the best Reagan clown is the one in the White House, and no one can match him. Second, because of the first reason, Reagan is a president that you have to be serious about.

You all know of the many stupid things he says. Sometimes you don't know whether to be afraid because you think the guy believes what he's saying, or because you think the guy absolutely does not know what's going on in the world around him. I mean, here's the guy who renamed the destructive MX missile, "The Peacekeeper." He's the guy who thinks trees cause air pollution. Do you know what he said when he was asked if he was going to visit the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial? "I can't tell until somebody tells me. I never know where I'm going!"

Any good entertainer can benefit from a good supporting cast, and Reagan's White House Comedy Hour certainly doesn't lack for back-up comedians. There's always Interior Secretary James Watt--you know, the guy who thinks that environmentalists are really pursuing the greater objective of central control of society something akin to the German Nazis.

Watt's latest contribution to the well being of America is trying to ban the Beach Boys from the traditional 4th of July Celebration on the Mall in Washington. He said that the Beach Boys

"attract the wrong element. From now on the 4th of July will be for the family and for solid, clean American lives." Maybe he's afraid the Beach Boys will get high on life and start banging people up side the head with their surf boards. One disc jockey said, "First he tried to get rid of the beaches. Now he wants to get rid of the Beach Boys."

* * * * *



Some of Reagan's clowns unfortunately are more serious. Take Frederick Andre, appointed by Reagan to the Interstate Commerce Commission. At a meeting of the ICC he argued that the ICC should stop enforcing anti-bribery and anti-kickback laws and regulations. Andre said, "Bribes among principals are probably the clearest instances of the free market at work... They are just discounts... A bribe is a rebate, is it not? It is an attempt to get around the rigidities imposed on the market by a government cartel."

What an idea! Let's stop fooling around with Congress. Instead, let's concentrate our energies on raising money. Then we can bribe VA officials to deal with Agent Orange--unless the chemical companies have gotten to them already.

*** **

And some of the clowns are dangerous. Take James Mullins, chief of the Air Force Logistics Command who told his civilian managers, "We must adopt a wartime perspective. No longer will we have the luxury of waiting for a crisis to develop." Hell, why even stop there? Let's create a crisis. Send over some of these new "Peacekeepers." And if that doesn't stop them, we can send Bob Hope to tell them some jokes.



GRENADE of the MONTH

This month's grenade goes to Harry Walters, new head of the VA. Where does Reagan get these guys? First Nimmo, now Walters. They make Max Cleland look like Joan of Arc.

Walters gets the grenade for leading the VA charge to delay tresting, treating and compensating Agent Orange victims. Using Reaganspeak in testimony before a House Committee, he said that enacting an Agent Orange Bill would "needlessly alarm millions of veterans and the population as a whole."

Right now, of course, we're not alarmed that many of our brothers have deformed children or liver cancer because they were in Vietnam and exposed to Agent Orange. And the population? No, they aren't alarmed because they don't know about dioxin. They only watch Times Beach Mo on the news every night, or watch EPA technicians carefully dig up soil around an old Agent Orange plant in New Jersey. Even Bob Hope tells better stories than Harry Walters. Walters ought to quit the VA and become a Reagan speechwriter--he's got all the qualifications.



If "one picture is worth 1000 words" then this one must be a White House attempt to save up precious air for the aging President!

We can just imagine how at future Press Conferences, this photo could be passed around in response to questions like; "How do you feel about decent benefits for all veterans?" Then there's one we're very familiar with; "Do you support the testing, treatment and compensation of Agent Orange victims?" But, perhaps far and away the question that this photo would best answer is the one he's been dodging all along; "What is your attitude in response to veterans and people's demands that there be NO MORE VIETNAMS?"

Bonzo, it's past your bedtime!



AGENT ORANGE UPDATE

Lawsuit Delayed 1yr.



June 27, 1983 was supposed to be the start of the trial in the class-action suit against chemical companies which manufactured herbicides for use in Vietnam. Because of a decision by Judge Pratt, the trial has been delayed by one year.

The delay should not be considered a loss, except in time (which is something we hate to lose). The Judge is ask-

ing for more information on how little an amount of dioxin exposure is needed for a person to suffer health effects.

Meanwhile, Dow, Monsanto, Hooker and many other companies are coming under more and more fire. Our education, information and agitation have begun to pay off--five (and more) years of work by vets groups, large and small, and of many different

political persuasions, all around the country.

The pressure on Dow influenced them so much that they proposed spending \$3 million for an "independent" study on the effects of dioxin on human health. We can't help but wonder why this is; Dow claims they already have studies on their own exposed workers, and that they're all OK!

Right after Dow's study announcement, Tom Daschle (D-ND) revealed some secret memos he had from Dow Chemical. He was not going to let Dow's disinformation go unchallenged. The two memos he released were from 1980 internal communications saying that they suspected that dioxin broke down the body's immune systems, thus making people more susceptible to cancer and other diseases. Dow was busted in a lie by their own documents; no doubt there are more 'secret' memos to be revealed in the future.

Terms such as "herbicides," "dioxin" or "Agent Orange" are now much closer to being household words. People are making connections when the terms are used; we've done a lot of work at the grass roots and it's paying off. Chemical spills, like that in Times Beach, MO, have brought dioxin into America's living rooms. Already the EPA has bought up millions of dollars worth of contaminated property, though there hasn't been much movement on compensation for contaminated veterans. We were exposed to dioxins at levels 5,000 to 50,000 times stronger than that in Times Beach. The contradictions are

mounting daily.

Now we have a year to wait to get the class-action suit to trial, but we've still got plenty to do. For years we've been urging everyone to collect their records: military, VA, family physician, children's records; and to make a personal narrative of your experiences with your health since Vietnam. The lawyers for the suit need a copy of everything if you're part of the suit. You need all this stuff even if you're not part of the suit, especially if you think there's a chance you'll ever want to file a claim for yourself or your children. We've been telling you addresses to write for all the stuff you need--please DO IT! There are attorneys all over the country who will better be able to represent your interests if you participate in the record gathering. Attorney Schlagel is coordinating things in the Midwest, but there are lawyers all over the country who are part of the consortium involved in the case. The local lawyer will tell you the same thing: gather your records.

We learned many things from our experience in Southeast Asia. One of them is the power of determination: a small force can fight back against large odds when they know they are right. Veterans have launched an attack on some of the most powerful corporations in the country. We will win because we are fighting for what we know is just:

TEST, TREAT AND COMPENSATE
AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS

--John Lindquist
VVAW National
Office

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

The next day we went right back into it again. They'd fire us up and we had gotten to the top of the hill. We set up on top of the hill to 110 personnel. By 10:00 we had about 60 people down to about 60 people. This hill. There was a North Vietnamese soldier walked into the platoon sergeant's position. He should never do. Because his friend the hill and two M-79 and because six of them died. Low in the United States Army to get his citizenship. He was from Ecuador. He last saw the 11th. Rooks and Shroth got back to the hill. About that time the Vietnamese counter-attacked.

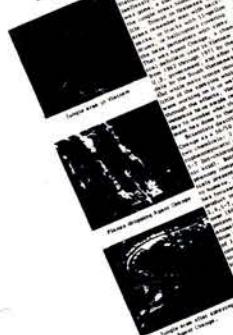
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VETERANS SELF-HELP GUIDE VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR Detest Agent Orange CHEMICAL TIME BOMB IN VIETNAM VETERANS



WHAT IS AGENT ORANGE...page 16 THE VETERAN Vietnam Veterans Against the War Veterans' Investigation into Effects & Problems VETS SAY 'TREAT AGENT ORANGE', TARGET VA



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Registration, Reagan and Repression SELECTIVE 'DIS'SERVICE

A recent statement from the Pentagon received heavy press when a general stated that the U.S. would need and would possibly implement a draft in the year 1986. It's a little confusing when we're constantly bombarded with Pentagon statements that resemble a seesaw: "Yes, we need one this year," or "No, we don't foresee the need for the draft in this decade." The most recent Congressional figures show the military getting quality enlistees above the actual present needs. The military has also historically played a yoyo game with figures and enlistment quotas. It's a simple process by which they decide to take a number less minorities, women, category 4 enlistees, or anyone, for that matter. "Quick boys, call the press: we're short a few. Tell them we're gonna need the draft."

A major stabilizing force in the question of the draft is the young men who are being asked to register for a future draft. They aren't exactly cooperating. In early May, the Selective Service dropped a couple of million bucks for prime-time advertising in an attempt to convince these people that registration is groovy. This expensive fiasco was called registration awareness week. It served to make the nation aware that registration is in serious trouble across the country. In states like California, Illinois, New York, Alaska and even Washington, DC, Registration Awareness Week probably had a negative effect--from the Selective Service point of view.

The Selective Service claims to have people signing up in the 90 percent range across the U.S. The Selective Service claims no more than 250,000 to 500,000 have refused to register. This is an interesting figure considering that the Selective Service is still looking for a coherent method of detecting people who haven't registered, beyond grabbing those young men who publicly defy the registration call.

Anti-draft forces estimate there are between 500,000 and 1 million non-registrants, and those who are refusing to register are on a roll. Government efforts to pinpoint non-registrants through a program by the Department of Education has collapsed.

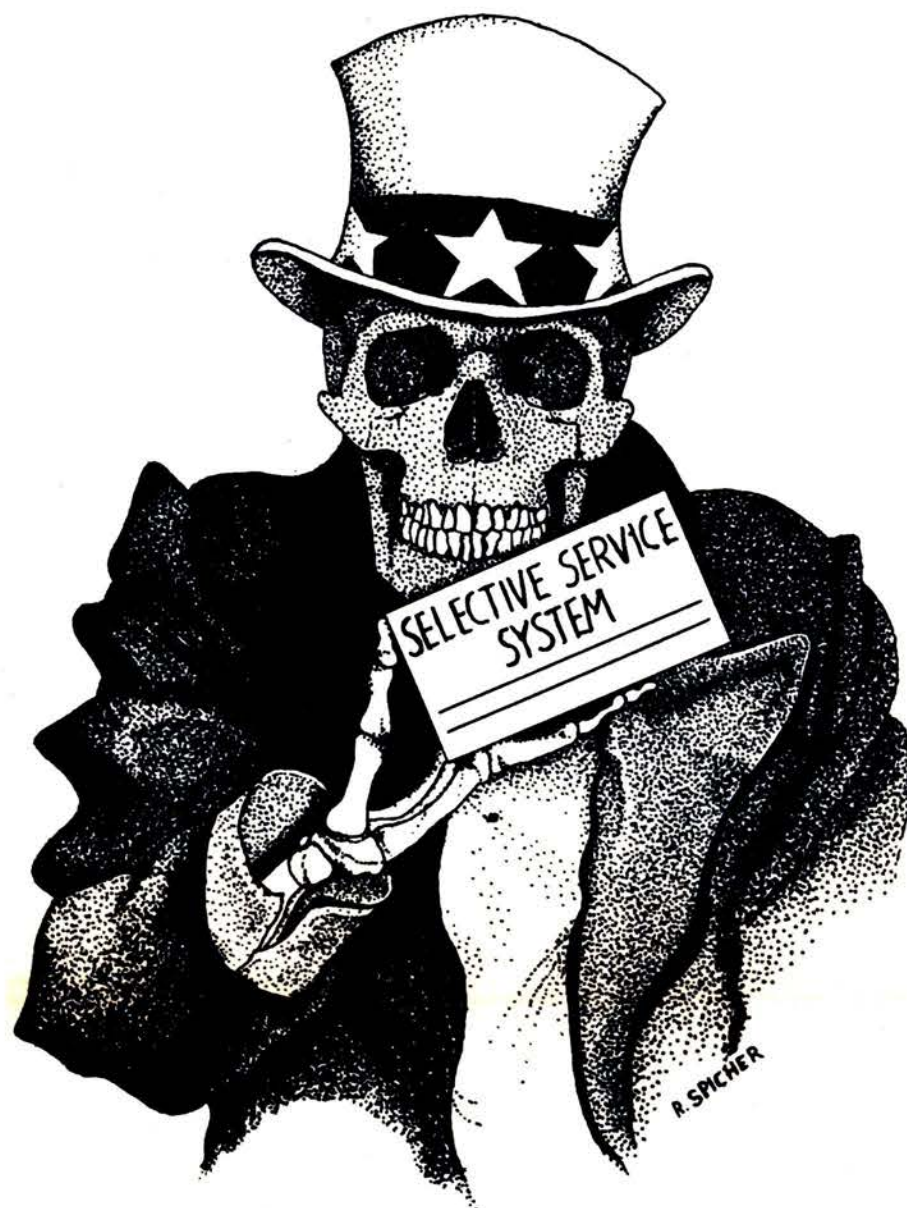
ment of Education has collapsed.

The government had hoped to require colleges and universities to report any students receiving federal loans who had not registered. The first wave of resistance came from the students themselves, followed closely by small colleges, religious institutions, large private colleges and finally the major land-grant schools. If things weren't grim enough for the government position, a suit initiated by Minnesotans in the Public Interest brought down the whole slimy house of cards with a court ruling requiring the end of the program with the Department of Education.

The second major tactic used by Selective Service to crush any resistance has been the courts, but that is now in legal limbo following a ruling on non-registration in California, followed closely by another and similar ruling in Iowa. The decision of the government to move only against non-registrants who spoke publicly against the draft proved shallow and not legally supportable. Currently 8 of the 10 men who were convicted of the "crime" of non-registration are free pending appeals; the other two elected to serve their sentences.

With their major strategies down the drain, maybe the Selective Service would rethink their tactics--but no. In a style recently coined Reagan Robotics, these minions of the Selective Service press ever onward muttering of mass indictments yet to come, but stand befuddled when asked why a registration if we're not to have a draft.

Seriously, a few Selective Service types with the uncanny ability to reason for themselves have privately admitted that things could be better. For instance they are probably hard pressed to locate upwards of 20% of those who have registered and suspect that 1/3 to 1/2 of the registrants have not given notification of changes in their addresses. Add to this the numerous Mickey Mouses, Donald Ducks, grandfathers and non-existent registrants on the computers, and General, your draft in 1986 is in serious trouble.



Hot Off The Press

AGENT ORANGE BOOKLETS

AGENT ORANGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

If there's a doctor or researcher in your community doing work around Agent Orange or dioxin, his or her life could be made much easier with the "Agent Orange Bibliography" for the clinician. Completed by Muriel Hogan, VVAW's national researcher, this volume has collected the best and most recent research on dioxin, with over 200 bibliographic citations. It's a job which hasn't been done before--and which needed doing. Copies are available from Milwaukee VVAW, 3433 N. Fratney St, Milwaukee, WI 53212 at \$5.00.

AGENT ORANGE DOSSIER

A new, 76-page "Agent Orange Dossier" has just come off the presses in Milwaukee. A collection of material which is not brought together anywhere else, the "Dossier" provides a wealth of information which both answer many questions about Agent Orange and will give the reader a lot more questions to think about. The "Dossier" costs \$4; send for your copy from Milwaukee VVAW (address above) or the VVAW National Office, P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625; rates for 5 or more copies can be discussed.

VVAW Forum

WAR AND THE DRAFT

On May 6, New York/New Jersey VVAW held a forum on war and the draft. About 80 people attended including students from 15 different high schools. The forum marked the beginning of our campaign to counter the Board of Education's Jr ROTC program in the New York City schools. Our main aim is to educate students about the realities of war and military recruitment. We were helped in building for the forum by the Coalition Against Militarism in Public Schools (CAMPS) who leafletted many of the city's high schools.

A slide show "Choice or Chance" (about avoiding military recruitment) and a film, "Only the Beginning" (graphically depicting the horror of the Vietnam War) were shown. Peter Mahoney of VVAW gave a brief history of the Vietnam War and compared it to the situation in El Salvador, warning the students that they could be used as cannon fodder if the Reagan administration starts a war there.

Then a panel of veterans-- Clarence Fitch, Jim Duffy, and Danny Friedman of VVAW, and "Cowboy" Bass of the Black Ve-



Photo by Jonathan Luna

VVAW speaking to students; Don't be fooled in the first place! (l-r): "Cowboy Bass", Jim Duffy, Clarence Fitch & Ed Damato

terans for Social Justice explained about their military recruitment, experiences in Vietnam and what happened afterwards. Clarence related how he was on his first patrol when he saw "48 guys killed in about a minute and a half.... All I could think of was I had 12 months to go."

Jim related how he was trained as a communications specialist but wound up "as a door gunner in a chopper.... What I learned was not a trade but a thousand and one ways to get the shaft." Despite military career training recruitment ads, Jim said in reference to

computer training, "You've got about as much experience as a guy who spent \$5,000 learning how to play PacMan."

Clarence and Cowboy talked about racial strife, saying that a disproportionate number of Blacks were in the line companies. Clarence said, "We carried a larger role in the fighting and dying. I wish I could've

sat in an audience like this before I went."

Danny, a veterans counselor, stated that he sees many veterans who say, "My recruiter promised...." If you fail a test or foul up in training, he said it "means they can make you anything they want. If you want out they'll let you sign a piece of paper but it'll follow you the rest of your life," referring to the less-than-honorable discharges.

We in VVAW look at the situation in El Salvador and realize that young people joining the military today may well be ordered to fight in a war similar to the one we were forced to fight in Vietnam, and that worries us. We don't want young people today to have to go through what we did.

--NY/NJ VVAW

Teaching or Killing

JR. ROTC DEBATED

On the morning of Armed Forces Day, May 21, VVAW was invited to send a member to a program sponsored by the Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) and the Coalition Against Militarism in the Public Schools (CAMPS). ESR is a group of predominately high school teachers from the city's public, parochial and private schools. They were holding a debate on whether Jr ROTC programs should be allowed in the city's public schools. Currently, there are programs in three NYC public high schools.

The program started with the showing of the slide show "Choice or Chance." Then a retired Navy Commander and

teacher of the Navy Jr ROTC program at Julia Richman High School in Manhattan spoke. He started by stating he was opposed to Ronald Reagan, he is against war, you should not believe recruiters, that Vietnam had been a tragedy, and that in his program they specifically try not to encourage students to enlist in the Navy. He was in favor of the program, however, because it didn't teach war; instead, it taught about oceanography and navigation, citizenship and patriotism and discipline. He pointed out that it was not the students in the Jr ROTC program who were spraying graffiti all over. Then, he let the father of a cadet speak.

Mr Dudley stated that he

had been a Marine and that nobody was going to tell him about boot camp. He had been shocked when his son joined. But, now he supported the program because it worked. It didn't teach killing, it taught patriotism. He stated, however, that his son was going to college, not into the Navy, and if there was a war he was getting his son out of it.

A draft counselor from AFSC and CAMPS pointed out that over 50% of the students in the Jr ROTC programs enlist in the military and only 4% get scholarships to colleges. In response to Mr Dudley's point that the program worked, he reminded the audience that Hitler's brown shirts worked to restore discipline and patriotism in Nazi Germany. He informed people that the military only paid 1/3 of the cost of the Jr ROTC program and the city had to pay the additional 2/3 of the cost.

The VVAW member, Terry Selzer, related his experience in a program that was similar to the Jr ROTC--Civil Air Patrol. He explained that it too didn't teach killing, but taught about aerospace and flight navigation. To young people it was great to

wear a uniform and have pride, machoism, etc. However, his experience in CAP did not prepare him for the reality of boot camp at Parris Island or the horrors of war. In Vietnam he learned that the primary job of the military is to wage war.

Following the debate there were questions from the educators. A video tape, prepared by the Columbia University School of Journalism was shown. It showed students in the Jr ROTC program at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. An interesting point in the film was a McDonald's manager who said they would be more apt to hire a student in the ROTC because they could follow orders. After the film, a counselor at DeWitt Clinton pointed out that while the students followed orders in uniform, they didn't bring that behavior into their other classes.

The debate was an excellent opportunity for educators to learn more about the military and the Jr ROTC program. For VVAW it was an excellent opportunity to make additional contacts to get into the schools and talk directly to the students.

--Terry Selzer
NY VVAW



VET'S ACTIONS AGAINST THE WAR FIGHTING FOR THE LIVING

Southern Region Update

VVAW, Athens (Georgia) and the Southern Region in general have been consistently busy. Primary activity is counter recruitment and providing alternative information to high school students. The Superintendent of the Athens schools agrees with the VVAW effort and has approved placing VVAW materials alongside the slick advertising brochures laid out by the recruiters.

Regional coordinator Elton Manzione has been satisfying many speaking engagements on the radio as well as in the local

schools. Recently he led two workshops at the Race Relations Institute, Nashville, TN; addressing the general topic of "The Arms Race vs the Human Race," Manzione represented VVAW and spoke on "Racism in the Military," and "Peace Organizing in the South."

VVAW Athens will join with CISPES at a demonstration outside Ft Benning, Georgia, on July 25th, focusing on the U.S. training of El Salvadorian government troops who are being trained at Ft Benning.

Lobbying in New York

On the morning of April 27, 1983, veterans from VVAW, Black Veterans for Social Justice, Vietnam Veterans of America and several college vets clubs filled up a bus to travel to Albany, NY. Unlike many other bus trips this was not to demonstrate. Instead, it was to lobby the New York State Legislature. The trip was part of a statewide effort by many veteran's organizations.

Earlier in the year VVAW had decided to participate in the lobbying efforts. Chapter members attended meetings of the Brooklyn VVA and developed plans to work together. A joint fund-raising party, featuring Bev Grant and the Human Condition, was organized. The party was a success and enough money was raised to pay for the bus trip. By contacting other organizations, such as the BVSJ, the bus was filled.

On the bus ride Mike Gold and Job Mashariki distributed materials outlining the priority issues, discussed current legislative proposals and the schedule for the day. The group arrived in Albany at "Rocky's Folly"--the huge mall of government buildings built by Rockefeller with the finest imported marble and other materials that cost taxpayers a fortune. The first event of the day was a meeting of the veterans organizations and the members

and staff of the newly created Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Veterans Affairs. The older veterans groups were jubilant because it had taken them 11 years to have these committees created. Prior to this there had only been sub-committees which dealt with veterans issues amongst their other work. The advantage of standing committees is they have staff resources and can introduce legislation directly to the full Assembly and Senate.

Following the opening session, vets split up into small groups to visit with individual lawmakers and their staffs. The key issue VVAW, VVA and BVSJ were pushing for were passage of legislation granting a tuition waiver for Vietnam-era veterans at the State and City universities of New York, and continued funding for the State's Dioxin Study Commission. This Commission has been successful in getting information to veterans about Agent Orange.

The initial response of the people met was favorable. Some, however, pointed out that while there was support for the issues we were lobbying for, there might not be sufficient funds to pay for the programs. New York, like many states, has a major budget crisis. Rather than seeking to expand programs, there is talk of substantial cutbacks and layoffs of state em-

ployees. In order to achieve these goals and assure not only passage of legislation but funding in the budget, additional lobbying is needed. Veterans must contact their representatives and Governor to insure passage of these programs. Similar sit-

uations face veterans across the country where limited state budgets require that vets, and especially Vietnam vets, get out and fight for what we need.

--Terry Selzer
NY VVAW

'Our Sons Won't Go' NYC Armed Forces Day



Photo by Ed Damato

Active Duty G.I.'s respond to "Eyes Right" command from VVAW contingent during Armed Forces Day Parade.

Armed Forces Day is all about glorifying the military. To do the job this year, over 1000 service men and women as well as APC's and artillery pieces were brought to New York City. An Air Force jet was even towed up 5th Avenue with Ed Koch, the mayor of New York, inside waving his arms and jerking around like Bozo the clown. On the reviewing stand a large number of military brass stood around patting each other on the backs and saluting the various units.

But this year they got more to "review" than they were planning on. To protest the increasing foreign intervention and threat of war that the Reagan Administration is bringing to America, about 25 members of the New York/New Jersey Vietnam Vets Against the War marched against the direction of the parade. We carried the chapter banner and displayed signs saying "No More Vietnams--U.S. Out of El Salvador," "Stop the Arms Race," "Test, Treat & Com-

pensate Agent Orange Victims," and "ROTC Out of the High Schools." When we reached the reviewing stand, we began chanting "Hell No, Our Son's Won't Go!" Then we spread out along the side of the parade route where we distributed thousands of leaflets and yelled anti-war slogans to the passing GI's, many of whom responded favorably.

After the march ended, we went to a nearby tavern to moisten our parched throats and discuss the action. One vet seemed to sum up everyone's feelings when he said, "It was good because it was a reminder to the government that we remember what Vietnam was all about and we won't sit idly by and watch Reagan drag us into another damn war all over again."

Later that night the local TV news covered our demonstration; we even got better coverage than "Ace" pilot Koch.

--Dave Cline
NJ VVAW

CROSS THE COUNTRY G, HONORING THE DEAD



Chicago Mothers Day

Chicago VVAW joined with an estimated 10,000 other concerned people in the "Mother's Day Walk for Peace" sponsored by Women for Peace. The event was a two-fold opportunity for the chapter since Women for Peace requested that VVAW provide security for the stage in the Grant Park assembly area and, in addition, VVAW had an information table filled with copies of THE VETERAN and information about VVAW activities.

Seventeen members of the Chicago chapter stationed themselves in front of the stage where speakers such as Dr Ben-

jamin Spock spoke of the need for both superpowers to get off the nuclear bandwagon.

VVAW made another significant contribution to the event as our "No More Vietnams" banner was positioned to underscore the walkers reason for being on the street. Most TV coverage of the Walk for Peace included the banner, while a number of speakers at the Festival recalled Vietnam when expressing opposition to U.S. intervention in El Salvador. Clearly, the day provided VVAW in Chicago with stronger ties with the Chicago peace movement.



Photo by Lee Channing

VVAW Chicago steps out at "Mother's Day Peace Walk." NO MORE VIETNAMS banner tells the story for the day.



National Office Photo

Jim Wachtendonk, of VVAW Madison, Wisconsin was one of the featured performers at Mother's Day event.

Memorial Day in Chicago



National Office Photo

Father Bob Bosse speaks to vets, their families and friends during Chicago Memorial Day ceremonies.

Memorial Day 1983 will not soon be forgotten by Chicago VVAW. Fifty or so vets, families and friends gathered on Sunday for a picnic in the western suburbs. Comprised of VVAW, both from Milwaukee and Chicago, and the Afro-American Veterans Association, the picnic filled a large shelter with people, coolers, etc, which later went flying as the edge of a tornado blew through, bringing heavy rains, hail, and a quick drop in temperature. When the dust settled, about 15 "hardcore" picnickers were left huddled in one group, the children wrapped in blankets, the adults wearing

garbage-bag ponchos and gathered close in to the grills.

Better weather arrived in time for Monday's traditional wreath-laying in Daley Plaza at the Eternal Flame. Forty-six persons assembled to hear a number of speakers including Francisco Rameira, a Salvadorian refugee, Father Bob Bosse, a Catholic priest, and Barry Romo and Pete Zastrow of the VVAW National Office, among others. All spoke to the central theme that while we honor the dead, we must also fight for the living and the prevention of still more senseless death and waste in the wake of Reagan adventurism

Memorial Day in Milwaukee

Monday, May 30th, 1983 marked the 5th year in a row that Milwaukee VVAW has been invited for the Woods V.A.M.C.

Ceremony for Memorial Day. About 20 Milwaukee VVAW members showed up on a cold gray and rainy Monday. We had an excellent wreath donated by a 'Nam vet and his future wife. We walked silently behind the wreath, passing between the over 22,000 graves.

The Memorial Day Ceremony is like most traditional ceremonies around the U.S., but this year we also learned some history. Back in 1867, the women of Milwaukee raised \$150,000 to build the first national veterans home in the U.S. Woods, Wisconsin housed 2,200 vets and, in addition, of-

fered a place for burial. We even saw some of the old graves, and some of the buildings still stand.

The ceremony had its usual political speech, but this year, Congressman Jim Moody (D-Milwaukee) spoke about nuclear weapons and war and the need for a freeze and cutting defense spending. This was a change from the past. We ended with all the organizations presenting the wreath; VVAW was represented by our youngest member (Keith Stoney, 25) and our oldest vet (Harold Davis, 61).

At the reception we were able to get literature and buttons out to people. Our best support came from the POW people who encouraged us to keep fighting for decent benefits for all vets!

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!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War
P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625

NATIONAL COORDINATORS

Bill Davis
(312) 386-1413

Barry Romo
(312) 327-5756

Peter Zastrow
(312) 275-0043

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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 Guilder."
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.



Membership Form

P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625

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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 _____

Common People With Common Sense FIGHTING THE MX

LETTER

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.

Vietnam veterans continue to be at the forefront of anti-war activity. In the western U.S. John McNamer, a 35-year-old Bronze Star winner is one of the most noteworthy. THE VETERAN spoke with McNamer during a Chicago stopover on a nationwide tour he is making to underscore anti-MX missile activity.

"I make it clear right off I'm a Vietnam veteran because the basis of my feelings comes directly from the nonsense of having to destroy a village in order to 'save it'," McNamer asserts. "This is the same kinds of twisted logic that we're seeing with the MX, only this time it's the western U.S. that will be destroyed and I'm not going to stand for it."

McNamer first got active in 1980 on Easter when he accompanied Rev. John Lemnitzer of the Missoula Montana Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and others of the congregation to form a symbolic barrier to the entrance of Malmstrom Air Force Base near Great Falls, Montana. Two hundred Minuteman missiles are deployed in that area. Rev. Lemnitzer had previously been warned by the Air Force that he was prohibited from entering the base and should he do so, he would be arrested. On this Easter Sunday, carrying a cross, the minister stepped over a painted white line marking the base boundary and was arrested. He was subsequently charged and convicted and sent to a federal prison.

The following Easter McNamer took the place of the incarcerated clergyman and he "crossed the line" and received a warning. "I felt real good to have my name on the record and my body on the line," he recalls. "I had been thinking a lot about this country's nuclear weapons' build-up.... I had read news accounts of the Pentagon's boast that the Carter administration's plan to build an MX 'racetrack' in Nevada and Utah would be 'the largest public works project in the history of mankind. I thought at that time, 'What a sad commentary on this society! Is this what this nation is all about?'"

McNamer remains appalled by what he terms the "obscene wastefulness" of the racetrack proposal and the MX-posed dangers to the land he loves. He

began talking to many people and reading extensively about the MX. "I started to understand that the people who oppose the government's nuclear weapons policies aren't crazy individuals.... I finally made up my mind that I had to do something," says McNamer in explaining his slow evolution from a simple rancher to organizer and activist. His present stature, however, didn't crystallize until August of 1981. At that time the Reagan Administration was considering rejecting the MX racetrack plan in Nevada and Utah. Montana, among other states, was being predicted as one alternative and that would bring the issue right into McNamer's backyard. "It was clear to me that the federal government wasn't carrying through in Utah and Nevada because of organized opposition--basically hostility--to the MX in those two states. The Pentagon was looking for a dumping ground for the project and Montana was a likely candidate because we already had Minuteman silos in the state."

McNamer responded by drafting the "Peoples' Petition" which simply stated: "We the undersigned hereby register opposition to the placement of MX missiles in Montana and express our concern over the escalating development in deployment of nuclear weapons by the U.S." Says McNamer, "It was a pretty

strong statement directed specifically at the U.S."

The Petition built quickly into what became Initiative #91 on the Montana ballot in 1982. With the assistance of Women For Peace and a full-page newspaper ad, a statewide petition network was formed and saw the success of the Initiative #91 when 57% of Montana voters favored it.

What began as a one-man army evolved into "Ranchers for Peace" and now "Western Solidarity." Eight western states now interact among groups opposing the MX. "The movement is growing," says McNamer, "because it's attracting common people with common sense--people who refuse to have faith any longer in a handful of men who claim infallible expertise while promoting the absurd and the obscene--the escalating nuclear weapons overkill capacity which, obviously, instead of protecting our national security threatens our destruction and the destruction of the world."

(John McNamer can be contacted at Ranchers for Peace, Route 1, Box 104, Charlo, MT 59824.)

--Lee Channing
VVAW National
Office

I recently attended a workshop entitled "Life, Death and Transition" led by noted thanatologist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross who has conducted these groups all over the world. In the company of 23 other people, one of whom was also a Vietnam vet, I experienced 5 days of extremely intense sharing and venting of various griefs, angers and sorrows--emotions that are so close to the being of most of us...

The program design was based upon release. This was accomplished by a process of externalization or public expression of these emotions that have been such a burden, if like myself, they have been kept locked-up. For myself, ANGER was a prime concern and I would learn to vent it by thrashing on phone books with a rubber hose! In this way the anger could be focused and verbally expressed at the same time which resulted in a tremendous sense of relief.

When the time was right for me, I was able to let go of 14 yrs of pain, rage and guilt. I haven't been able to cry much since my return but, when it came, it was a flood. All the grief and guilt about the people I killed and the senseless destruction I was a part of just poured out. Then the rage and anger I felt about being used and about seeing my friends killed and wounded for nothing boiled over and focused on the telephone books. The room was filled with tattered bits of paper when I was finally too exhausted to continue but, for the first time since I got back, I felt totally peaceful inside; the rage, anger and pain had subsided.

One thing that struck me throughout the whole week was the interest and curiosity that everyone there expressed about how we veterans felt and why we felt we were the way we were. Many of the participants had husbands, brothers or sons who were vets that wouldn't talk about Vietnam. They wanted to understand and help but they were frustrated by the lack of information available. Many thanked us for being there and giving them a start on getting a handle they could take home with them. For myself, I knew that I'd be talking a lot more with my wife...

-- Ned Curran
Solerno, CA.



38 Years after the Fact ATOMIC VETS

Thirty-eight years after the first veterans were exposed to atomic tests the VA has begun to treat veterans who have become ill as a result of their exposure. For Vietnam veterans who are victims of Agent Orange exposure, the final treatment of the atomic vets--though many years later than it should have been--is a hopeful sign.

As many as 500,000 GI's took part in the various atomic tests, both in the Pacific and in Nevada between 1945 and 1962. A smaller group was exposed to the deadly effects of radiation when sent in to Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the Japanese surrender in 1945.

Although the government did not have a clear idea of how much radiation might be dangerous to an individual, even some of the simplest precautions were not observed; as in other wars in other places, the GI was the easiest item to replace

and therefore the most expendable.

Several groups of radiation-exposed veterans have been fighting for VA treatment for years as they watched their numbers dwindle; various forms of cancer and thyroid problems were the most prevalent results of exposure. As in the case of Agent Orange, however, the VA dragged its feet at every opportunity. At one point in the effort, only 69 out of 3,325 radiation exposure claims in front of the Department of Veterans Benefits were found to be "service-connected." And even after Congress passed legislation directing the VA to provide medical care to radiation victims, it still took the VA another 17 months to announce that it would begin such treatment.

Treatment for Agent Orange victims should come next; we can't afford to wait as long.



Those who take the meat from the table
Teach contentment.

Those for whom the taxes are destined
Demand sacrifice.

Those who eat their fill speak
to the hungry
Of wonderful times to come.

Those who lead the country into the abyss
Call ruling too difficult
for ordinary men.

--Bertolt Brecht

Anniversary

Anti Nuclear Rally Commemorated

On June 12, 1982, one million people rallied in New York City's Central Park demanding an end to the use of nuclear weapons. The first anniversary of this historic event, the largest political rally in the history of the U.S., was commemorated with a benefit performance of the new documentary "In Our Hands." This benefit was held at the Beacon Theatre in New York City.

Actor Ossie Davis was the

MC. Speakers included Bella Abzug, Coretta Scott King, Jules Pfeiffer, and actor John Shea of the film "Missing." Performing artists Tom Hall, Odetta and Tom Chapin entertained.

The film documents the rally with clips of interviews with participants offering their views on nuclear weapons and their feelings about the day's activities. Other clips show the hundreds of thousands marching through the city streets and

highlights of rally speeches.

One note of interest to readers of THE VETERAN: at the film's climax, showing Pete Seeger and a host of performers singing from the state, the action briefly cuts to the VVAW banner held above the crowd. It is the last banner shown in the film, and as one VVAW personage put it, "They saved the best for last!"

The speakers at the benefit asked people to continue to

build the movement against nuclear weapons and for human decency. They urged everyone to attend a massive rally on August 27th in Washington DC planned to honor the 20th anniversary of the famous civil rights demonstration highlighted by Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. They will be saying-- "We still have a dream--jobs, peace and freedom."

--Ed Damato
NY VVAW

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VETS' NOTES Cutting Thru Red Tape Making Sense of Regs

DISCHARGE UPGRADING

Since World War II, four million veterans have received less than honorable discharges from the U.S. military. Of those millions, an estimated 3/4's of a million are from the Vietnam era, most as a result of discharge without benefit of a trial or hearing (general or "other than honorable" discharge). At present men and women are still being discharged from the military, many without benefit of adequate representation or erroneous application of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, a questionable legal system to begin with.

Currently the various branches of the military are conducting traveling Discharge Review Boards (DRB) which consist of five-member panels of military officers representing Air Force, Army, and combined Navy/Marine Corps boards. These boards deal with discharges in the categories of general and "other than honorable." How they administer their peculiar forms of justice depends on the different branches. The Air Force and Ar-

my DRB's have the reputation of being more lenient, and the Navy/Marine combination being far less cooperative. Being a Navy veteran seeking an upgraded discharge is a disadvantage because of the Marine composition of the Navy/Marine DRB's. Discharge upgrading counselors have rated Navy Boards ranging from "maniacs" to "gross" in terms of their cooperative spirit.

An estimated 30% to 50% of people applying for upgrading are successful. This is probably due to the quality of counselling individuals get before applying for the upgrade. There are not so many people doing upgrade counselling as in previous years, due to lack of available funding. Of the advisors available, the quality of advice and guidance the applicant receives is in direct proportion to the success rate of upgrading for that agency and, of course, how good a chance the individual has to getting his/her discharge upgraded.

To apply for the DRB's an applicant must have received

"bad paper" after today's date, 1967. For a vet applying for upgrading, the sometimes lengthy process can be discouraging when the outcome can conceivably make or break the individual's ability to get vets benefits or employment. With the length and complications of the process also go a political set of problems. One attorney recently placed it in perspective when he stated, "With the Reagan administration in power it would be fair to say there has been a noticeable chill cast over the operation of the Boards and any gay cases in particular are treated with hostility beyond the bounds of the law."

A realistic look at the process for discharge upgrading shows it to be merely a bandaid over a large wound. If all eligible vets with bad papers were to apply in a year or two, the system set up to administer to them would throw the waiting list into the next century, hardly an encouraging or efficient method of upgrading. The long waiting period and complicated

process discourage many applications from the beginning.

The discharge upgrading process should be taken on for those vets who need relief to get benefits or jobs. Done correctly, upgrading is not impossible. The long-term relief for vets and future vets lies in the form of a single-type discharge program that VVAW and others have supported for years.

For more specific information of discharge upgrading, contact your local VVAW or:

Midwest Committee on
Military Counselling
50 E Van Buren, #809
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 939-3349

National Lawyers Guild
Military Law Task Force
1168 Union St, 4th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101
(714) 233-1701

Veterans Education Project
1346 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036

(Thanks to Joe Shuman and Randy Newfeld for help with this article.)

Continued Central America

"team players," a definition which suggests that they will, under no circumstances, report or see anything which Reagan and his crew don't wish to hear.

Don't forget that this is a President who could summarize the experience of the Vietnam War by calling it a "noble cause." Seen through the Presidential blinders, Central American policy has a tradition which goes back to Vietnam and before: simply, it's to stop the Commies, no matter where or how or what it takes. If someone else's kid gets killed in the process, that's unfortunate but "noble." And should such a death occur, we will redouble our resolve and march straight down the road to Hell that we've set for the country. Again.

That "again" is what gives Vietnam vets a vital role in the early warning system concerning Central America. If you see

a disaster headed your way, you can either warn people to get out of the way or you can stick your head in the sand. In Central America there are consistent and unmistakable replays of the experience of Vietnam.

For different vets different incidents will set off the fatal echoes of Vietnam. Perhaps it's the El Salvadorian recent military "pacification program" called "Operation Well-Being." "Winning Hearts and Minds" blinks like a neon sign.

Or there's an interview with General Nutting, just departed as U.S. Commander in Central America: "The guerilla will persist as long as he thinks he has a chance of succeeding through violence and intimidation. But when he is convinced he can't succeed, he'll fold his cards and turn to acquisition of political power by democratic means." Makes it hard not to recall some of the rosy and optimistic predictions and justifications for increased aid to Vietnam in the early days of that war by the wise military sages.

For me the memory of Vietnam came through strongest when El Salvador's provisional president Alvaro Magana, visiting Washington toward the end of June to beg, borrow or steal whatever he could take home with him, said he could see "no possibility of U.S. troops in El Salvador.... We don't need it. With enough military aid we can handle the situation ourselves." How many self-serving statements from Vietnamese presidents like Thieu or Ky or Diem played on whatever the U.S. political climate happened to be to concoct the most suitable lie in order to get as much as possible? Here we go again!

For vets the job is to make as much noise as possible each time policies, words, ideas, phrases, acts are repeated--in short, to point to each similarity between U.S. activities in Central America and U.S. activities in Vietnam. Few Americans--left, right or political center--have any interest in repeating Vietnam, which is one of the reasons why Reagan and his apologists devote so much

time and energy to trying to point out the differences between today's ventures in Central America and the 1960's ventures into the Southeast Asian swamp.

Of course there are differences and we cannot defeat our own case by refusing to notice that Central America is a lot closer to the U.S. than was Vietnam (which means, among other things, that U.S. forces and supplies are only hours away from any of the Central American countries), or that there are other significant differences. But the poverty of the people, and the people rebelling against that poverty in an attempt to have the right to decide their own futures--and the U.S. government doing all that it can to defeat that hope--it's all the same. We can't afford to forget. And we can't afford to let others forget.

No More Vietnams--
U.S. Out of Central America

--Pete Zastrow
National Office
VVAW

RECOLLECTIONS

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

After They Were Dead, Really, They Would Still Take 3 or 4 Steps Forward

THE LAST GRUNT

The captain comes around to our position and says, "You guys are getting to be celebrities back in the world; the lifer times or somebody is sending out correspondents."

He leaves. We have been in this hell-on-earth for six or seven days, I no longer know. So many have died that I don't know anything anymore except that sooner or later North Vietnam has got to run out of bodies to feed to the fires of hell.

Battalion says we have killed over 700. The Air Force is claiming a thousand. Hanoi Hannah says they had sent a battalion to wipe us out but they could not do it, so next will be a regiment and hell, we have already had to butcher at least one regiment, it seems to me.

I don't know anymore. Every night they probe or attack and every night they kill some of us and we kill all of them. You go 500 meters in any direction and you see maggot-covered bodies, burnt bodies, dismembered bodies, pieces of bodies--just flesh, and it is everywhere, everywhere. Every night, and more every morning we have to go out and collect more weapons, more webb gear. I have been in this country for 21 months, through Tet of '68, through sniper fire, 51's, barrages, mines. And through all of Vietnam--the mud, the leeches, the night marches, the CP's the OP's, the long-range patrol, the ambushes. I have been already from 100 meters inside North Vietnam to 40 clicks south of Saigon and never before and never again will I see anything like Ni Ha.

It is a study in utter gore. The dead just keep piling up. No matter how many there are, there are always more. No wonder the Marines could not hold this bit of hell. The stench of it alone is enough to kill any normal man, let alone the NVA artillery, rockets, automatic weapons, mortars, cannons--they have got more firepower than we do except for the air.

Hell, they have never sent a correspondent to this unit before and I think they will regret that they do now. The captain

comes by and says, "Well forget the correspondent; they zapped his bird. I think it was for CBS or somebody, but hell, I don't know. Anyway, he ain't comin' now."

"Did they get out of it?"

"Don't know; they went down somewhere next to the old marine positions. They're sending armor out for what was



left now."

"Well hell it wouldn't make any difference. They ain't goin' to show the people back in the world this."

That's what we say to ourselves. They never did. Nobody ever heard of Ni Ha. Nobody ever saw what Hamburger Hill or 882 or 881 or the A Shau Vally or Kontum or Hue or anywhere else that was really bad. But hell, we did what we had to to live through it. But hell, nobody ever gave a damn about a grunt. Nobody ever gave a damn about those poor bastards out there or us.

So we go out and collect webb gear and weapons again. And I'm taking the steel pot off one NVA about 20 I guess; he'd been hit about 100 times or so--par for the course. Anyway, the top of his head comes off when I pull the pot, and his brain falls on my boot and I feel sick, but hell, I just kick it off and get the rest of the shit, throw it in a poncho, and start back before they start sniping or shelling or whatever they try next.

I see a GI laying on the ground pukin' his guts out and I say, "Take it easy, man," but he doesn't even hear me. He just gets up and runs back toward the CP and I see he got a camera and hell, I guess he

was the correspondent--I don't know. They medivac him, whatever he was.

We go out and get more webb gear. They'll be back tonight. Damn it, they're back every damn night and hell, the only thing here is what's left of a village--a church steeple, god knows how many dead men, a graveyard; the "street of no

joy" to our backs and the damn sand.

There just ain't nothing else left. Hell, if I know why they want it so bad. And shit if it was up to me they could have it. I would be damn glad to leave but battalion says hold, so we hold. But, like every other damn thing in this place, it is stupid, pointless and insane.

This stinking piece of dirt ain't worth nothing, but before it's done, close to a company of Americans will die here and 5 battalions of North Vietnamese and for absolutely nothing. We will leave and two days after we do, the NVA will take it again and then walk off of it and never come back, to the best of my knowledge, at least. That's all; it was a stupid game of tag the generals wanted to play with pawns that nobody gave a damn about. And though I don't really know the exact number, a hell of a lot of those pawns died at Ni Ha. You could not just kill the NVA, you had to desintegrate them to stop them. They were absolutely out of their minds; you hit a guy with an 18-round burst and he just kept coming. After they were dead, really, they would still take three or four steps forward.

--The Last Grunt

Oliphant

