



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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VETERANS DAY NOV. 11, '83

EL SALVADOR

Behind the Lines With a Nam Veteran

"One of Reagan's myths is that the Salvadorans are a violent people."

"Archbishop Romero, before being assassinated, told the Salvadoran people that if the choice was between violence and survival, violence was sanctioned."

"In the liberated zones (those areas controlled by the popular forces) a new society based on cooperation is unfolding. The people, for the first time, are taking control of their own destinies."

"A couple of priests, Rutilio Grande and Jose Alas, brought their people a powerful message: your misery is not due to God's will but to the greed of a few men."

"United Nations statistics tell of 70% malnutrition in El Salvador. 25% of the children die before age five. 2% of the population owns 60% of the arable land."

Dr Charlie Clements knows
turn to p.10

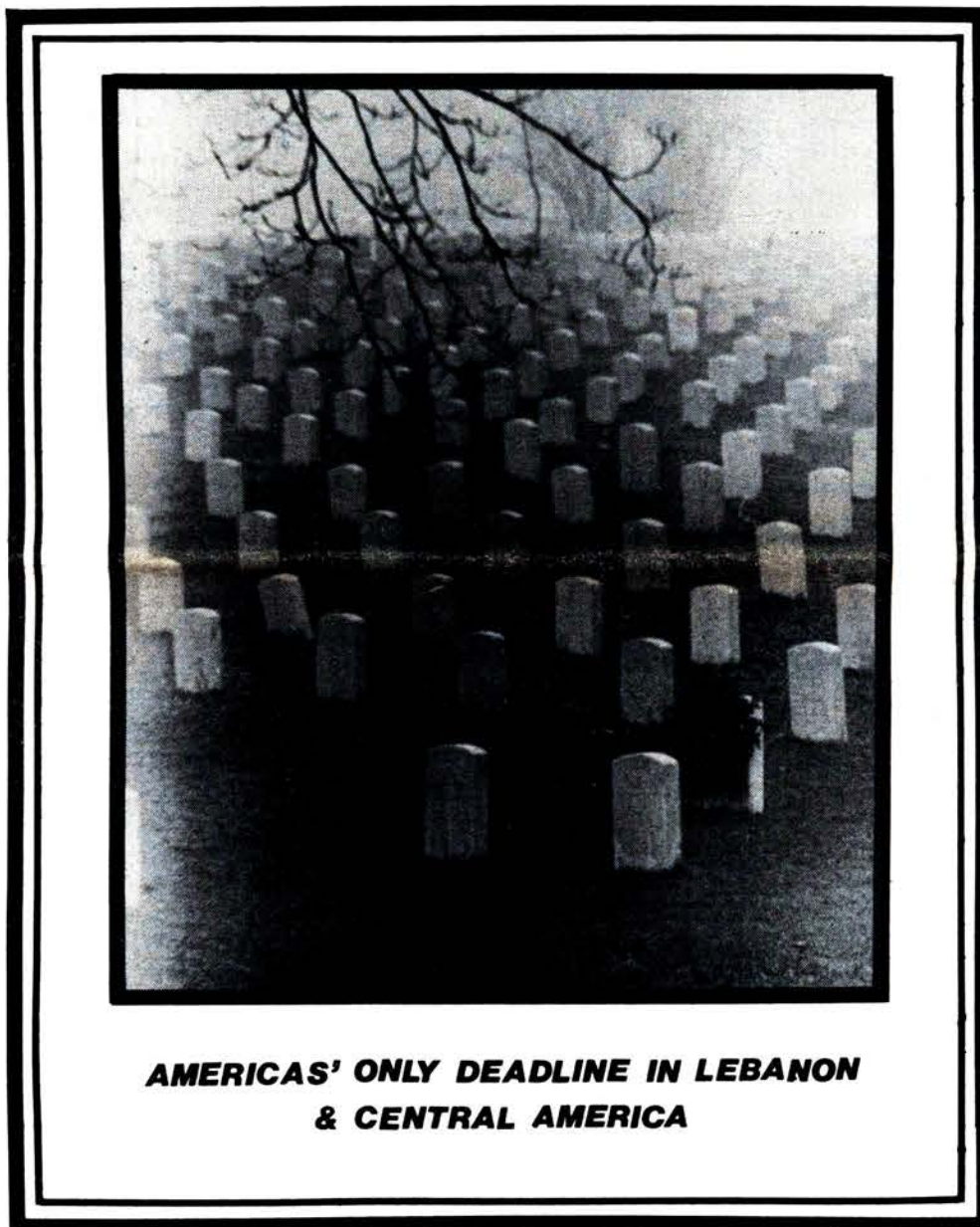
If It Sounds Like Vietnam, It Must Be LEBANON

American Marines are dying in the Middle East. While the papers are full of "facts" about the Lebanese "government," army, and history, there are more than a few facts omitted. THE VETERAN presents some of them for you here:

1. Lebanon was a French

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**AMERICAS' ONLY DEADLINE IN LEBANON
& CENTRAL AMERICA**

colony whose borders were extended to include such Muslim areas as Tripoli and the Beka Valley.

2. Lebanon became "independent" in 1943. The French insured a 6 to 5 Christian majority in all government offices despite a Muslim majority of the citizenry. This was done through a manipulation of a 1930's census which has not been updated since.

3. The country remained relatively stable until 1956 by adhering to strict neutrality be-

tween the West and Muslim worlds.

4. The US changed this by pouring CIA funds into the coffers of the Christian President who attempted to change the Constitution and align with the US, leading to a civil war, followed by US troop invasion in 1957.

5. The Phalangist Party, the group that presently controls the government is modeled after the Fascist parties of Spain and Italy including a theory of racial superiority over their own Muslim citizens.

turn to p.5

In 1983 Veterans Day comes at a particularly important time. Despite talk of recovery, the reality is unemployment and more unemployment as far as 'Nam vets are concerned. And it seems as if Agent Orange is going to be studied until the last Vietnam vet dies (and then the government will decide to compensate vets, not their families). One would think the VA is importing water from Lourdes the way they are cutting our disability benefits.

At the same time, GI's are bringing "peace" to Lebanon in a non-war where they are killed, U.S. troops are increasing in Central America, and funds and aid are increased to every two-bit dictator this side of Hitler (over \$100 million in military aid to Honduras alone)!

As veterans we must speak out!

The leadership of the VFW collects funds to prop up the counter revolutionaries in Nicaragua (when Congress is cutting funds for the same bunch of terrorists). The leadership of the American Legion and VFW are backing Reagan with all the enthusiasm that alcohol and Geritol can muster, but Reagan is literally a dead end for 95% of Vietnam vets and American GI's. VVAW will not forget the combat vets (no matter what they're called) being produced every day by Reagan and Co. They will also need re-entry programs and a GI Bill.

This Veterans Day local VVAW Chapters will organize events to speak to our real needs:

TEST. TREAT & COMPENSATE AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS!

No More Vietnams!
AID FOR VETERANS,
NOT DICTATORS!
Jobs or Income!



FRAGGIN'

Sp 5 Willy(Ret.)



There's a lawsuit presently before the courts that I find interesting. The Manville Corporation is supposed to shell out \$950,000 to fifty people who worked in Navy shipyards during World War II. These people were exposed to asbestos dust and developed asbestosis and related diseases.

The thing that makes this interesting is that now Manville has turned around and sued the government for help in paying off because--you guessed it--the Navy knew all along that exposure to asbestos was harmful, and Manville lawyers have documents which they feel prove this.

What strikes me is the parallel to the Agent Orange case where the chemical companies are being sued, and the government knew about Orange all along. In the asbestos case, the ship is sinking and the rats are fighting each other for the last lifeboat. Maybe some day with A.O. too?

* * * * *

You know how the Russians are supposed to be conducting biological warfare in Afghanistan, Laos and Cambodia, the so-called "yellow rain" that's killing people. Well now two scientists from Harvard and Yale claim that the evidence we have of yellow rain may be nothing more than bee droppings. They say that all the samples of yellow rain occur in conjunction with these bee droppings. I ain't no fan of the Russkys--what with their invasion of Afghanistan and their militarization of SE Asia. However, I would want more evidence before I believe they are involved in biological and chemical warfare. (Don't forget this is one of the justifications for Congress being asked to appropriate funds for U.S. CB weapons.) Remember, the people who are bringing us evidence of these Russian activities are the same people who couldn't count NVA troops, used the smell of VC urine to call in air strikes and manufactured the Gulf of Tonkin incident. They didn't know shit from Shinola then, so why expect them to know bee shit from beeswax now.

* * * * *

Speaking of not knowing bee shit, there's Caspar Weinberger our ever alert Secretary of Defense. Old Cap said that one of the reasons for continued U.S. aid to El Salvador is that it "is on the mainland of the United States, and we do have a responsibility for the defence of the continental United States, over and above all other priorities."

I missed something here. Did Hurricane Alicia loose El Salvador from its moorings and blow it ashore in Galveston. I must have missed the nightly news on the day it happened.

* * * * *

Speaking of great thoughts from great leaders, consider

GRENADE of the MONTH

We'll give this month's grenade to the members of the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records. Why do these nameless faces or faceless names deserve the honor? Let me explain.

There once was a major general in the Army by the name of Edwin A. "Ted" Walker. Around 1960 he was commander of the 24th Infantry Division in Europe. He lost that job because he was using John Birch Society material for troop indoctrination.

He eventually was forced to resign from the Army and entered a career as a segregationist. He flew flags upside down in Texas and was arrested and charged with inciting rebellion and assaulting federal officials during the skirmishes which were intended to prevent James Meredith from enrolling as the first black at the University of Mississippi.

"Imagine that son of a bitch being commander of a division until last year," is what President Kennedy said about him in tapes recently released by the Kennedy Library.

Then, last year Edwin A. Walker had retired rank restored and began receiving military retired pay following action by the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records. The way the Board did it was sneaky. They appointed Walker to the

Barry Goldwater that faithful old right winger. They've been having congressional hearings lately to supposedly iron out problems in the Pentagon--everything from cost overruns to policy in Central America.

They trotted out Goldwater to hear what kind of wisdom he had on the subject.

His solution to the problems was to end civilian control of the military because we lost the last two wars. Maybe he was thinking of Caspar Weinberger and feels that generals could better find El Salvador on the map. But then again he wasn't in Vietnam where he would have seen military leaders that would have made Caspar look like a genius.

reserve grade of chief warrant officer. Then they retired him the next day and immediately advanced him on the retired list to major general so that he could receive retired pay for a two star.

Let this be a lesson for all you vets out there with bad paper. Immediately get your nose out of The Veteran. Burn this paper along with any old copies of The Veteran. Get you some right wing literature to read, do something right wing nutty in public and then appeal your discharge to the Army Board for the Correction of Military Records. You just might get your discharge changed to honorable. However, when you retire, don't expect \$47,000 a year. That's reserved for heroes like Major General Walker.

In the mean time, let's give the grenade to the members of the Board who put Walker on easy street. And let's hope Walker is in the room when they receive their reward.



No More Vietnams

Hot Off The Press

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 answers 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.



16 pages of testimony by victims of Agent Orange and experts on the effects of the chemical on Vietnam Vets and their families. 50¢ post paid.

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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.

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Vet Attends Agent Orange Conference RETURNING TO VIETNAM



The local fruit market in Ho Chi Minh City

Roger Quindel, Secretary of Milwaukee Jobs with Peace campaign, was recently invited to Vietnam to participate in an international meeting of trade unionists who are working with and concerned about chemical and bacteriological weapons. He is now one of only five U.S. veterans who have been to Viet Nam since 1975.

Roger was born in Milwaukee, volunteered for Vietnam in 1968 and was wounded during the Tet offensive. He is a member of the Disabled American Veterans.

He has been a chief steward in the UAW while working at Allis Chalmers, a machine shop instructor and is currently working for the Sherman Park Community Association. Roger lives with his wife and two young children on Milwaukee's west side.

In Quindel's presentation to the conference on chemical weapons, he stated to the delegates representing 62 countries:

"This trip has been a vivid reminder to me of the horrors of the Vietnam war. The statistics of the war--more explosives used than during all of WW II, 90,000 tons of herbicides, 2 million Vietnamese and 55,000 of my fellow soldiers dead--are

implanted in my mind. The brutality of war I know from my experience. But the living reality and legacy of the war has been brought home to me anew: deformed babies in Tu Du Hospital; the Vietnamese man who calls himself "Bob"--whose mind has been captured by the "ugly side of America." And the reality has been a powerful emotional experience."

"But what of the U.S. veteran so callously used by my government. More veterans have now killed themselves than have died in the war--56,000 by 1981 when the government, shamed by this fact,

what evidence he saw of defoliants' damage in Vietnam. Rogers' response was:

"The first time I saw a defoliated forest was when I was a soldier in Tay Ninh province, one of the most heavily defoliated areas. I thought, 'My God, what a huge forest fire.' But then I remembered having seen burned forest; life kind of asserts itself afterward, some of the trees escape, grass starts growing right away. This was different; it was all gray.

In the Ma Da forest where jungle trees used to stand 140 feet tall, there is today nothing but a vast wasteland. In 20 miles, we didn't see a

living creature.

"You see, defoliants speed up the natural aging process. A tree which would normally live 100 years, lives its life in a matter of weeks.

"Autopsies which have been done of some Vietnam veterans who were involved with the Agent Orange Victims International and other organizations have revealed 30-year-old men with the organs of a 90 or 100 year old....These are the evidences of dioxins' deadliness.

"One of the most emotionally difficult situations during this trip was during a trip to an obstetric hospital. It was so difficult because I am an American and, even if I didn't do any defoliating, I feel responsible for my country's actions.

"First they showed us a couple of siamese twins--really one and a half kids, one normal and half of the other coming out of its side. They were alive.

"Then they took us to an exhibit--it was awful! 85 glass jars, the kind we might use for flour or sugar, filled with stopped keeping records. Even government statistics, which often grossly understate reality, admit 26% of all Vietnam-era veterans are unemployed. The record is even worse for disabled veterans, and veterans of color.

"The chemicals used so freely in Vietnam have also left their legacy on the health of the veteran and his family. Liver disease, cancer, skin disease, deformed children, miscarriages and more are the results of our chemical war.

"While we close whole towns like Times Beach, Missouri because of dioxin contamination, the government has refused to admit that Agent Orange and other chemicals have affected the health of US veterans.

"My government has done the same to the Atomic veterans of the 1950's--soldiers who were forced to witness test after test of nuclear weapons from close distance and with no protection.

"Why? Why does my government ignore the plight of its own veterans? Because to admit that Agent Orange has affected the health of the Vietnam Veteran is to admit that the health of the people of Vietnam was affected by these same chemical weapons. And my government

which wants to spend \$5.6 billion dollars on a chemical weapons buildup needs to ignore Agent Orange in order to do this.

"My government cannot admit poisoning with nuclear radiation tens of thousands of US soldiers during Atomic tests and sell the U.S. people on a 5-year, \$1.6 trillion dollar military budget.

"The world is at the crossroads. We can blindly plunge on to a nightmare of toxins and nuclear war or a world with peace and prosperity for all.

Recently interviewed by a Milwaukee newspaper Roger Quindel was questioned about formaldehyde and examples of the most grotesque deformities; some of them were kind of babies but others were just little blobs with an arm or leg sticking out someplace. All of this matches what the veterans in this country have said. The difference is that over there they are trying to uncover it, collecting data. In this country, the government tells each vet that their complaints and disorders are due to his own personal habits or makeup. There are 40,000 veterans already who are part of the lawsuit."

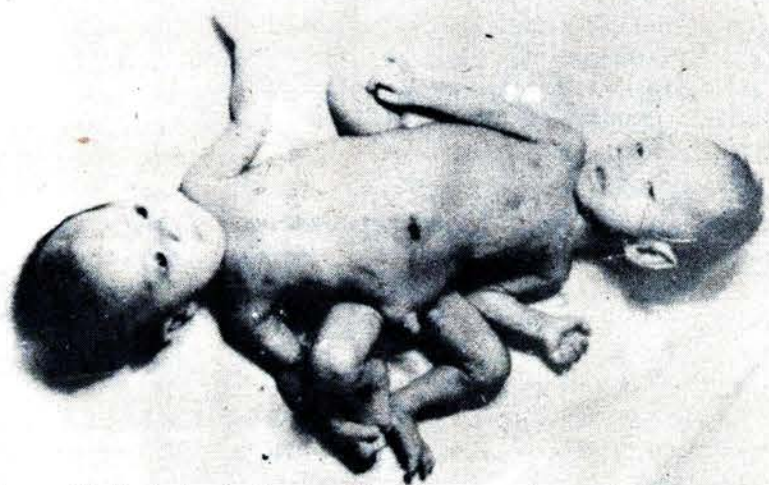
Questioned on national security and the lack of relations between the U.S. and Vietnam, Quindel said:

"We pushed them into the camp of the Soviet Union. Even today, we have no relations with them. Who are they supposed to have relations with. The U.S. government's actions have led to everything they say they don't want.

"We spend almost 300 billion dollars on military spending. That's more than everything else combined. Think of what we could do with that; we could retool the steel industry, retool our machine tool industry, everybody could have an education, we could fix our roads. The people who spend this kind of money on defence are wrecking our national security. They are physically ruining it and they are ruining our reputation in the world, undermining everything that most American people stand for.

"I think it's tragic that we've forgotten Vietnam and the lessons to be learned from our involvement."

(VVAW appreciates the contribution of papers and news clippings by Roger Quindel that made this article possible.)



Gross Birth defects have climbed as much as 1300% in areas hit by Agent Orange according to Vietnamese

25TH NATIONAL MEETING

The 25th National Meeting of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War was held in Chicago on September 24, 1983. The meeting was highlighted by votes to raise money for a Catholic Church self-help project in Nicaragua, and a proposal to change the name of the organization. (See accompanying article.)

After a presentation about the Catholic parishes in Bocana de Piawas, Nicaragua, the organization voted to support a program of aid. Two priests, Fathers Bob Stark and Jim Phelps, have inaugurated two reconstruction projects; a women's sewing collective and a cultural project focussing on teaching photography skills. This parish has had 300 of its members killed by the "contras" (a US CIA backed band of anti-government forces). The priests see these self-help projects as vital to the well-being of the people of their parishes.

The sewing collective is to teach the women job skills, develop a cottage industry for the area, develop a worker's collective, and encourage women's leadership and empowerment. What is particularly

needed is sewing machines. The photography skills are being taught in order to pictorially chronicle Piawas' reconstructive history.

Recently the Veterans of Foreign Wars at their national meeting attended by President Ronald Reagan, initiated a program to support the 'contras' with financial aid. The VVAW voted-on resolution is being done to directly counter the right wing aims of the VFW and to actually aid the people of Nicaragua in their Catholic community who are opposed to the CIA-VFW backed contras.

Other business dealt with by the meeting was the election of National and Regional Coordinators. Bill Davis, John Lindquist, Barry Romo and Peter Zastrow were re-elected to the National Office. Regional Coordinators elected were: Annie Bailey for the Mid-west, Ed Damato for the Northeast, Elton Manzione for the South and Tom Wetzler for the Southwest.

Chapter reports were given for San Antonio TX, Norman OK, Athens GA, and Iowa. Milwaukee, Madison, New York City and Chicago chapters presented. Most chapters reported to be working around the



situation in the Mideast and Central America and also a lot of work was done around the issues of Agent Orange. Almost every chapter gave reports about their work in high schools, countering the military recruitment programs and advertisements.

John Lindquist gave a report on the Agent Orange law suit that has been in the courts for a long time. Right now the situation is unclear. There is a delay in the trial and it may not reconvene until next June.

One very important discussion that took place revolved around the future of VVAW. Many people put forward that they thought the organization should re-establish its ties with the general peace movement and get back to the roots of why the organization was formed. Examples given were the situations in Lebanon and Central America and the escalation of the arms race.

on and Central America and the escalation of the arms race.

It was also stressed that VVAW should continue to build its ties with other veterans organizations.

VVAW appreciation awards were given this year to four people who have given of their services above and beyond the call of duty. They were: Muriel Hogan and Fred Wallace, for their work on the VVAW Agent Orange Dossier; Keith Kavenagh, the belated Agent Orange attorney; and Victor Yannacone also an attorney for the suit. VVAW would also like to thank Virginia McFadden for the delicious meal she made for the delegates to the national meeting.

All in all the 25th National Meeting was a success and hopes that the 26th meeting in New York City (proposed) would continue to build the organization and its work.

Continued

Interview

We don't know, maybe that's communism. We have to run our own show and administer our own resources. Reagan doesn't like that. We can't let them come in and loot us again! What we really mind is that our people are still being killed, and that they continue funding the ex-National Guard, the Somozistas, in Honduras. Pretend that you are able to speak to one of the Americans going to Honduras to be a Military trainer. You have the opportunity to try and talk him into disobeying his orders, and refuse to go. Siu: "It's a little tough. First of all the troops arriving in El Salvador and Honduras could not be thought of as average American citizens. These people know ahead of time what they are going down there to do, And they're really mercenaries. They know that they are going down there to kill, and that they are going to be making money at the cost of other people's lives. Nevertheless, the barbarity is such that many of them repent later, as happened with Vietnam. Many went because they had to follow orders. That's why there are organizations like yours, people who have seen the fruits of an unjust war. I think that your organization can do a lot.

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DROP THE "THE" PROPOSED NAME CHANGE

A very important proposal was put forward by the National Office at the national meeting. It was suggested that the organization should change its name from Vietnam Veterans Against the War to Vietnam Veterans Against War. Notice the difference? The change is to drop the "the." While this may seem insignificant the change could cause a lot of discussion in the organization.

The National Office put forward its reasons. It was suggested that events in the world today should be taken into account. Troops are fighting and dying in Lebanon while the Navy shells its countryside. "Advisors" are in Nicaragua at the same time the Navy maneuvers off its coast. The Korean airplane incident and the deployment of nukes in western Europe are hot points of superpower contention.

It was said that when the troops involved in these and other potential conflicts come home many of them may look for an alternative to the vets groups that glorify war. A viable veterans organization that would be opposed to these wars

would serve as an invaluable group to join and call their own. The vets of these wars will have particular problems in both adjusting to civilian life and in dealing with a government bureaucracy that will tell them they were never at war.

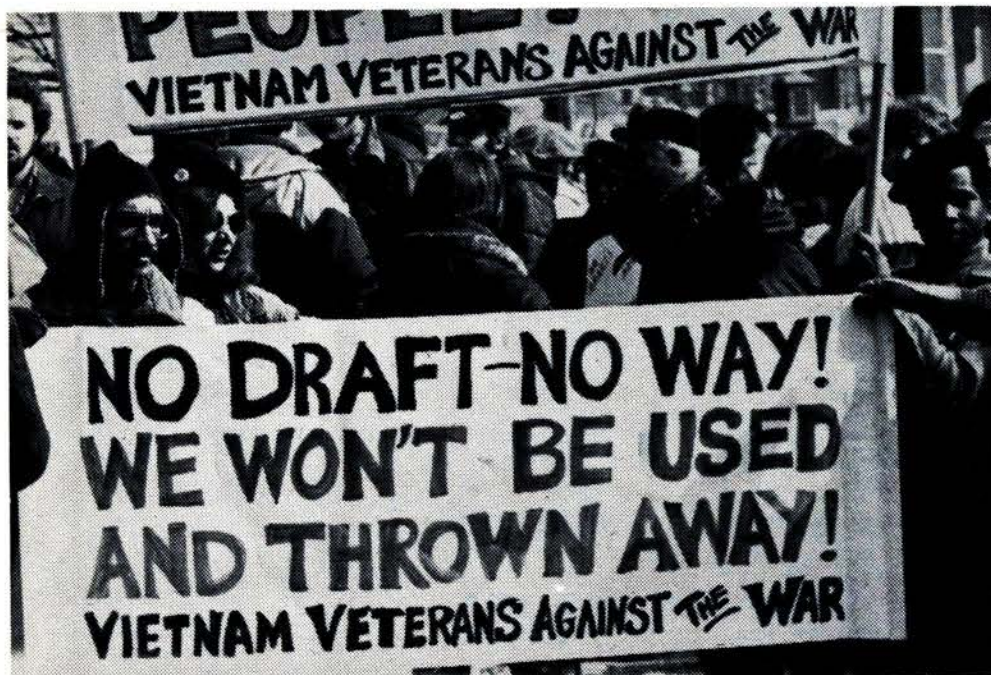
On the other hand some people put forward that dropping the "the" would mean that VVAW was a pacifist organization opposed to fighting and may turn some people off who think that some wars are just. It was also said that changing the name would be tampering with our tradition.

What all this means is that the local chapters must discuss the pros and cons of making such a change and have to cast their votes by December 31, 1983.

The discussions could help the organization in defining its role and reasons for existence. Hopefully chapters will have good discussions and any questions or clarifications should be asked of the National Office whenever necessary. Opinions pro and con can be put forward to the NO and disseminated to the organization. Members who do not belong to chapters should write to the NO with their opinions.

Reagan Shoves Youth To Altar

SELECTIVE SACRIFICE



The campaign being waged against young men who, for whatever reason, refused to register for the draft may be the most vindictive yet by the Reagan Administration. It may be the quietest, too.

Directed by Ronnie Reagan, this film about a firm president, who made movies while the body count of American dead rolled on in Europe and the Pacific during World War II, doesn't seem to have a happy ending for non-registrants.

Perhaps driven by his own guilt of missing out on "the big

one," Reagan is assuring us that he will stop at nothing to see this crop of youngsters get a chance to fight in a war somewhere even if it takes a whole elected term to start one.

Using the ultimate legal tool of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Reagan forces managed to overturn lower court rulings that allowed students to receive federal loans to attend colleges and universities without proof of selective service registration.

A number of colleges immediately pointed out that they will not enforce the law for the federal government. According to Jerry Condon, a spokesper-

son for the National Office of the Coalition Against Registration and the Draft (CARD), a number of schools, including Harvard, Stanford, Yale, and the 9-college system of the University of California have, or are considering, some type of loan program in place of the federal loan. The Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Mennonite Church are working towards a scholarship fund for non-registrants.

True, most of this information is available in some form to the public. Some people might go as far as to say, "Let them work for a living or earn the money to go to school." That, Jerry Condon, a former Green Beret who refused a second tour in Vietnam, is the most known result of the Supreme Court ruling.

Rarely reported in the draft articles is the information that thousands of young men who can't or won't be going to college will not be able to participate in federally funded job training programs unless they too register for the draft. This "rarely mentioned" group may eventually outnumber college students. Some relief may be on the way for both groups in the form of a lawsuit being prepared for them by the Center for Constitutional Rights in Washington, DC.

Legal moves and counter-moves can be expected from both sides, while the Selective Service readily admits failings both administrative and numerical in this registration drive. If the government can't handle this stage, wait until they try to institute a draft!

--Bill Davis
VVAW National
Office

Madison, Wis.

2,4-D Still In Use

Outraged residents meet with the city Public Health Commission to decry the use of 2,4-D in area lakes. The chemical is an ingredient of Agent Orange, the herbicide used in Vietnam blamed for a number of health problems.

Jim Wachtendonk of Madison, of VVAW, attributes his skin and nerve problems to A.O. and blames the chemical for some of his children's health problems as well.

On July 6, Jim went swimming in Lake Mendota. In a short time he got a severe rash on his legs, a headache & other symptoms. 2,4-D had been used in lakes Mendota & Monona to control weeds.

His wife, Suki, emotionally called for a total ban on 2,4-D, citing studies linking the chemical with cancer and genetic defects in laboratory animals. "It is not safe at any level," she said.

Wachtendonk was not the only person claiming 2,4-D in the lakes causes ill effects. Others reported side effects of swelling of the eyes & body, headaches, dizziness and nausea.

Fishermen have long claimed that 2,4-D and other chemicals used in the lakes kill fish.

Dennis Kroll, of VVAW, said people should be concerned about the use of any amount of 2,4-D in the lakes.

University of Wisconsin professor, Arthur Hasler, an authority on lakes, said, "The practice of using 2,4-D or any other herbicides is a bad ecological practice." He said studies have shown mechanical harvesting of weeds to be no more expensive.

The State Department of Natural Resources, who has jurisdiction over the lakes, were invited to the Health Commission meeting, but declined saying it did not warrant their attendance.

Two samples were taken from Lake Monona, but the samples were taken two weeks after the spraying and no firm conclusion could be drawn.

The commission will draft a letter to the DNR expressing its concerns.

In the words of Dennis Kroll, "The bottom line is, whose lakes are they?"

It's important that VVAW members fight the use of 2,4-D and other dangerous chemicals in the United States

continued... LEBANON

6. The U.S. and Christians approved and applauded the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976 as a counter to the PLO.

7. The present "government" of Lebanon has no base except among the Phalangist Party (not even the whole Christian community, which is split several ways, supports it) and in reality should be called the government of Beirut. Beirut is the only area it "governs" and it needs US, French, British and Italian troops to do that.

All things considered, how can U.S. troops serve any real use in unifying and promoting peace in Lebanon? And how many of Reagan's failed foreign adventures are worth the life of even one Marine?

Drawing by Erica Weihs.



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San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO, TX: "The news from Central America is all bad (almost) and 110% of my time has gone to it. Thousands of refugees from our foreign policy and oppressive government have passed through South Texas. We have been working closely with solidarity groups in Mexico. The only real solution is for the killing to stop but it's been impossible not to be involved with immediate problems of the people we've come in contact with.

Many Salvadorians are risking deportation, then death, by openly speaking of their experiences while in church-sponsored sanctuary projects. It's similar to our Winter Soldier Investigations in the early '70's.

Last February VVAW San Antonio joined other groups in San Antonio protesting Reagan's recertification of El Salvador's human-rights record by engaging in street theater at the El Salvador Consulate. Individual VVAW members continued to speak to community groups and church groups. American GI Forum is beginning to take a more visible stand against Reagan's stuff here as are some city council members.

Memorial Day we ran an Agent Orange Information booth at the Solar-fest, a local area counter-culture festival/education/music/new age event. The response was very good from everybody and we believe more people signed up in the lawsuit before the cut-off date. The majority of local press stories and reportings here have been supportive of our Agent Orange positions lately.

Vets Centers here are starting to see a few vets who have just returned from paid work in "Honduras." Word-of-mouth information is \$1200/week pay. Seems they're having more "adjusting" problems upon their return to the States...."

Tom Wetzler
San Antonio
VVAW

VVAW Saluted by N.Y. Yankees

Last June the New York City Chapter bought a block of tickets to the Yankees-Milwaukee Brewers game. While the Yankees trounced last year's American League champions, the Yankees flashed on their scoreboard "New York Yankees welcome the Vietnam Veterans Against the War." Not only did the home team win, but the unexpected salute was enjoyed by all -- probably even by the VVAW members from Milwaukee.

Iowa's First Nam Vet Reunion



VVAW members at Iowa State reunion.

Iowa's first Vietnam Veterans Reunion, August 26-28th in Cedar Rapids, Iowa provided a fine chance for VVAW to talk to Midwest vets. The event was held at the Roosevelt Hotel and began with a dance on Friday night attended by 300 people.

VVAW was invited to direct workshops on Agent Orange and to sell literature, buttons, etc. All the traditional veterans' organizations were there; some of the posts boasted 100% Vietnam vet leadership. VVAW's literature was well-received and we got high marks from all, though not everyone agreed with our articles on Central America.

Saturday's session, attended by 150 people, went well. There were workshops on Agent Orange, Post-traumatic stress, legislation and the Iowa Memorial; soon, our table was swamped and VVAW got a good chunk of the TV coverage.

Saturday night's banquet and parties also proved interesting. We never thought we'd see the day when the statement "No more wars like Vietnam" would be greeted by applause from everyone at a gathering like this, but it was--the statement ended a speech by a former governor of Iowa. The new National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) gave the keynote address. He is a triple amputee, Vietnam vet from the 9th Division. During his talk he let it be known that this year all six line officers of the DAV are Vietnam vets. Following the dinner we talked to him about the DAV National Monument to Vietnam War dead in Eagle's Nest, New Mexico, and told him the story

about VVAW doing perimeter guard there in 1971 (local red necks were threatening to burn the building down because there were pictures and references to Vietnamese war dead in the Monument).

Sunday's activities started with a Memorial march and ended with a pig roast at a Legion party in Marion, Iowa. VVAW showed up and sold stamp buttons; we were invited back to next year's reunion and Memorial dedication on May 30th, 1984.

Before we left, the Reunion leaders thanked VVAW for coming and said we got high marks from people who attended our workshops or read our literature. Even some of the more right-wing vets thanked us for coming and said they now better understood where VVAW was coming from.

A big thanks goes to the Chicago chapter of VVAW for helping out, and to the Quad City's Iowa VVAW members.

John Lindquist
VVAW

Montana

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

....I came up with an idea to name a park and a street in downtown Kalispell (Montana) in honor of all veterans of the U.S. I found it unbelievable that the major veterans organizations had not proposed something similar, but after meeting with these people I realized that their major worry was how to increase their ranks with Vietnam veterans. In fact I was offered an officer's position in all of the organizations in order to get more Viet vets to join but I refused as these were the same people who did not want me in their organizations when I came home in '69. They wanted to work with me on the idea of setting aside a park until they found out what VVAW meant.... At any rate I scored a partial victory as a part of the park is going to be set aside

While I was doing this I was holding rap sessions with approximately 20 vets and found that they had problems that I as a layman could not give them the best help possible and they told me that the local mental health clinic would not help them with post traumatic stress disorder unless they admitted to a drug and/or alcohol dependency and then it would still cost them \$50 per session. I approached this problem with no real knowledge of what to do but with a sense of outrage. Twice they refused to attempt to contact the VA and get funding for an outreach program which tended to infuriate me so that at the third time I dialed the phone for these jerks and told the VA that we were 250 miles from the hospital and that we should have a outreach program. They agreed and expedited all of the bullshit paperwork and set up the program within one week of the phone call and at no charge to the Vietnam veteran for the counseling....

Jim Brodniak
Montana VVAW

Athens, Georgia

"We're getting ready to crank up in the fall. Got the news that the local VVA group was doing away with their rap group and spoke with a few of those guys about the possibility of us picking up the ball....We have endorsed and will participate in a planned blockade of the SRP nuclear weapons plant in South Carolina around October 22nd and are getting our counter recruitment program off the ground.

On June 26 during the demonstration at Ft Benning, about 6 chapter members and 15 sup-

porters were among the 300 or so who showed up at the protest. We got lots of interest from the local TV folks, and the 30 second spot they aired on the news featured two of us and the well-known VVAW chapter banner. The brass at the base would not, of course, let the group deliver their letter of protest to the base commander. Two folks, Father Roy Bourgeois and somebody else have been arrested twice for sneaking on the base and holding rap sessions with the Salvadorean soldiers.

Elton Manzione
Athens VVAW

Photo by Chris Molloy

Strength-VVAW Chapter Reports

Chicago



Mayor Washington lays wreath for Atomic Vets

On July 16, 1983 anti-nuke forces, WWII vets, Vietnam vets, and others across the nation participated in Atomic Veterans Day (Trinity plus 38 years), a day recognizing the struggles, accomplishments, and goals of the Atomic Veterans.

In one such ceremony in Chicago, participants ranged from WWII vets who witnessed the bombing of Hiroshima to members of Citizens Against Nuclear Power who had been arrested recently protesting projected openings of new Chicago area nuke plants.

The program began with an

interfaith service at the Chicago Temple First United Methodist Church. A more knowledgeable or impressive list of speakers could hardly have been assembled. Dr. Leo Seren, Physicist, Argonne National Labs, participant to the first manmade atomic reaction, witness to the first atomic detonations with the Manhattan project, 1943 to 1947, spoke solemnly of the dedication and work of the atomic pioneers and their horror and chagrin with the use and suffering brought about by their work.

Speaking for the Chicago branch of the National Association of Atomic Veterans, St. Clair Alexander, steelworker and physical witness to thermonuclear test shot "Annie" at Camp Desert Rock, Nevada in 1953. St. Clair spoke of the many frustrating years of his and other vets health problems and their continued appeals to the deaf ears of the Veterans Administration on behalf of Atomic vets.

Patrick Ralph, symbolizing the continuity of struggle from generation to next, spoke for his father, Harold Ralph, who was with the US Marines in the occupation of Nagasaki, Japan immediately following the atomic detonation there. Harold died of Multiple Myeloma in

1979. His widow, Patrick's mother, Jean, is active with NAAV in Streator, Illinois.

The final speaker, Bill Davis of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, spoke of the need for solidarity between Vietnam vets and the Atomic vets and of their common experience with the VA. Davis compared the battle for testing treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims and their survivors with the battle for treatment and compensation for the Atomic vets and their survivors. He pointed out the tactics of the VA haven't changed for vets, let as many as possible die off before making minimum payments to the remaining vets and their families.

The service was followed by a short march to the Eternal Flame for Vets at the Daley Civic Center where Mayor Harold Washington of Chicago dedicated a wreath to the Atomic vets of the Chicago area and the nation.

Oklahoma

NORMAN, OK: "An Oklahoma Agent Orange Foundation was formed here in Oklahoma.... Yesterday they gave us \$3000. We are incorporated as Oklahoma Center for Veterans Rights...."

Bob Wilson
Norman VVAW

New York City

NEW YORK CITY, NY: "Right now the work that interests our membership the most is our planned work around speaking to high school students. Soon we will send a packet to every public and Catholic school principal requesting that we be allowed to present programs to the students to offer the view not put forth by military recruiters.... Another successful activity we is socializing. Ballgames, parties, beach clambakes, picnics. We think this is vital to the group and we intend to not only keep this up but increase the frequency. We really believe that doing political work is greatly enhanced when the vets get to know each other socially as well. It also allows families of vets to see other members and families and get to know them...."

One point we would like to stress. We believe that VVAW should be larger than it appears to be. This means we see the real need to advertise our events via such media as THE VETERAN and our newsletters. If we do something we want our membership to know how it turned out and we want to spread that information to other chapters too. We all learn from each other. We really think that other chapters should use THE VETERAN and the mails to popularize their activities...."

Ed Damato
New York VVAW



VVAW joined with hundreds to protest involvement in El Salvador in Chicago

Hiroshima Day, Milwaukee

On Saturday, August 6th, more than 200 people gathered in Milwaukee to remember the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with a march and rally calling for an end to nuclear weapons and a halt to U.S. intervention around the world, especially in Central America.

VVAW's dirty dozen had a chance to shine as the people took to the street, marching from our assembly point in the square outside the police station, down the eastbound lanes of Wisconsin Avenue, around the new Federal Building, arriving at a park beside the Milwaukee River, where the rally was held.

We proudly carried our guidon and a wide banner with the VVAW shield and the slogans:
U.S. Out of El Salvador!
No More Vietnams!

As any video tape will show, the word "march" is not sufficient to describe that purposeful VVAW stride, going down the street looking "b-a-d." Even at the cadence calls, "Your left, your left," unless by accident, no two left feet strike the pavement simultaneously. But when it comes to shouting out cadence responses, we were right on time with these:

Reagan, Reagan, he's no good,
Send him back to Hollywood!

If he'd been in 'Nam back then,
He'd never made it home again!

Sound off! (one, two)
Sound off! (three, four)

Bring it on Down (one, two, three, four, one two--Three Four)!

All the generals want a war!
Send them to El Salvador!
Drop them on the jungle floor,
They won't bother us no more!

At the rally speaker Erwin Knoll, Editor of The Progressive, noted that attendance had fallen from previous years, perhaps due to the Milwaukee Brewers' baseball game. Local Mobilization for Survival people announced later in the program the formation of "Fans for Peace," a plan to take up the questions of peace, nuclear weapons, and human survival at the ballpark: they intend to rent a bus, throw a tailgate party, and display banners in their section of seating in the stands.



Photo by Ed Damato

Per-Olaf, (a veteran of both the Swedish Army and the US marines) and Monique sit under their makeshift beach umbrella and celebrate the end of summer at the 2nd Annual New York City Beach Party and Clambake. Members and friends of VVAW downed bushels of steamed clams, corn on the cob, hot dogs and a keg of beer and swam in the salty wave-tossed Atlantic Ocean at Jones Beach on Long Island.

--Ed Damato NYC VVAW

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 warlike 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

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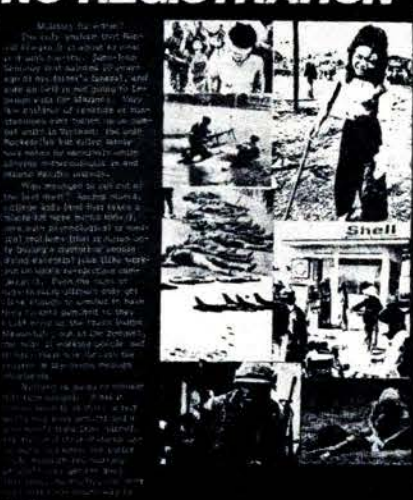


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BY-LAWS OF VVAW

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 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 Officers.



Membership Form

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VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are 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.

Signature _____

Book Reviews - Book Reviews - Book Reviews - Book Reviews - Book Reviews - Book Reviews

KISSINGER DOUBLE CROSSES THE WORLD

The Price of Power

From reading Seymour Hersh's The Price of Power, it's abundantly clear that the price of power is far too high, and that we--taxpayers, workers, veterans--are the ones who end up paying that price. While the book is about Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House, Kissinger paid nothing; neither did Nixon or Haig or most of the hundreds of other characters who cross the pages of this book.

Part of my own price was going to Vietnam. As Hersh makes clear, Kissinger was on the make long before Nixon won the White House; a noted Harvard professor, Kissinger had been used by the Administration of Lyndon Johnson to carry on behind-the-scenes negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris in 1968. Though not quite an official negotiator Kissinger made sure that he knew all the classified details and, though his role was supposedly secret, he made sure that the right people (governmental and media) know of his view of his importance to the negotiations.

Meanwhile Nixon and Hubert Humphrey were campaigning for the presidency; Humphrey, then vice-president, could not escape partial responsibility for the twists and turns of foreign policy under President Johnson which had gotten the U.S. mired in Vietnam. The electorate greeted Nixon's campaign promises about "peace with honor" enthusiastically. And the intensity of negotiations in Paris increased in hopes of some kind of breakthrough before the November election.

Kissinger sold himself to the highest bidder. He let it be known to the Humphrey camp that he was available; at the same time he was playing footsie with Nixon advisors--and acting as semi-official negotiator in Paris.

In the clandestine world of political manipulation, it became known that Kissinger was under consideration for the job as National Security Advisor should Nixon win the White House. Nothing, of course, was written down; nothing, probably, was even agreed to between Kissinger and Nixon or a Nixon advisor. But it "became known." (One of the strongest points in the book is Hersh's consistent ability to trace this kind of web of inference, suggestion and hint where no one is quite respon-

sible, no name appears on the dotted line, but all the players in the game seem to reach a common understanding on the results.) In return, Kissinger began to supply the Nixon camp with the most sensitive and secret of information coming from the Paris talks, talks which were in fact close to negotiating a ceasefire. And, as the election came down to the final days, Humphrey was gaining rapidly, to the point where a dramatic gesture such as a ceasefire could make Humphrey president.

The ceasefire didn't happen and, of course, Nixon won the election. With the information supplied by Kissinger, the Nixon camp persuaded President Thieu of South Vietnam to torpedo the talks, letting it be known that Thieu would fare better under a Nixon Administration than he would in the waning days of the Johnson Administration. Richard Allen (then coordinator for Nixon's foreign policy, later Reagan's National Security Advisor--the names in the book keep popping up in today's headlines as they are shuffled through job after job) said of Kissinger's help: "It was inevitable that Kissinger would have to be part of our administration... Kissinger had proven his mettle by tipping us. It took some balls to give us those tips...." It was, he said, "a pretty dangerous thing for him to be screwing around with national security."

For over a million Americans the price for Kissinger to come to power was a tour in Vietnam since, had the peace process gone ahead, it's certainly possible that the war would have wound down in '68. As one who spent 1969 in Vietnam, my price was relatively small; for friends who returned home with minds, bodies and/or spirits shattered, or for the families of those who didn't return home at all, the price was enormous--unpayable.

In event after event of the Nixon/Kissinger years, The Price of Power draws its indictments. There's Kissinger's refusal to take even the most elemental steps to prevent starvation after the Biafran War in Nigeria for fear that he might appear "soft" to a White House where "toughness" is so important (the book makes it clear that no matter how insane, if a proposal was hard-line enough, the proposer looked good).

There's Kissinger's prolonged and tortuous maneuvering to underwrite the assassination of Allende in Chile and to install the present Pinochet military regime. In the Middle East, "The president and his national security advisor managed to escalate that civil strife (in Jordan in 1970)... with its local origins, into a direct big-power confrontation involving military alerts, deployment of aircraft carriers, and a presidential order to commit an act of warfare in the Middle East that was ignored by his Secretary of Defense."

There is Kissinger's overwhelming need to be the "star," to gather all the strings into his own hands so that the puppets will dance to his tune. His drive to stand solo during armistice talks with the Soviets led him to ignore specialists who had been negotiating for months with the result that he took positions which had to be retracted later--and that did nothing to speed arms agreements. And there is Kissinger's same desire to hog the spotlight during negotiations with the Peoples' Republic of China; Kissinger almost eclipsed Nixon which led to a temporary fall from favor. And there's the picture of Kissinger plotting targets for the secret bombing in Cambodia; Kissinger seems to be running for the job of emperor of the world, and almost made it.

His manipulations fill the book. From the start Kissinger set up his own channels of communications (backchannels) so he would not have to rely on State Department information (and so that the State Department wouldn't know what he knew). Since Kissinger's agents were as devious as he, at least one of his proteges, Alexander Haig, almost eclipsed Kissinger for basking in the Presidential limelight (and the power that flowed from it).

Because Kissinger was aware of his own trustworthiness, he naturally enough suspected anyone around him. The story of his taps on his assistants as well as newsmen runs through the book. More seriously, because Kissinger was consistently dealing double (or triple or more) he couldn't afford to let anyone know just what he was doing--including his closest aides. As a result, however, he refused advice from experts; in fact, a monumental ego seems to have given Kissinger the assurance that he knew all there was to know on almost any as-

pect of diplomacy, leading to equally monumental goofs--like his own solution to the war in Vietnam which came completely unglued with the Christmas bombing in 1973.

Seymour Hersh wrote the book which uncovered My Lai, then the book which uncovered the cover-up of My Lai. He is a respected journalist and, as this book shows, an exhaustive researcher. When The Price of Power appeared it was noticed, even quoted, but then pretty much ignored. Perhaps the revelations are so frequent and so tied in to the history of the time that none of them rank as a major, newsworthy sensation. Perhaps we're all so used to governmental intrigue and lies that yet another collection of them makes scarcely a ripple.

This band of powerful men do have a life and death power over the rest of us. That the ego of a Kissinger or Nixon or any of the others needs a little stroke can send thousands of us off to war--that is the bottom line of The Price of Power. And the utter outrage that should follow the revelations in this book is, for whatever reason, missing; it shouldn't be. With its hundreds of examples of the total cynicism of our "leaders" The Price of Power could hardly match the cynicism of the act of appointing Henry Kissinger to another position in the government where he can start his slithering toward the seat of power once again.

Pete Zastrow
VVAW National
Office

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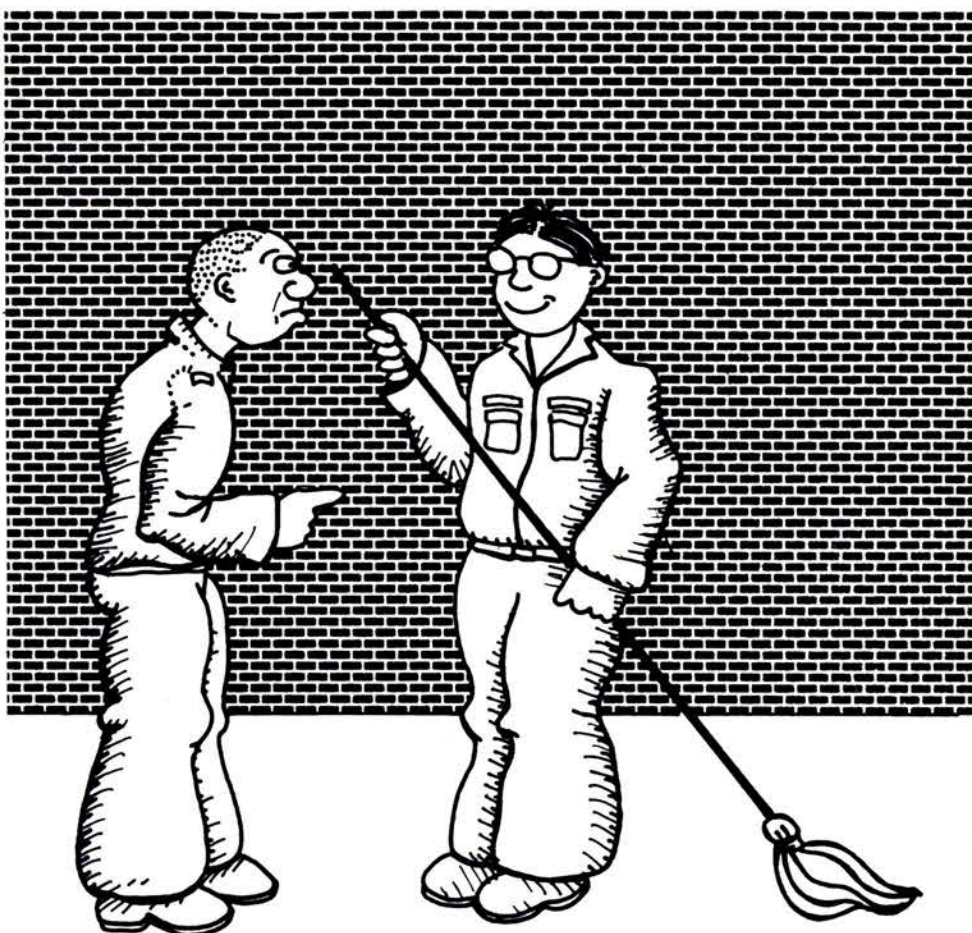
RECOLLECTIONS

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

It was about 10 years ago, around 5 AM Turkish local time, that the Air Farce, via my flight commander, determined that I was a "drug addict." It wasn't that I was busted or confessed or anything like that. I just looked the part!

The butter bar, my flight commander, was holding court in the map room, as usual, during the end of a night shift. I was in there taking my turn at the controls of a mop. I was remember the tales I had heard from my lifer-father. One was about the fact that the Second Lieutenant's gold bars are actually stupidity generators. Then, my very own O- $\frac{1}{2}$, a former E-5, had to go and prove the theory.

He was spouting the usual BS when he came out with the incredible remark that he could always tell a dope-smoker because they part their hair in the middle. And he was serious! Standing there, mop in hand, hair parted on the side and a non-doper (at the time), I desi-



red what any good trouble-making GI with an attitude problem would: I wanted this guy's bars in my fists.

I dropped my mop, went to the latrine, parted my hair down the middle (where it's been ever since) and strolled back to my mop. As expected, the Lieutenant took one look at me and flew into a rage. He, of course, immediately started giving me the "This is a direct order" garbage as he was ordering me to re-part my hair. I calmly asked for it in writing as the rest of the room looked on.

He had started writing when a senior NCO managed to stop him and spoil the fun. He said it would look silly to the CO and might not be entirely kosher. I commented that that was too bad since I had wanted a set of gold bars for my trophy case. I left as the NCO's tried to calm the newly enraged idiot.

Ray Parrish
VVAW Chicago

Continued El Salvador

El Salvador. For a year (until March, 1983) he lived with the popular armed forces and the civilian population of the Guazapa Front, a 225 square mile area 25 miles north of San Salvador, the capital city. Formerly a C-130 pilot in Vietnam, he applied for CO status, was given a psychiatric discharge from the service, went to medical school and, in 1980, began seeing Salvadoran refugees in a medical clinic in Salinas, California. He had been speaking out against our growing intervention in Central America but the testimonies he heard made him want to do more. After negotiating with the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front--the political arms of the popular armed forces), his medical services and neutrality were accepted and he hiked in to the rebel-controlled Guazapa Front. He found 10,000 civilians living there, 40% under

the age of twelve. He found a people hungry to determine their own future. Attacks by government soldiers and by U.S.-supplied A-37's and Huey gunships made this a risky and dangerous process. But as Clements listened to his patients recount the personal tragedies that had befallen them, their families and friends, he gained insights into life in Guazapa. He learned of the deep-seated conviction with which the people bear arms even though they desperately want peace. He found out from a campesino that the meaning of "violence," a term so freely thrown around by our President, can only be comprehended when you've seen your own child die of starvation. He realized that medical supplies are contraband in El Salvador after people he knew were killed for carrying a couple of bottles of aspirin or a few boxes of diapers. He listened, observed, and learned. He also taught. Diarrhea, common especially among the chil-

dren of the Front, was combated through a rehydration procedure based on locally available substances. Iron deficiency was treated with a "nail cocktail"--a rusty nail rubbed with lime and mixed with water.

Then Dr Clements left Guazapa. He came back to the U.S. to speak out again about the effects of our military aid to the Salvadoran junta. He has testified twice before Congressional subcommittees. And he has crossed the country, speaking out in public forums, on radio and TV, and in newspaper interviews, hammering away at the same theme: the greatest obstacle to peace in El Salvador is the United States aid to that country. Clements maintains that he saw no Cubans nor Nicaraguans in Guazapa. Arms for the rebels are captured from Salvadoran army troops or bought on the black market. Even so, the rebels are short on arms. People are waiting in line to take up a weapon and

join in protecting those who live in or who have fled U.S.-designed counterinsurgency sweeps into Guazapa. Charlie Clements has raised money, too. Since returning to the U.S. about a thousand dollars a day has been raised--money which will be used to buy badly needed medical supplies in Guazapa and other zones under popular control.

When asked what the rest of us can do, Clements offers these suggestions: Inform yourselves to the point where you can see through Reagan's lies; put pressure on your Congressional representatives through visits, letters, petitions; get ready to hit the streets in protest; and don't overlook acts of civil disobedience, one example being the active support being given to an underground railroad that transports, harbors and hides undocumented refugees fleeing El Salvador and Guatemala.

Jack Elder
San Antonio VVAW



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Exclusive Interview With VVAW

NICARAGUAN WOMAN SPEAKS OUT



Sandinista Reserve Battalion.

Perhaps it's my vet mentality, but one of the images that Central America conjures up is a contingent in a demonstration of CAVAW Central American Vets Against the War. Well, this is an interview with two of the Nicaraguan women that our hypothetical comrades may have to fight, I think that after reading this you will agree that we should all re-dedicate ourselves to preventing any US intervention.

I shared both tears and smiles with a weary Ivon Siu and Zulema Baltodano, as they passed thru on a speaking tour with their translator/guide, Sally Hanlen. I interviewed them at Chicago's 8th Day Center, one of their sponsors. They wanted me to add that they think American vets may prove to be a crucial link in the movement to stop a war in Central America. Let's hope that we can be true to this trust.

VVAW is particularly interested in experiences during the revolution that portrayed the differences between the two armies. Ivon Siu: "They were radically different. When one of the National Guard members fell into our hands we respected his life and called out to his people to put down their arms and to stop killing their own people. The guard would kill people without having any proof that they were involved with an enemy force.

Just because you were a young person, that was proof enough. They would kill you. We have discovered that during the war we have deepened our moral and spiritual values. Our leaders particularly. They have taught us to see the national guard members as victims of a bloody dictatorship and a corrupt system.

Zulema Baltodano: "As a member of the Nicaraguan Human Rights Commission I visit the prisons regularly. And, because my daughters were imprisoned I know the previous prisons. They are totally different. If someone was taken prisoner, instead of being shot, they would become victims of the worst possible tortures. Now, on the contrary prisoners are treated as human beings. They have visits from their families, and can provide for them by working in the factories we have added to the prisons. Our high school students, who had just been freed from the repression of these same people, conducted reading classes for the prisoners

Do combat veterans of the revolution have any problems re-adjusting to peacetime?

Siu: "No. There is a difference here between a US war veteran and another one from Nicaragua. We were not soldiers, we were civilians who had to go to war

in order to defend ourselves. We were armed with a deep conviction that we were making war in order to win peace. That enables us to transcend all possible traumas. A veteran who has gone to war to which he was forced to by his government (and which he really didn't understand why it was going on in the first place) finds it difficult because of the psychological scars. Like Sandino said "We are not military, we are pueblo. Armed civilians defending our people. I was wondering what specific experiences either of you have had in combat, we sometimes call them "war stories." Things that stay with you for one reason or another.

Baltodano: "What you call veterans, we call leaders. These were men and women who were born oppressed. So those people began to show the way. After they had begun my children came along, because that was a twenty year war. I had nine children, seven girls and two boys. The third of my daughters decided to go into the struggle when she began participating in the Christian community groups, which we used to call something like "vanguard." Those groups worked on helping the most needy.

In that way she began getting involved bit by bit in the struggle. At the beginning I really

opposed her. Little by little I began to realize that the young people were right. As the repression grew, the involvement of the young people grew, so several of my children got involved in the struggle. Three of my daughters were imprisoned and one month before the victory they killed one of them. The youngest of my daughters lost both hands. Monica, the first of my daughters to get involved, was a guerrilla commander, and is now the highest ranking woman in the Nicaraguan government. Siu: "I joined the struggle at the same time Monica did, in 1971. In our country there were many fronts in the struggle. At one time we were providing logistical support for the takeover of the home of one of Somoza's ministers. That was the action, in 1972, that announced to the public that the Sandinistas were in open confrontation to the government.

What answers would you like to hear from a presidential candidate about what their policies would be towards Nicaragua?

Siu: "We feel that the North American people should demand that a president and his administration should respect other countries. Mutual respect is one of the basic principles of truly democratic governments. We feel that the U.S. government has never really respected the countries of Latin America, especially our own. Since 1912 successive US governments have intervened in our country. From 1924 until 1979 they were the ones who did and undid everything. Calling all the shots. But, within the Reagan administration the interventionist and militaristic policies have grown. We feel that what Reagan thinks is: since we don't permit him to continue intervening, he feels that we have given him a political slap in the face. And he sees that for the first time the US empire has been slowed down by a little tiny country. And that goes over like a lead balloon. That's why he has begun this whole campaign to discredit us, bringing up the wornout slogan that we are communists. We have done an original, a Nicaraguan revolution. We're rebuilding our country and the only thing we do know is that we want peace. We want our children to have health care, hospitals, shoes to wear, education and food to eat. That's all we're asking for. **Ctd-Page 4**