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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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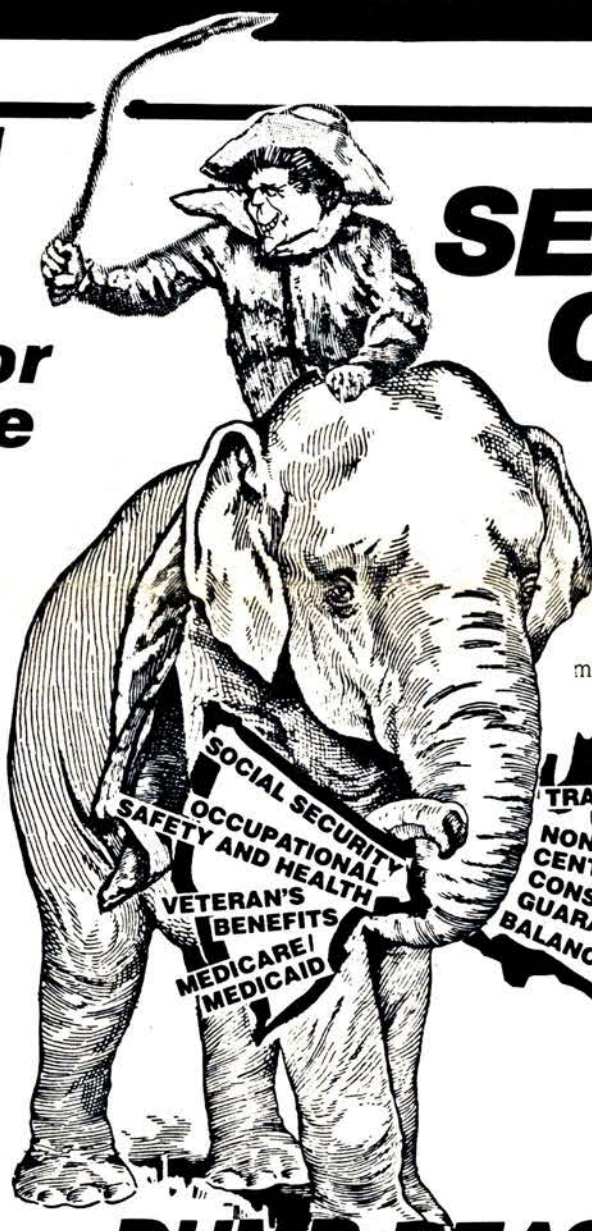
FALL 1984

VETS' DAY ~ For a Decent Life without War

November 11th, 1984. It's Veterans Day again. And again VVAW chapters will break out the fatigues, unroll the banners, call out all the members we can find, and commemorate the day set aside to remember this country's vets. As in years past we will be saying, "Honor the Dead; Fight for the Living!"

Different chapters in different cities will remember the day in different ways, though in some cities, VVAW Veterans' Day ceremonies have become almost as traditional as the activities of older veterans groups. In most places there is, by now, a history of VVAW attempts to be recognized either as a part of the official ceremony, or to have the right to hold our own observance at 11 o'clock on the 11th

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SEEN ENOUGH OF THIS ACT?

No President in modern history has made more blunders, exercised less day-to-day control of the office, or had more corruption than Reagan; yet none has been treated better by the media.

Maybe it's the fact that he's one of their own (after all, what is modern "news" if not show biz?) or possibly a major conspiracy to make a boob look like a genius, but more likely it's that these high-priced commentators are a cut below the average, despite all the information at their disposal.

A look at the "Great Communicator" shows a man of fluff without substance. He may be able to walk directly to the "x" in front of the camera, turn his good side to the lens, and tell homey stories, but where's the beef? When asked about problems with negotiating with the Russians, he became flustered, confused and started staring. His wife had to come to his aid and whisper through clenched teeth, "We're doing the best we can." To which the

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DUMP REAGAN NOVEMBER 5th

VETS WIFE RESPONSE

(In the last issue of THE VETERAN we printed a letter from the wife of a Vietnam vet, and asked for responses from readers. We are reprinting the letter here along with some of the responses.)

I am the wife of a Vietnam infantry veteran, soon to be ex-wife. My story is probably like many other wives; for 13 years I have loved, honored

and cherished my husband through various medical problems associated with Agent Orange, post-traumatic stress, unemployment due to illness, and his never-ending distrust of the U.S. government to the point where anger, hatred and mistrust have taken over our lives. All along I kept asking, when does all this anger and hatred subside? Will it ever let up? Why is it getting worse

all the time?

He has gotten involved. He's a member of VVAW, he's joined every group he can find to end all the useless wars our government has gotten us into, he's even in therapy to help him deal with his medical and psychological problems. He seemed to be venting all his anger but there was no time left

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Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)



As you can see, I've come out of the closet. Yep, they've put my name on this column. I guess I won't be able to hide from the FBI any longer.

As I understand it, names of writers were seldom used in THE VETERAN as long as the writing reflected the organizational position of VVAW. Either that or everyone was paranoid that the government would find out who they were and take 'em out in the desert, tie 'em up, cover 'em with molasses and leave 'em for the ants.

So now that my name is up front, I guess that means that my editors either want to disassociate themselves from any weirdness I might write or they don't care if I get turned over to Reagan to be tortured (maybe they'd make me listen to Reagan's speeches or watch his movies).

Anyway, I'm really a Willy I'm really retired. And I really was a Spec 5. I was a Spec 5 because I was a Spec 4. I was a Spec 4 because of a few square feet of plywood. That happened at Fort Leonard Wood.

I was a PFC for about a month or two and a company clerk and then the Army decided to give out special promotions to Spec 4 without regard to time in grade in order to get GI's to think about the Army as a career which was kind of stupid since Spec 4's were getting killed in Vietnam too, but anyway SFC Nicollet at Brigade HQ was in charge of distributing these promotions and SFC Nicollet was remodeling his basement and needed some plywood and Big Red who worked over at the 4th Brigade warehouse could get his hands on all kinds of stuff so Big Red got him some plywood and SFC Nicollet was happy and gave me the promotion to Spec 4, and I was happy and Big Red took a two-week leave for Christmas, and he was happy because he didn't get back until mid-February, but that was OK since I was company clerk and our Morning Report showed he was at Fort Leonard Wood all the time, and we all lived happily ever after except that's probably not true because SFC Nicollet was a mean sonofabitch who never smiled and probably hates himself and Big Red was a

crazy Vietnam vet who's probably PVS-ed out in Detroit by now, and I'm sitting here writing this damn column....

* * * * *

Did you watch the Olympics? I didn't, except when it happened to be on the TV when I stopped by the local watering hole for a sassa-perilla. I got tired of the games about two weeks before they started. By then it was well out of the realm of athletics and into the realm of politics.

First, the Russians and their allies pull out of the games because the U.S. pulled out of the Moscow games in 1980. Then Reagan and a whole bunch of U.S. politicians and commentators go around looking down their noses at the Russians for saying they won't come. Then the Russians make a big thing about violence in this country (which is true) and about how an ordinary Russian wouldn't be safe walking around Los Angeles (which is not true--they must have confused Los Angeles with Afghanistan). And then the U.S. people talked about how stupid the Russians sounded. That may have been true, but it was total political oppotunism on the U.S. part.

I was exhausted and the games hadn't started yet. Then, on opening day, Reagan gives this speech to the U.S. team about winning one for the Gipper. This was totally out of line for what the spirit of the Olympics is supposed to be, to say nothing of being corny. Then, he had special praise for the women's team. That was kind of ironic. The women's team has become competitive because woman athletes in this country were finally able to develop and train because of court rulings giving them access to athletic scholarships under Title IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. So who is trying to do everything in their power to cut back the gains of Title IX for these women? Why it's the old Gipper himself, Ronnie Reagan.

So, then, as the leader of the host country, Reagan began the games, not with the simple traditional phrase that every other previous leader has used, "Let the games begin." Instead, the ham in him came out and he gave a short speech. From then

on it was a mixture of fine athletics and good old Yankee jingoism as flags waved, anthems were played and announcers gushed over "our" team as young Americans won medal after medal.

Is there a connection between the Olympics and such things as preparing the people of the nation to take on the El Savadorians or the Nicaraguans or the Russians. There is an appropriate quote: "I've discovered a wonderful thing," said Napoleon--you know, the general who left bloody troops all over Europe when he tried to conquer the world in the early 1800's. And what was that wonderful thing, Napoleon? "Men will die for medals."

Maybe it's unfair to use quotes. Seems like you can always find a situation where they don't apply. Maybe Napoleon didn't have it quite right about medals. After all, look at what happened when the U.S. invaded Grenada.

For this little military action the Pentagon passed out over 7,000 medals. That's for a one-sided battle against a small number of troops that involved a couple of days of fighting and a couple of weeks of mop-up.

In fact, the battle was so short that some of the medal winners didn't get there in time to see any action. Many never even left the Pentagon. I guess they got rewarded for answering phones or plotting strategy or something.

Sort of reminiscent of Vietnam. Officers at the ass end of the communications line got medals in bunches while the poor slobs who sucked mud and got shot at and killed had to be satisfied with Hearts of Purple and Agents of Orange. But that's all right. They didn't need medals to further their careers.

In comparison, one has to admire the way Cubans handled their officers on Grenada. They didn't pass out 7,000 medals, or 700 or 7. Instead, the Colonel in command and 42 other officers were court martialed for cowardice, busted to private and sent to fight in Angola. I guess that means that in the Cuban army you get promoted according to how you do in the field, not according to how much your chest

tilts.

* * * * *

Now that the Marines have been pulled out of Lebanon, I notice that that country is closer to peace. There still is skirmishing, and it is too soon to tell, but the Green Line has been dismantled, alliances have been formed, and the number of killings has been dramatically reduced. Could it actually mean that sending the Marines there was a mistake?

Of course. Some people who would agree are members of the Near East Bureau of the State Department. A new study has shown that the Reagan Administration has stifled dissent in the State Department. The Near East Bureau did not want Marines in Lebanon, but their dissent was not heard. The Marines were sent, and 269 were killed, and that war was prolonged. Maybe it's better to have Ronald Reagan fight his wars at the Olympics.

GRENADINE OF THE MONTH

Despite everything else, Ronnie Reagan has been good to me. With all the turkeys he appoints to various government positions, it is easy to find someone to throw the Grenade at. Take Philip Abrams, Under Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for example. He gets this grenade for his analysis of overcrowding among Hispanic people. He said that the reason is that it is a cultural preference unrelated to poverty, and that Hispanics prefer doubling up.

For this in depth analysis of the problem, Ronnie Reagan ought to give him a medal. Or maybe appoint him Ambassador to Angola. Or better yet, why not Lebanon? He could study the housing shortage there. Maybe he could earn a purple heart or two!

Bill Shunas (AKA SP5 Willy)



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Say No To Ronald Reagan & War

"Great Communicator" then replied to the press, profoundly, "We are doing the best we can." And walked off. As far as communicating, no President in the last 20 years has had less news conferences (that's right--Nixon had more).

As far as his work, Reagan doesn't get up before 10 AM, lunches at noon, a quick nap during cabinet meetings (that's right--his aids admit he sleeps through, which may be why his wife has to coach him on foreign policy), and he's through work by 3 PM. Of course, his work day is easier when he's on vacation, which is about as often as a beer commercial during a football game.

The government in fact is being run by different bureaucrats, some better known than others, who are pursuing different policies and getting Americans killed. Look at Lebanon: Secretary of Defense Weinberger wanted Marine intervention. The State Department was against. Reagan didn't step in except to make excuses for the disaster that cost more Marine lives in one day than any time since 1968 Tet in Vietnam. The drug enforcement people are trying to stop the flow of cocaine while the CIA is working hand in glove with the pushers in an

effort to find allies against leftist insurgents in South America. There is one place where the Reaganists in government find agreement, and that's selling the nation's future to the highest bidder. The forests, the parks, the rivers, lakes and oceans are being given away to the "lowest" bidder in a rape of the natural resources that belong to the nation, not a few multi-national corporations.

nice guy."

Quite simply, a "genuinely nice guy" wouldn't be killing aid to millions of starving children in Africa. A "genuinely nice guy" would not deny breakfast and lunch to American children now facing a nutritional crisis unparalleled since before World War II. In fact as far as people go, he doesn't give a damn even when it comes to the military. Sure, the generals and the ad-

REAGANBUSTER



As vets we've seen both sides of Reagan. He smiles, he cries, he prays. He "honors" us at every opportunity, but his kind of "honor" is purest poison to us and our kids, as poison as was Agent Orange which Reagan refuses to recognize as service-connected. As deadly as the war he is trying to get us involved in and send our kids to die in. The Legion and the VFW may applaud him, but they are applauding the man who had cut the number of hospital beds available to vets in the VA. They are applauding the man whose advisors want to gut the VA totally throwing disabled vets into charity wards and end the VA vets' Outreach Centers.

I'm sure there are some who say, "Sure he's President, but like you say, he sleeps a lot so he's not really to blame." Except that he's paid and elected to be President. He is responsible for those below him, appointed by him and carrying out the plundering of the country by their corporations. And he does not care, despite his carefully cultivated image as a "genuinely

mirals are getting their toys and bennies, but when it comes to the enlisted man and woman, it's a different story. Cost of living raises have been held up, promotions frozen, and with the cut-back in welfare aid, even GI's are suffering.

The last four years are only the beginning. The next four promise much more--more pain and suffering for the average American and more money for Reagan's rich friends.

I suppose one is not supposed to bring up Reagan's private life but he's trying to interfere with our individual rights without a thought to the Constitutional questions. This great religious man who would put prayer in schools, subsidize parochial education and dictate moral standards does not go to church himself (except to give a campaign speech). He never tires of talking about the value of the American family, yet has not visited his grandchildren in years. And he is hardly above lies; he told an Israeli how he visited Nazi extermination camps in the Army, yet he never left the back lot in

Hollywood during his military "career."

I certainly wouldn't want to suggest Reagan doesn't deserve re-election. At times I even think the electorate deserves him. But I can't believe that our children or the rest of the world's children do deserve him.

---Barry Romo
VVAW National
Office

VETS 'BUST' CHEMICAL PLANT

On July 12, 1984, the Hercules Chemical Plant in Milwaukee was turned in by a neighbor for a possible chemical spill. There were 3 alarms worth of fire trucks including the hazardous material unit.

The next day Milwaukee VVAW received a phone call from one of its members whose 'Nam vet brother lives by the factory. He remembered the Agent Orange demonstration of May and knew we were out for Hercules' blood.

The VVAW Chapter met on Sunday and, armed with the informant's information, two members volunteered to look into what had happened. One member got the copy of the chief officer's alarm report and it looked like a possible leak of PCL3 (phosphorous trichloride); we thought we smelled a cover-up. Another VVAW brother researched the procedure of how to report this to the Department of Natural Resources (toxic waste-pumping) and we were on our way.

With the May 7th sellout of the Agent Orange court case to the chemical companies by the lawyers, we wanted the hide of Hercules Chemical.

To make a long story short, only one gallon was spilled and the gas cloud witnessed that night was only fog. The chemical plant was able to prove only one gallon was lost. So VVAW did not get our revenge, but our eyes are glued on to them.

--Milwaukee VVAW

Military Drug Tests Not Accurate

(The following news item was from Seattle as reported by the Chicago Tribune wire services.)

Sloppy testing and paperwork have forced the Navy and Air Force to reverse disciplinary action against more than 5,000 servicemen charged in a military crackdown on illegal drugs, the Seattle Times reported. The Army, meanwhile, is trying to track down 60,000 to 70,000 soldiers to tell them that faulty documentation of their drug tests may allow them to appeal disciplinary action, according to the copyrighted story. During the last 2 1/2 years, the Navy, Army, Air Force and Marine Corps have conducted 6 million tests on urine samples from servicemen, with about 375,000 tests indicating drug use and 72,000 servicemen being disciplined, the newspaper said.

(!!!!!!)



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Vets' Wives & Problems

for his family. The more involved he gets, the angrier he becomes. I know that it takes people like my husband to get involved, and to do something constructive, but is there no time for love, children, wives and friends?

Understanding all of this anger, why his health is so bad, why our children are deformed, or wondering if our children's children are to be deformed, why all these tests are coming back from the health department with devastating results, why the chromosome damage and his immune system damage is so severe that he has been told he doesn't have very much more time left to live. Ten years at the most and that's probably a high estimate. At the same time he's being told by the VA that there is nothing they can do. They haven't even acknowledged that there is a problem with Agent Orange. Helpless is how you feel.

Our marriage is at a loss. There is nothing I can do anymore. I can't give him hope; he has no hope that he can or will get better. He feels he has no more need for me as a wife. He is just waiting for his time to come. He is still working against all the things he is against, for the future of our children, maybe, but there is no more hope for his future as he sees it.

What am I supposed to do? How can I or could I give him any hope? I couldn't. We've come to a standstill in our lives and there is nothing either one of us feel we can do. If nothing else I want the rest of his life to be happy. That is why when he wanted me to leave his life I did. Separation is what he wanted, indefinitely. So here I am writing THE VETERAN. Now what?

Dear Sister,

Your letter in the last issue of THE VETERAN was devastating in its honesty, courage and impact. Your situation and all its sadness struck some very personal chords in me, as I'm sure it did with all the other wives and partners who read it. Every one of us could have written that letter at some point in our lives with our veteran husbands.

There are indeed thousands of us out here, struggling with the same issues and problems.

The fears for the future of our children, the frustrations of trying to deal with the VA, the chemical companies, the lawyers and the Courts on Agent Orange, feeling our families crumble beneath their greed, and knowing they'll do it all again, creates within us all a terrible burden of hopelessness. None of us is immune.

Unfortunately, for too many wives, the suffering is endured alone and creates its own private hell. On one hand, her veteran-husband (and possibly others) are advising the spouse that it's best for everyone to end the marriage and be rid of the veteran and all of his problems. On the other hand she feels tremendous love, loyalty and responsibility for her husband, her family and their future together. This situation creates severe emotional and mental anguish and confusion for the partner. Obviously it is a direct contradiction and goes against every goal that has been established in the marriage.

In my case I found this to be a battle for my own sanity and survival as an individual as well as the continued survival of my family unit. My husband as well reached a point where he felt that all was lost and no hope existed for us. His involvement and commitment to the struggle of veterans also took a lot of our time and energy. Over the years his illnesses increased and his ability to struggle on became almost impossible. The lies, deceptions and broken promises by the government took their toll, and the guilt, anger and frustration were turned inward and became very destructive for him and those closest to him--his family.

After months of tearful discussion and prolonged agony over what was the best for all involved, we too separated. It was definitely the most difficult period of our lives together. Very scary for several months, but it was good for us because it enabled us to step away from each other, take a rest from the intense problems facing us, and in time, come back together with a better appreciation and understanding of ourselves, each other, and the true value of the love we share. Our separation was a time of personal growth and discovery. We came back together with a

greater resolve and ability to continue on with our lives together.

In the time we were separated, I found a wellspring of personal strength in myself, and comfort, wisdom and understanding among over wives and partners of veterans. Like our husbands, we too are survivors.

I wish to thank you for opening this issue of partners and our struggles to remain so in THE VETERAN. So often our problems are overshadowed by those of our veteran husbands, and we are lost to ourselves and isolated from each other's caring and support. Perhaps the time has come again for VVAW women to gather and discuss these issues common to us all. The National Meeting in Chicago would be a great place to begin.

THE VETERAN:

The stories may vary in certain facts, but all in all they are basically the same.

My husband has numerous health problems due to exposure to Agent Orange and has not worked since August, 1981. He was diagnosed as having post-traumatic-stress-disorder and still hasn't received any compensation or help. He has joined many veterans' organizations and has written congressmen and senators. No one can seem to help him. It took us two years to get the VA to determine that he's totally and permanently disabled due to an "arthritic condition of unknown origin." He gets \$65.00 a month for that non-service connected disability.

There is no Outreach Program around here to help him with his PTSD so his life is filled with hate, bitterness, distress, and he feels he is socially unaccepted and has no self-worth.

My children have unexplained headaches, stomach aches and joint pains.

We divorced after 7 years of marriage even though we loved each other. We have since remarried, but the problems are still there.

His condition has affected both family and friends, and all I can see is that his condition is worsening.

Is there any hope for these vets and their families? We are people just like everyone else and it's time the govern-

ment started realizing that there is a problem and it has to be resolved.

That's my story. Sound familiar?

Niceville,
Florida

I, too, am a vet's wife, and at one time experience the helpless doom that she speaks of. However, a God much bigger than the U.S., Vietnam, and all of us put together, pulled my husband out of the "muck" re-united our troubled marriage and has given us a new life full of hope today....

In Christ's Service,
Fran Hansen
Syracuse, NY

As a psychotherapist involved in working with Vietnam veterans and their families, I'd like to respond to your letter and attempt to suggest some possibilities to the "Now what?" question you posed at the end of your letter.

For many Vietnam veterans, it is crucial to become a part of social action, both for personal understanding and satisfaction as well as, as you described, "to do something constructive." Yet, as you asked, what happens if the marriage, the family, and the veteran continue to suffer? Are there additional courses of action to take?

Individual, group and family therapy, i.e. "readjustment counselling" as it is called, which focuses on Vietnam issues as much as the veteran and family can tolerate it, is quite different than social action. Yet, it is an effective additional approach. Also when one veteran and his family can work it out, the ripple affect can touch the world in surprising ways, which is a form of social action in itself.

Post traumatic stress is a usual focus of therapy--trauma impinging on the veteran and often family members, and reactions to this. Unlike most psychological problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (ptsd) is based on "stressors" which would cause a reaction is almost anyone.

What I am leading up to: even though the original source

of many of the problems were external events (Vietnam, lack of homecoming, etc) the results have left their mark within the individual and within the family. The symptoms of the events continue, in the pain, the suffering, the substance abuse, the numbing out and keeping at a distance.

You describe devastating health, genetic, psychological and family damage, and mentioned that your husband is in therapy for medical and psychological problems. Yet you feel helpless, hopeless, with your marriage at a standstill or worse, that you're unable to offer any hope.

Not knowing more of the specifics, and with some risk of overgeneralizing, I'd like to ask: what about, as you said, time for children, wives, and friends? What about bringing together those who care into group meetings with a therapist who is familiar with issues of Vietnam veterans and families.

I believe family therapy is a crucial and necessary component of a comprehensive treatment plan. I suggest you speak directly with your husband's therapist, or if there are any objections to that, speak with an additional family therapist familiar with Vietnam veterans' issues.

Check out how you and your family can become involved in therapy together, in a timely and thoughtful way. Without some on-going family involvement, the individual sessions can sometimes maintain isolation and separation that is part of the problem. It is true that some issues can be worked with in the privacy of individual sessions or in groups, but it's also true that the "results" need to be reintegrated into the family at some point.

One other thought: even if your separation remains indefinite, or results in divorce, family meetings at times can assist with a less destructive (or more constructive) divorce--and even possibly lead to an emotional reconciliation.

I hope you arrive at the next step, in terms of your "Now what?" question, and with for you and your family the best possible outcome.

Clifford Brickman, ACSW
Co-Director
Family Reintegration Consortium

Dear Vet's Wife,

I read your letter in the latest issue of THE VETERAN. Having faced my own terminality and having found it to be full of warmth and hope, let me venture to relay some sketchy thoughts that came to me as I read your letter.

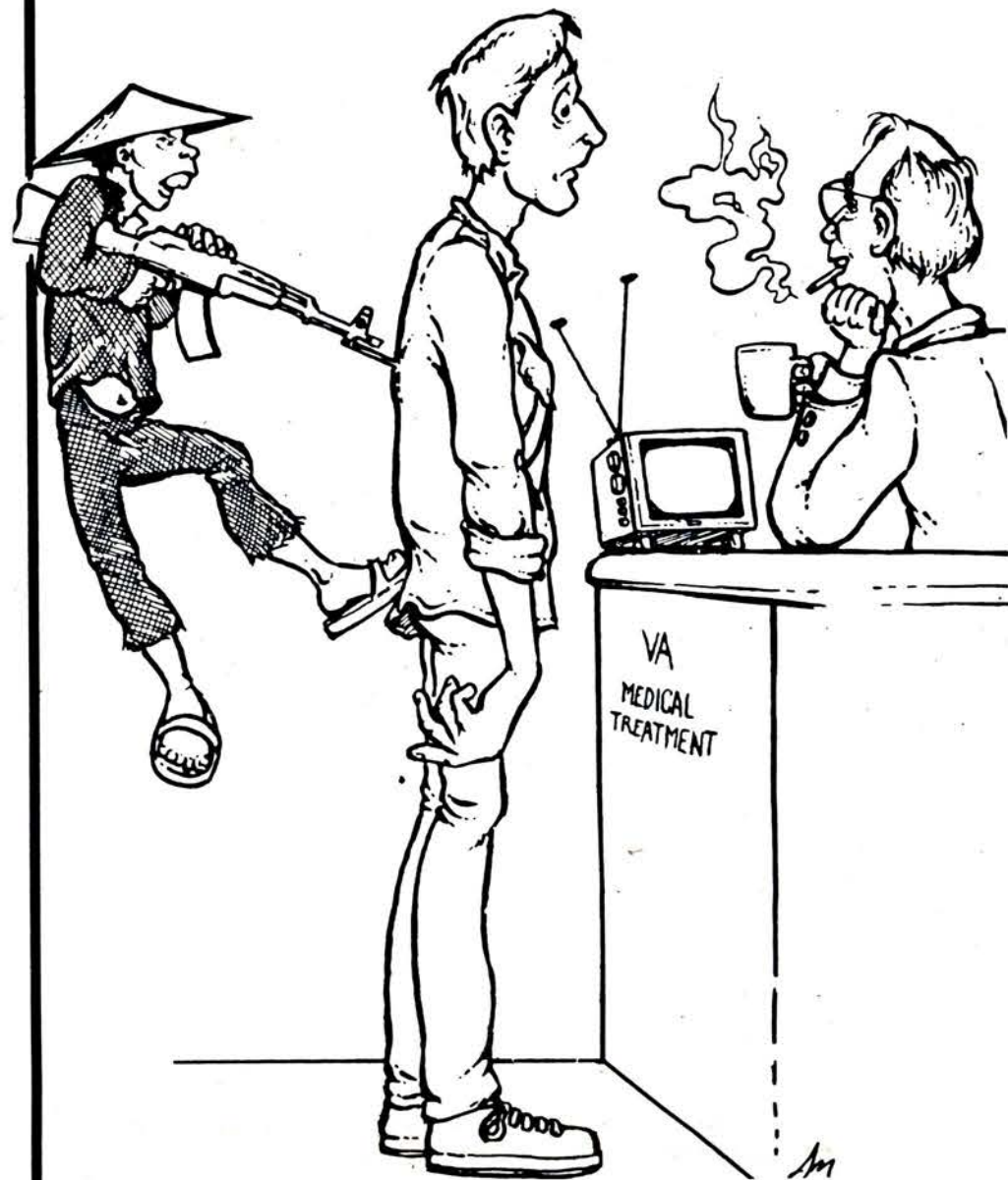
For some of us, anger and hatred were described as "bad" things. But, highly charged emotions, even "bad" ones, often result in "good" things. Properly directed emotions usually produce progression in life. Poorly directed emotions usually produce regression and aggression. There IS time for everything in this life: love, children, wives, fighting injustice--you name it. But, a person must properly direct his/her emotions. Your husband must choose life, day by day.

You say, "He is still working against all the things he is against, for the future of our children" and that sounds like a very selfless thing for a man to do. But, where are his actions? I don't believe it is best 'for the future of his children' that he separate himself from them. Nor do I believe it is best 'for the future of his children' that he allows himself the privilege of winding himself in his death shroud so tightly tied with the self-made chains of anger and hatred that he's blind to the needs of his family.

You ask, "When does all this anger and hatred subside?" When all the injustices are addressed and resolved, or perhaps when your description of the world includes its imperfection. "Why is it getting worse all the time?" Because, as the years go by, the frustrations over the unresolved injustices accumulate. "Will it ever let up?" Probably not. But then, you already knew the answers to these questions.

If you thought separation would make your husband's life happy, you would not have written to THE VETERAN. And, since you "want the rest of his life to be happy" the answer to "Now what?" is reconciliation, family consulting, and a positive attitude on the days to come in this life with a hell of a lot less dwelling on the end of this life by both of you.

Sincerely,
Friend & Partner of a stressed-out Vet since 1968.



Until you can prove it's service related, there's nothing we can do!

In Memory of JOHN GRAVENSTINE

VVAW Milwaukee would like to remember John Gravenstine. We buried him on Memorial Day. He was 33, a long-time member as an RTO from 1969-70. He came home with problems that the VA gave him a ton of drugs for. It didn't take long before he was strung out on VA drugs which only masked many of his medical problems. The coroner's report couldn't decide if he died of drugs or because of a blood clot in his brain, but VVAW had people taking him to doctors just before he died because of severe headaches -- headaches that the VA said were "psychological."



of VVAW (1971). In Vietnam he was with an Army infantry unit

We called him Gravey and he was one of us. He stood up against the war and the VA with VVAW despite all his pain. He had warmth and humor and we will miss him. He always believed in our philosophy--Honor the Dead! Fight like Hell for the Living! John did it. It is a fitting memorial that we continue in that tradition. Memorial Day will always be a little more personal to VVAW in Milwaukee.

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VETERANS DAY

day of the 11th month.

Often there is a question why we are doing this, why we are remembering a war which holds so many events we would like to forget. Many of these memories hold little but pain for the vets and, in many cases, it would be far easier to stash them far in the backmost reaches of memory as have so many Vietnam veterans. And, it should be added, as have many of the people of America, led by politicians who hope that forgetting Vietnam will make easier the waging of a similar war somewhere else.

Among the experiences that we have come to value--those of us who remember Veterans Day--is learning that there is a difference between the war and the warrior, that even though we may wish to forget most of our experience in Vietnam, we do not want to forget those with whom we served. And when we "Honor the Dead," we do indeed remember fondly the memories we hold of those who fought beside us. We remember, too, that the casualty list is far longer than the names which appear on the Wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Thousands of veterans and friends have, since the war, been the casualties of drugs, of alcohol, of post-traumatic stress in its many forms, of Agent Orange, and should as surely be marked as the dead of the Vietnam War as are those whose

names are inscribed on the Wall.

We learned how to hate the war but not the warriors. We learned, most of us, never to confuse the two. We did not fight the war because it was our idea; we did what our government (that we had been taught to respect and obey) told us to do, more or less willingly, depending on our situation, and in some cases even gladly (those of us who were convinced we were saving the U.S. from the threat of godless communism). Though the war was wrong, for any number of reasons, the people who fought the war were not wrong.

It took a number of years to learn there was a difference. Much of the American population still doesn't understand that the war they did not support was not the same as the men and women who were sent to fight that war. The fact that many of us failed to see the difference for a long time led to some of the problems that so many vets still have.

Yes, there should be "blame" attached to the Vietnam War, and there should be guilt assigned. Neither of these belong to the veterans of that war, however. They should be directed where they belong--at a government (and the powers behind that government) which had an interest in fighting a war for control, power and economics in Southeast Asia.

It's never been easy to tell the parents of one of our friends who was killed in Vietnam that their son died "for nothing." "In vain," the phrase that jumps to the lips, is hardly comforting. Yet unlike some earlier wars, there was nothing "noble" about the cause and no noble purpose behind the support of a corrupt, thug-filled government which the U.S. set up in Saigon. Nevertheless, there was heroism by noble men and women fighting an ignoble war for all the wrong reasons.

Our activities on Veterans Day speak loudly about some Vietnam veterans; while we are remembering the dead, we're thinking about the living and about how we never want to

has affected our bodies and those see them go through a war such as we went through. Never again should 18-year-olds be shipped off to fight a war in which neither they nor their families have any interest or any stake. Some corporations made some dollars on the Vietnam War; some defense contractors did well. Some politicians made careers as did some military officers. But for those of us who ended up having to fight the war, there was no glory in Vietnam, and nothing much since Vietnam--except joblessness, psychological problems, Agent Orange poisoning, a public which would just as soon forget, and a Veterans Administration which does as little for the Vietnam vet as it can possibly get away with.

And what about the danger that Vietnam vets, parading around in our jungle fatigues present exactly the wrong model for the young, already enamored of uniforms and many of the trappings of the Vietnam War? Are we glorifying the war much like the VFW or the Legion have done for wars of the past? Of course that's possible, but not if the young listen to what VVAW has to say. When, during Veterans' Day ceremonies, we talk about Agent Orange, it won't be quite the same as what others will say. The traditional vets organizations will say, by now, that vets should be tested, treated and compensated for the problems that come from exposure to Agent Orange--it took awhile, but seeing that this was something that Vietnam vets knew was important, and seeing that their futures lay with the Vietnam veteran member, even these groups began to move on the issue. VVAW will say that and more. Other Vietnam vet groups will talk about the need for help for Agent Orange victims--perhaps even including the Vietnamese victims--and will speak against the settlement in the class action suit against the makers of Agent Orange. VVAW will say that and more.

For VVAW, Agent Orange is more than just a poison which

of our children. Agent Orange is a significant symptom of the diseased system that sent us off to fight someone else's war and then, once we got home, forgot us, tried to shove us aside and now would like nothing more than to see Vietnam vets all die off quickly and be quiet. Our history and our presence on Veterans Day is one more reminder that we have no intention of fulfilling the dreams of the Reagan war planners and let people forget what happened in Vietnam.

Veterans Day was originally Armistice Day; November 11th was the day which marked the signing of the peace treaty to end World War I, the war which the politicians of that era declared "The war to end wars."

That is a fine thought. But it would be hard to count the number of wars which have taken place since November 11th, 1918. However, as we face another Veterans Day, we can and will do whatever we can to make sure that our children are not used as we were.

That is how the VVAW message on this Veterans' Day will differ from the message of other organizations. We are not less patriotic than they. No less than they do we honor the dead on this day, for they were our friends. But the real fight--the fight for the living--still lies ahead. Every move toward another war, every step down the path toward conflict in Central America or in the Middle East, or anywhere else, will have to be met with all the experience and credibility we can muster. No More Vietnams! Honor the Dead--but Fight Like Hell for the Living!

If you live in an area near one of the VVAW Regional coordinators listed in THE VETERAN, get in touch with them to find out about activities that may be going on near you. Or contact the VVAW National Office and we will try to get you in touch with people in your area. But much of what is talked about in this article, and much of what VVAW does on Veterans Day can be done individually--a letter to an editor of the local paper, a letter to a political figure to support peace or the nuclear freeze or expanded vets' counselling programs, or sharing of this article with a friend. Veterans Day needs your participation.

--Pete Zastrow
VVAW National
Office

NY Yankees Salute Vets!

For the second straight year VVAW in New York took in a Yankee ballgame in June. About 40 members, family and friends went to the Bronx to see the Yankees and last year's world champs, the Baltimore Orioles in a game that ended in a 2-1 loss for the home team.

Because of this dismal showing by the Yankees, the highlight of the game turned out to be when they flashed on the scoreboard, "Yankees welcome Vietnam Veterans Against the War."

Despite the heartbreaking loss, the vets and friends had a good time drinking beer, eating Yankee Franks and cheering on their team. As one vet, wise in the ways of the once-proud Yankees said, "Wait till next year."

VIETNAM REVISITED



Graham and June Bell at Reunification Hall, Ho Chi Minh City

(The following is an excerpt from a letter of Graham Bell, Australian Vietnam vet and longtime friend of VVAW.)

Before I tell you about our Vietnam trip I had better put it in perspective by telling you something about myself: I come from a working class family. Half of my upbringing was in the bush so I am no stranger to homes with dirt floors, no electricity or running water, and no education opportunities beyond primary school. Aborigines are for me real people and not toys to be played with by middle-class supporters of land rights, who take damned fine care that they don't let any Murri sleep under their roofs.

I was brought up to take people for what they are, and that helped me to survive during the Vietnam War.

I went to Vietnam with the Australian Army's Long Range Reconnaissance and Counter Revolutionary Warfare Specialist Unit, S.A.S., then after my discharge from the Army I studied comparative revolution and change as part of my degree course at Griffith University's School of Modern Asian Studies; the course covered in depth the economics of developing Asian countries. My wife and I have lived and travelled widely in Asia; we usually go travelling at ground level rather than jetting from one American-style luxury hotel to another. June was an Army nurse and I did my nursing training in the years when I was forced out of the University by the Fraser government's anti-veteran discrimination. I still speak a bit of Vietnamese, too.

Travel to and within Vietnam is controlled by a state-run tourism company which is a hell

of a lot better organized than most corporate bodies in developing countries. The trouble is that travel in Vietnam is a bloody rip-off: the Vietnamese seem to have the idea that all western visitors are there solely to pay off their national debt.

We found quite unrealistic, illogical and sometimes self-contradictory differences between costs and prices. What's a Yankee imperialist dollar worth? 11 Dong at the official rate; 40 Dong at the general commercial rate and 120-160 on the black market, but really, foreign exchange rates don't tell you all that much about an economy; the prices people pay for things are a better guide. Pushbike: 3700 D; matches, 5D; a newspaper, 20D if you are a Russian and half that when they find out you are not a Russian; a pencil, 1D, 50x.

Our travel program was surprisingly flexible; some of my requests were met and others were not, but you have to expect that sort of thing. There was never any obvious moves to prevent me wandering around talking with whomever I liked.

The war we fought in is now something in the distant past for young Vietnamese; they were curious about me because I was a non-Russian foreigner but there was no hostility at all; nowadays, Pol Pot and Deng Xiaoping are the devils.

Prior to going to Vietnam we read several articles about the present situation there. Most of what we read was complete and utter bullshit--the writers had either dreamed up some socialist peasant Utopia and given it a Southeast Asian setting, or, at the other extreme, taken lurid descriptions of life in Bolshevik Russia and inserted Vietnamese names in place of

Russian ones. The real world Vietnam was far more interesting. Take pop music, for instance: "Abba" and "Kiss" were still popular but "Duran-Duran" and "Men-at-work" were as yet unknown; so much for stories that Western music was banned.

Make no mistake. Things are pretty tough in Vietnam now--there is poverty, there are desperate shortages of both industrial and consumer goods, and there is a lot of bureaucratic disorganization. What else would you expect to find after years of warfare, natural disasters, and economic blockade? These problems can be cured and they will not themselves cause the collapse of the present regime. What did astonish me was to find that the Vietnamese are still rushing headlong down the same suicidal path to economic disaster that almost wrecked China: the path of "better-to-be-red-than-expert." I can understand the need to have politically reliable people running things but the Vietnamese have gone completely overboard. Given their problems and their available resources, why the hell they don't go all out for a strategy of developing technical expertise and individual initiative as well as political reliability is completely beyond me. To make matters worse, there is still smouldering resentment in the South against Northerners; reunification seemed like a terrific idea at the time--until the smart-arsed kids came down from Hanoi to kick the guerrilla fighters out of the good jobs and back to the paddy fields. Nobody wants the old regime back.

If you want a lesson on how to blow a successful revolution, then look at Vietnam today.

Unlike a lot of my fellow Australians who learned to hate the Slopes, I have always liked the ordinary Vietnamese people (except when they were trying to kill me) and it is the ordinary people I feel sorry for now--

One thing, though: the Vietnamese still have their sense of humor, so there is hope for the future.

Just in case anyone has any delusions of forcing change on the Vietnamese from outside their country, let me tell you in the strongest possible terms that although Vietnam needs a radical improvement in its domestic economic methods, especially in management, if it is to gain prosperity and to avoid driving the people into rebellion, any such change must come from the Viet-

namese themselves--they have the talent, they can easily gain the expertise, and, surprisingly, they do have all the material they need to launch their own recovery. Forget about owing the Russians money until into the 22nd Century, forget about the Americans double-crossing them after the war (in the long run that was America's loss), the Vietnamese themselves have the power now to make themselves prosperous--or to destroy everything they worked for.

It is highly unlikely that the Vietnamese will even issue me with another visa.

Graham Bell
Australia



(The following short article comes from UPI and was datelined "Washington." It may well have appeared in your local newspaper, but we include it here just in case you missed it.)

Truck drivers making deliveries in South Vietnam for U.S. oil companies routinely avoided sabotage by paying off Viet Cong guerrillas with fuel that was then used in the fight against allied troops, a declassified CIA report shows.

The previously top-secret study was prepared in 1966 for former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and recently released for Gen. William Westmoreland's \$120 million libel suit against CBS Inc.

It appears to partially confirm reports of payoffs during the war, which have long been denied by Exxon, Mobil and Shell.

A Shell spokesman said yesterday there was "no way to know" what the truck drivers did. Mobil had no immediate comment and an Exxon spokesman said his company was aware of the problem but denied any complicity.

VETS SPEAK AGAINST AGE

The public hearings step in the process of determining a settlement to the Vietnam veterans' class action suit finally happened around the country. Hearings in Brooklyn were followed by hearings in Chicago, in Houston, in Atlanta, and, finally, in San Francisco. At each hearing, the judge in the case, Judge Jack Weinstein,

heard a succession of vets, family members, lawyers, and concerned citizens. In each city, the overwhelming number of those testifying, spoke against the proposed settlement.

The settlement, agreed to by the lawyers "management committee" set up a fund of \$180 million (with interest) to be paid out to affected vets and family members. The money was immediately deposited by the chemical companies--the objects of the suit--and their stockholders breathed a collective sigh of relief that they had gotten off so easy.

The lawyers "management committee" had not bothered to ask Vietnam vets (who they were supposed to represent) about the settlement; in fact, several times before the settlement was announced, lawyers from this committee had straight-out said they would not agree to a settlement. But once the settlement was dangled in front of them, they bit and swallowed it, hook, line and sinker.

At the hearings, the lawyers had to do all they could to justify their acceptance. As can be seen from the description of the hearing in Chicago, they went to great lengths to make themselves look good. Still, some 90% of the vets spoke against the settlement.

For many vets it was simply a case that they did not want to be pitted against their fellow vets--with \$180 million (minus some healthy fees to the lawyers, no doubt) vets would have to fight over what was left, and few vets wanted to see that. We remember what it was like to be a part of a unit where you depended on your buddy, and he depended on you.

San Francisco hearing, the Judge looked old and tired--he had lived through the kind of testimony described in the following article. We can only guess how it affected him and his settlement.

In New York one of the vets said, "We were told when Saigon fell that the war was over; when the Vets Outreach Centers were started, we were told the war was over; when the vets were welcomed home and the Wall was built, the war was over. Now with this settlement we are once again told 'the war is over.' Well, it is not over; this is not the end but only one more chapter." In unity there is strength.

The Midwest Agent Orange hearings before Judge Jack Weinstein were held August 13th & 14th amid bitter controversy between the vets and their attorneys, a controversy that had marked the Agent Orange lawsuit since the announced settlement for \$180 million earlier this year.

The focus of the attack had suddenly shifted from the government and the chemical companies (much to their relief) to the attorneys, specifically the "management committee," as they styled themselves, appointed by the Judge to look after the interests of the veteran members of the suit.

On the evening of August 12th, two important meetings were underway to attempt to influence the "heart & mind" of Judge Weinstein. One, a meeting of vets and their families from across the Midwest with Victor Yannacone, the attorney who originally filed the class action suit against the chemical companies on behalf of Vietnam vets before he was ousted by the same "management committee."

The other meeting, held in a plush suite in the Loop (down town Chicago) by the attorneys and their meager band of supporters, clearly pointed out why the vets were justified in directing their anger towards the "management committee" and away from the chemical companies and the VA, temporarily, at least.

Yannacone's northside meeting, hastily arranged by the Chicago Chapter of VVAW, focused on the experiences of the New York hearings, how the proceedings occurred, what testimony to focus on, and the continued need for unity among all the vets involved.

The "management committee" session was also striving for unity, unity of the few in opposition to the needy many, a meeting that could only resemble a nest of snakes. High-powered corporate attorneys, licking their chops at the prospect of millions of bucks for themselves and their law firms with all the human values and morals of a pot of fish paste. An eyewitness who sat on the "management committee" meeting characterized it as a "strategy session to tie up last minute details" for the Chicago hearings and a summation of the New York hearings. The skull session concentrated on how to control the Chicago hearings, influence the media, browbeat, humiliate and de-

flate the opposition (us!); a little time was set aside to bicker over the money they would each receive when the settlement was accepted.

On the morning of the first day of hearings, VVAW took the initiative away from the "management" creeps; the first sight the media beheld was dozens of vets and their families leafletting up and down the street, banners and picket signs, an information table, a swirling mass of activity and color. Vets from across the Midwest stepped forward to relieve VVAW members



VVAW sign-up/lit table

Southern Report

Four members of Athens, GA VVAW testified at the Agent Orange hearings in Atlanta, and made some valuable contacts with vets throughout the Southeast. We were the only ones today at the hearing who took the stance of totally scrapping the settlement, although many felt the money was inadequate. A few addressed our issues such as liability and connection of symptoms with Agent Orange and the matter of ineffective counsel. This last was one of the major issues for several other folks and it seems there was general dissatisfaction with the management committee....One guy closed his statement with the note, "If you do not give us a settlement worth living for, you will give us a cause worth dying for."

Elton Manzione
VVAW--Athens



on banners and picket signs. Local politicians and bureaucrats mingled with the crowd, gray and seersucker blending with OD green. U.S. Representative Paul Simon, a candidate for U.S. Senate, smiling, posing in front of the banner "Test, Treat & Compensate Agent Orange Victims--VVAW" shaking hands all around, interviews with the media, whisked away in a limo. Media and more media. Print writing furiously, radio and TV tripping over each other, tangled equipment--the vets solidly and firmly voicing their opposition to the suit to anyone listening, writing, filming, recording. Finally, slipping through the crowd, casting furtive glances; the attorneys, sleazing in through the doors of the Dirksen Federal Building as vets pointed them out for others.

Upstairs in the building was another scene. A jammed waiting area, some vets in suits, others in jungle fatigues, peering at name tags and organizational buttons and patches, old friends re-uniting, representatives of a multitude of vets groups comparing notes and con-

AGENT ORANGE SETTLEMENT

ferring. A small group of "management committee" attorneys furiously answering a multitude of questions hurled at them stand nearby a group of well-dressed vets, flown in by the attorneys for pro-settlement testimony. Strangest of all, there's a small group of attorneys representing the chemical companies, little androids every one in perfect print summer frocks and stylish suits, blank expressions, still waiting.

Ahead in the hallway leading to the courtroom, a metal detector with a large number of

with the judge, clerks and attorneys, they weren't even on the docket or listed to be heard on the next--and last--day.

In the afternoon sessions, literally no vet or family member spoke in favor of the settlement. Tales of horror and suffering confirmed our worst fears. Vets broke testifying and were replaced by wives or children reading their statements. Maude De Victor, the VA worker who first exposed Agent Orange cases at the VA testified once again.

The quality of testimony and documentation was amazing. It was sometimes so emotional that that hardly a dry eye was seen. Vets overthrew all courtroom decorum and began to applaud and cheer on the speakers.

Testimony continued through the evening and into the night. The judge dismissed the court reporter and clerks, taking testimony off the record. VVAW members specifically argued that people be allowed to speak the next day instead, or that their written statements be accepted.

People who were forced on to the next day's docket were furious, pointing out that the attorneys had manipulated the hearing. The initial print media returns were disappointing, showing mixed results. The electronic (radio & TV) media was better--not being allowed to film or record inside, they had been forced to talk to the vets. VVAW and its allies from the National Network of Vietnam Vets, led by Rena Kopystenski of Agent Orange Victims of New Jersey, began to gear up for Day Number 2 of the hearings.

If the first day of the hearings was excitement, a media circus, the 2nd day of the hearings was subdued in comparison. Gone was any pretense of favoring the settlement. Tuesday saw an endless stream of testimony opposing the settlement. The vets still cheered the speakers, emotions running high. Vets who hadn't heard of the hearing until Monday's news coverage crowded the halls and courtrooms demanding to speak, to give their accounts, to condemn the settlement and to submit their written statements on into the evening.

Judge Weinstein had heard an overwhelming appeal against the settlement and received documents by the ream. He'd seen the attorneys attempt to control the outcome and fail. Would he throw out the settlement or had he already made up his mind, going through the motions in city

after city where testimony ran 85% to 90% (at its lowest) against the settlement? We'll know in September or early October.

A family stood before the judge, the man a Vietnam vet, his wife, a boy of 9 and a girl of 12, both with multiple birth defects. As the vet concluded his statement, the girl turned to face the audience. As she spoke the judge's eyes widened and he gripped the desk behind which he was seated. The girl said: "My daddy said you never left behind the wounded in Vietnam." Taking her brother's hand, she said simply, "Are you going to leave us behind now?"

A vet jumped to his feet shouting, "Hell no, we won't leave you behind."

The rest of the crowd rose as one roaring its approval. The doors to the court burst open into the hall as men and women in tears released the pent-up emotions of two days--or years. A vet said, "If that son of a bitch has any kind of heart, he'll throw this settlement out."

The judge and certainly the attorneys have next to no idea what binds us together to fight, as individual vets, as organizations, as a movement regardless of the judge's final decision.

Two Families

Jim & Suki Wachtendonk, from Madison, Wisconsin: Jim had been home about 6 months when he and Suki met; he was already experiencing health problems--gastro-intestinal problems, bloody urine and other problems that Jim feels are Agent-Orange related. They have two children: Reeanne, born in 1976, and Zak, born in 1979; both children have multiple birth defects. Zak's problems are still occurring and seem endless; a minimum of \$65,000 has been spent on medical treatment.

Jim, a guard dog handler in Vietnam in the area around DaNang, now works for the City of Madison, and is an incredible singer and musician.

While Jim was somewhat satisfied with being able to testify, Suki was angry, and that's probably an understatement.

When they arrived in Chicago, they were like many other couples in town for the hearings, a little nervous, but eager at last to get their day in court with Judge Weinstein. They attended a meeting with

Victor Yannacone on the night before the hearings in order to get more insight into what had happened during the New York hearing.

From there, according to Suki, things went downhill. "I thought that the hearings were tightly controlled by the attorneys mostly for the benefit of the media. They stacked the testimony in their favor at first."

"Jim and I were scheduled for the morning of the 13th; by afternoon, we were still waiting. Our attorney, Steve Schlegel (of the "Management Committee")



John Lindquist (VVAW National Office) speaking at rally.

kept assuring us we'd get to speak."

Afternoon became evening, then late night. Jim and Suki were faced with "off the record" testimony or waiting until the next day. Suki was furious and wanted to leave, but John Lindquist of the VVAW National Office convinced them to stay.

"I was angry, frustrated," said Suki. "We were put off and put off. Schlegel apologized to us--big deal! The damn lawyers didn't pay for an extra day of baby sitter service for us. Jim lost a day's wage. The baby sitter missed a job interview--lost the job."

"The bastards (lawyers) didn't want us there. I had 180 pages of supportive documents. I got to speak for five minutes. The attorney spoke up to 45 minutes. I'm positive the hearings were rigged."

"I told the judge so. I said 'The whole thing stinks'

Turn to page 11



federal marshalls. The attorneys look resentful that they must wait with the rabble and be subjected to this indignity. Finally, people pass through, first enough to fill the courtroom, and then the overflow stacking up in the hallway as people wait to get in.

Inside, the attorneys have manipulated the docket: they speak first, seeming to go on endlessly, and they are followed by their hand-picked group of vets in favor of the settlement. A break for lunch and the media rush out to report the veterans like the settlement or are split 50-50 at best.

At noon VVAW holds a rally in the plaza across from the Dirksen building. Members of the VVAW National Office, and Ann Bailey, Midwest Regional VVAW Coordinator, speak about Agent Orange, its effects, the hearing and their importance. As people come from the courtroom the crowd of several hundred, excluding the media, are told of the attempt at media manipulation by the "management committee." People express how their worst fears were realized when, after months of correspondence

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

NATIONAL COORDINATORS

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(312) 386-1413

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(312) 327-5756

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(312) 561-3435

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(414) 963-0398

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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 _____

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



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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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.

VETERANS SELF-HELP GUIDE

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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 Office.

VETERANS SELF-HELP GUIDE

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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Continued from page 9 AGENT ORANGE —Two Families

and told him why; he glared at Schlegel who just bowed his head."

"We waited seven years for those hearings and got robbed."

When asked about the outcome of the hearings and the future, Suki stated, "I think the judge has already made up his mind. He'll take the settlement and put the money in the hands of vets groups who won't administer it well or leave out the groups they don't care for, creating a battle for the money."

Suki agreed that as much unity as possible among vets and vets organizations could prevent such an outcome.



Anita and Terry Farrand, from Quad Cities, Iowa.

ing about patriotism, sorrow, death and grief at the "University of Hard Knocks." The lawyers, on the other hand, were going on panty raids and having chugging contests at the local fraternity house by night. By day they were learning how to weasel around a fight and how to talk like a natural fertilizer salesman with a mouthfull of samples.

Dow hurt us where our hearts are--our kids. Let's hurt them where their heads are (they got no hearts). Let's hurt them so good that they'll need a proctologist to give them CPR!

We must remember that we're brothers and sisters in this thing and we can't let petty stuff amongst ourselves hurt us. The fight goes on and we must too."

Anita and Terry's presentation to the Judge was one of the highlights of the 2nd day of the hearing. When Terry faltered and burst into tears, Anita picked up on their prepared text and finished. They were given a thunderous ovation. The Chicago *Tribune* referred to their presentation as "the testimony that most struck at the heart of the Agent Orange controversy." Terry later stated, "When I started crying it wasn't from sorrow or pity but just years of accumulated tension and frustration. I found myself at last before the judge and couldn't hold it any longer."

Bill Davis
VVAW National
Office

VIETNAM VETERANS
ARE STILL DYING
OF AGENT
ORANGE

New Feature REAGANSPEAK

(This issue, THE VETERAN is starting a new feature. It is called "Reaganspeak" and its aim is to give Reagan and others an outlet to share their views with the readers of THE VETERAN. Despite the name, "Reaganspeak" is not a new phenomenon; George Orwell introduced the term "news-

THE VETERAN calls this fashionable method of telling lies "Reaganspeak" in honor of the person who has elevated "newspeak" to new heights.

Each issue of THE VETERAN will carry the best new example sent in; the person who submits the entry chosen (and these are real quotes) can win a free subscription to THE VETERAN. The first winner--since he thought up the contest--is Ed Damato of Brooklyn, NY, for the following entry).

A top federal housing official said that many Hispanic families live in crowded conditions because of "cultural preference," it was reported.

HUD Under-Secretary Philip Abrams, the #2 official in his department, was quoted by The Washington Post as saying he does not believe Hispanics might be living in crowded homes because of poverty.

"I don't think so," Abrams said. "I'm told that they don't mind and they prefer, some prefer, doubling up. That is, as I found out, a characteristic of Hispanic communities, irrelevant to their social (and) economic conditions. It's a cultural preference, I'm told."

Representative Robert Garcia (D-Bronx), chairman of the Hispanic Caucus in Congress, said: "This is really a racist remark. These people have no concept of what is going on in America. They really live in another world."

SONG SOUND FAMILIAR?



peak" in 1984 and Reagan is just continuing a long tradition. Probably the most famous example is from Vietnam where a "tactical withdrawal" became a fancy way of changing the truth--it simply meant "retreat."

I'm a
Vietnam Veteran

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Nam Vet Reports From the Front NICARAGUA AND U.S.

Far too many of us face joblessness, homelessness, hunger and a sense of helplessness while our country's valuable resources are wasted trying to deny to the people of Asia, Africa and Central America their right to create a more just and humane life for themselves. The people of Nicaragua have been struggling since 1979 when they overthrew the ruthless dictator Somoza to raise their standard of living. At the same time they have been forced to fight a war of survival against the U.S.

The response of the U.S. government to the determination of the people of Nicaragua has been both embarrassing and appalling. Rather than supporting the rights of the Nicaraguan people to self-determination (as opposed to U.S. determination) by providing the country with medicine, educational assistance, and the like, our government has chosen to wage war on this country of 2.7 million people simply because they have chosen not to be exploited.

Reagan's refusal to obey the verdict of the World Court condemning the CIA-sponsored mining of Nicaragua's harbors, the huge increase in U.S. militarization of Honduras, the prolonged U.S. military maneuvers in that region, the continual violation of Nicaragua air space and territorial waters, and extensive economic sabotage all have brought us closer to a full-scale war involving U.S. troops and materials, costing money badly needed at home. Both the country of Nicaragua and our communities are targets of undeclared wars in which the attacks have been definitely stepped up since the Reagan administration has been directing the fire. As a Vietnam-era veterans, I see history repeating itself all-too-clearly as the U.S. intervention takes the form of the CIA training, supporting, supplying and directing counter-revolutionary forces under the command of the former Somoza National Guard. These so-called Contras have raped, mutilated, murdered and terrorized peasants, teachers, religious and medical workers, blown up daycare centers, school buildings and medical centers.

The Sandinistas, on the other hand, have provided a good example for their neighbors throughout

the Americas. Their accomplishments are many. They have reduced DDT levels in mothers' breast milk from one of the highest in the world (under Somoza) to one of the lowest; developed democratic institutions; reduced hunger and malnutrition; given land to peasant cooperatives; created adult education programs reducing their illiteracy rate from 56% to 12%; built hundreds of

benefit one family or to eliminate hunger. He is also attempting to deny and ignore the historical role that the U.S. has played in the history of Nicaragua.

History

From 1926 to 1932 Augusto Cesar Sandino, the inspiration of the present-day Sandinistas, led a victorious guerilla army against U.S. Marines in Nicaragua. To withdraw from that war, U.S.

ing/fact-finding peace mission to Nicaragua under the auspices of VAICA (Veterans Against Intervention in Central America). Six of us had served in Vietnam and Southeast Asia from 1964-72 collectively. Although a diverse group, we had much to unite us. We were multi-racial, of differing social and political persuasions, men and women, largely working class, community acti-



The faces of "our" enemy in Nicaragua.

school; provided free and accessible healthcare for everyone; reduced infant mortality by 1/3; eliminated polio, and built hospitals and clinics. All of this has been accomplished in five years. It is this threat of a "good example" which has caused the Reagan Administration to be so hostile toward Nicaragua. And despite the U.S. position of attempting to overthrow the government of a country that has never done anything to the U.S., Nicaragua has continued to maintain full diplomatic relations with this country.

When President Reagan charges Cuba and the Soviet Union with causing and directing the Sandinista's revolution, he is attempting to deny the Nicaraguan peoples' knowledge and experience under the U.S. supported Somoza tyranny which kept the people poor, sick, illiterate and hungry. He is attempting to deny that a country of poor people has the right to choose whether their resources should be used to

agents arranged to have Sandino assassinated, and brought to power the infamous Somozist National Guard which served the Somoza family's greed for money and power; the Somoza's lasted from 1933 until they were overthrown by the Nicaraguan people under the leadership of the Sandinist National Liberation Front in 1979.

President Reagan would have us believe that the Nicaraguan revolution was an act of subversion by the USSR. By the same logic the American Revolution was an act of French subversion against the British rather than a revolt by the colonies against the tyranny of British rule. The Nicaraguan revolt in 1979 was an act of liberation from both economic and political repression, just as was the American Revolution of 1776. The people of Nicaragua now control their own natural resources, markets and labor power.

Tour by Veterans Delegation
During the week of July 1-8, 1984, 8 Vietnam-era veterans were led on an information-shar-

vists who were united on the question of peace and took stands against U.S. interventionist policies in Central America in particular and other parts of the world in general. Our delegation delivered medical supplies to an Army Hospital in Managua; had a talk with the publisher of La Prensa newspaper in Corinto; visited the CIA-bombed oil refinery and rehabilitation center for prostitutes, as well as the Momomba volcano; swam in the Pacific Ocean; interviewed and talked with army officers and personnel in Managua and Ocotá; and toured the historical sites of Leon, Masaya and Esteli.

I hope that this article will aid in breaking the conspiracy of silence and misinformation, a conspiracy of government and big business who have cooperated in printing and broadcasting unfounded charges and outright lies about what is happening in Nicaragua, simply ignoring the impressive gains they have made in five short years, not only with-

TERRORISM

out U.S. help but against U.S. forces. The U.S. government, first under Carter and now Reagan, has responded negatively to the many accomplishments of this courageous people and has used economic pressure (blocking international loans) and military might in an attempt to undermine a Nicaragua that it did not control.

I believe that the U.S. government missed an opportunity to build real friendship with the Nicaraguan people and opted instead to continue to take the side of the past exploiters. The reason for this choice was pure and simple: to maintain the power achieved by controlling the natural resources, labor power and markets of Nicaragua as the U.S. has done since the turn of the century throughout Central America.

Nicaragua's War Against Poverty

On July 20, 1979, Tomas Borge declared, at a victory rally attended by over 250,000 people, that a new war was to be waged "against backwardness, against poverty, against ignorance, against immoral destruction."

Days earlier, millions in the U.S. had watched film clips of ABC News correspondent Bill Stewart being casually and ruthlessly murdered by the Somoza National Guard, the mainstay of repression under Somoza's rule. We watched children being gunned down, saw tanks attacking poor neighborhoods, saw the bombing of schools and hospi-

ers and peasants who were doing the fighting and dying who won the revolution and then proceeded to found a government that represented them and their interests--not those of the U.S. White House. The Carter Administration had tried to convince the Organization of American States to send a "peacekeeping" force



that could keep the Sandinistas from winning the war (similar to the Marines in Lebanon). They were surprised by the negative response from their traditionally willing partners. But, they were unaware of how much Somoza was disliked by his neighbors--even more than the Sandinistas.

The trauma of Vietnam was yet fresh in the memory of the American people and evoked a deepfelt opposition to the use or even suggested use of U.S.

determination for the Nicaraguan people.

For 45 years the history of the Somoza family and their National Guard was a success story in blood and corruption. Although corrupt and repressive dictators, they had the full support and approval of their "Big Brother"--financial interests in the U.S.--as well as the U.S. government. As President Franklin Roosevelt once said of Anastasio Somoza Garcia, "Somoza may be a S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B."

Generally the Somozas ran the country as if it was their personal property (which it was until the revolution) adding to the family coffers and helping U.S. bankers to get super profits in exchange for backup military support.

A Threat to Tyranny

The U.S. government--the Reagan Administration in particular--has continually accused the Nicaraguan government of being "nondemocratic" because they did not convene an election immediately following the revolution (the charge was also frequently levelled at Grenada before the invasion). Yet the Nicaraguan government has targeted this year for their elections, just five years after their revolution (it took 13 years for the first election after the American Revolution). In addition, it is the direct participation of Nicaragua's working people in the political life of their country

that has set and molded the course of the Nicaraguan Revolution. Nicaraguans vote every day: by participating in the national discussions on the new labor laws; by participating in the national consultations on education; for leaders of their unions and mass organizations; by participating in the Sandinista Defense Committees; by volunteering for the cotton harvest; by joining the militias. In this fashion, the Nicaraguan people enjoy a much greater say and degree of participation in decisions that affect them than we do as citizens of the U.S.

Real democracy requires, in today's technological world, a population that can read, a population that has access to information. It requires a population that has the opportunity to organize itself, to begin running its new society, to choose and see who its leaders are, and generally to understand the issues in the new Nicaragua. This has been the task that the Nicaraguan government has been carrying out in preparation for its election: preparing its people to participate to the fullest extent possible. Unlike the U.S., Nicaragua has more than two political parties, and is preparing for an election that includes everyone (the first U.S. election clearly excluded women, Blacks and Native Americans). There is a serious question for the American population to decide: how best to help the Nicaraguan people? The answer is by helping the current Nicaraguan government provide food, shelter, clothing jobs, education and medical care for all its inhabitants, not by helping the Reagan Administration to deliberately undermine the legitimately constituted government of Nicaragua by supporting opposition forces financially and militarily and mining its harbors. The role that the U.S. plays in Nicaragua is one that must be dictated by U.S. citizens, not by a coalition of government and big business that continues to be interested solely in profit, regardless of its human costs.

--Rick Tingling-Clemmons
VVAW-Washington DC



Author views graffiti in Corinto

tals. Despite their economic stranglehold on the country, none of the Nicaraguan business groups favored by the U.S. had the popular support of the Sandinistas. Thus, it was the work-

troops in support of yet another corrupt dictatorship, thereby preventing direct U.S. military intervention. So the stage was set for the CIA to step in and continue its war against self-

**NO MORE VIETNAMS
U.S. OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA**

**GIVE REAGAN
THE BOOT
NOVEMBER 5th**



In the course of elections, many campaigns and causes run aground or get relegated to political backburners. One example in the area of Vietnam veterans' activities is the drive by Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) to obtain congressional recognition which would afford it the same status as the VFW, the American Legion and other such traditional groups.

Congressional recognition entitles these organizations to have offices in VA facilities, represent vets as service officers, and opens numerous paths to political and financial connections.

VVA will probably gain such status, but for the present the VFW is leading the charge to bar the door.

The decision to petition Congress for recognition was put forward at the first national convention of VVA in November of 1983. The actual application (HR4772 and S2266) appeared in March of this year. Sponsored primarily by Democrats in the

VVA & 'THE TEMPLE OF....'

House, the application immediately came under fire from the Republican members of the House. The Republicans were guided by literature circulated by the VFW and National Commander Clifford Olsen.

Using heavily slanted, conservative articles from such publications as "Soldier of Fortune Magazine," the attack centered on Bobby Mueller and his supporters in VVA leadership positions. Bobby, once a highly visible member of VVAW, had incurred the wrath of the right-wing by travelling to North Vietnam to ask for POW/MIA release, and possibly grabbing more public recognition than themselves. In the process of the attack on Mueller and VVA, he was also accused of a number of "terrible" antiwar activities when with VVAW--all of which are true and which we

who participated are quite proud of.

While the battle continued in the House, the VFW appeared to attempt to exploit the internal differences in VVA. Claiming 19,000 members, VVA is as diverse an organization as the areas of the country represented. Progressive vets share the same organizational status as the ultra-conservative. As a national organization VVA, in its first convention, emphasized work around MIA/POW's with no hard commitment on U.S. involvement in Central America, the draft and registration, bi-lateral nuclear freeze, or similar political issues. VVA's position on Agent Orange was, however, in line with most of Vietnam vets around the country until they petitioned the court to be the sole representative for Vietnam vets and the disbursement of Agent Orange

funds, which didn't sit well with a lot of other organizations that had worked on the issue since 1974. In spite of the conservative attempt, the House passed HR 4772 with a near 3 to 1 margin.

Promising a more difficult battle in the Senate, all bets are off until the elections are over. The future for VVA's recognition hinges on several factors. First, will the VFW continue the onslaught. If so, will the political struggle within VVA escalate, giving the VFW, Soldier of Fortune, and who knows who else the ability to drive a wedge deeper into the organization.

With that Congressional recognition, which will be hard won, will come the added responsibility to the government; will the VVA membership be asked to support, wholeheartedly, a war in Central America or elsewhere as the price?

DAVID CURRY UPDATE

In the spring, 1984, issue of *THE VETERAN*, there appeared the story of the government's persecution and prosecution of three Alabama veterans' counselors--Tom Ashby, Don Reed and David Curry. All three had been convicted of charges relating to the distribution of small amounts of cocaine.

The charges had been brought as a result of the activities of an undercover agent in the Birmingham Vet Center. Evidence against the three was minimal, and all indications were that this was a frameup intended to smear the Vet Center program while at the same time railroad some of the more active counselors.

At the time of the last article, David Curry was living in Chicago and planning to appeal his case to the Supreme Court after having been rejected by the U.S. District Court. Since then, he did make his appeal to the Supreme Court. In an unusual move, the lower court ordered him imprisoned to wait for the results of the appeal; normally, the appellant is allowed freedom until the case is finally resolved.

Curry is currently serving his five-year term at the federal prison in Eglin Florida--right outside Eglin Air Force Base. He had three possibilities of getting out of jail early. Hope number one has failed. That was a proceeding involving an

appeal to the original judge to reduce the sentence after hearing character witnesses and reviewing his record.

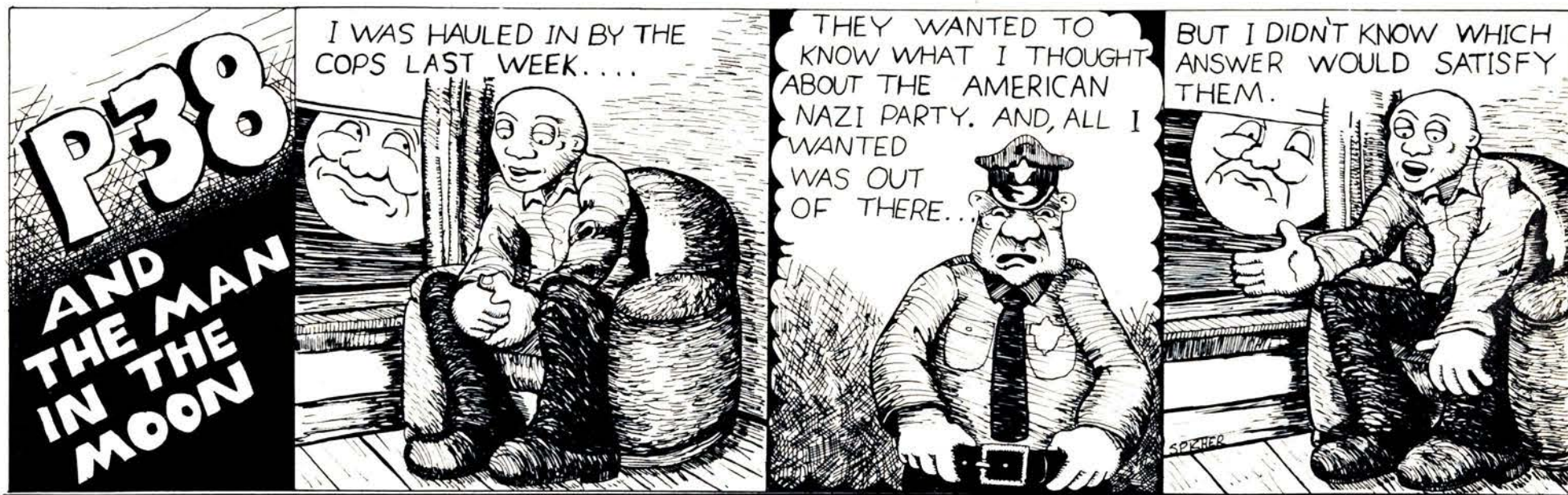
Possibility number two involves a parole hearing in late September, and possibility number three is that the appeal to the Supreme Court will result in a reversal of the conviction. The David Curry Defense Committee is still in need of funds to help make the appeal to the Supreme Court. Donations may be sent to the Committee, c/o VVAW's National Office, P.O. Box 25592, Chicago, IL 60625.

There was a similar case in the news recently. A fellow named DeLorean. He got set up by the government too. He was arrested and put on trial. Only

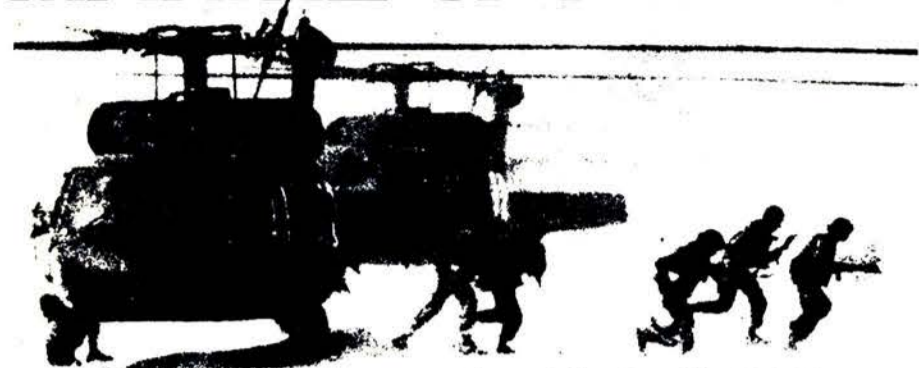
that's where the similarity ends.

The Curry case involved only a tiny amount of drugs. DeLorean? 60 pounds. Curry was found guilty. DeLorean? Innocent because of the methods used to entrap him.

Yes, DeLorean bathed in flammor. His trial brought constant features in the media. His pretty model wife was the center of attention. The jet set was on trial, and the jet set won. Not so for a veteran's counselor. Same entrapment--different result. Curry faces the possibility of five years unless the parole board comes through or the Reagan Supreme Court reverses the trial result. Justice in America triumphs again--for the rich.



Lebanon and Grenada MARINE SAYES NO



In October, 1983, a lone driver crashed the security gate at the Marine Compound in Beirut, Lebanon and killed 260 Marines as they slept.

Two days after this needless and senseless tragedy, the U.S. war machine led by Ronald Reagan invaded Grenada, a small Black nation in the Caribbean.

Absent from both of these obbupation missions was CPL Alfred Griffin, a Black Muslim marine from New York City. He refused orders to participate in Lebanon, and, when asked, he said "No" to the racist invasion of Grenada.

CPL Griffin, a former mem-

ber of the Presidential Honor Guard was charged with missing a movement and AWOL. He was court Marialed and found guilty.

For his brave stand, reminiscent of Muhammad Ali, CPL Griffin was sentenced to 4 months hard labor at the Camp Lejeune brig, forfeiture of 6 months pay, reduction in rank to private, and a Bad Conduct Discharge.

Since his conviction, people who oppose war and the injustices of the military have rallied to support CPL Griffin. Barring the overturn of his conviction, CPL Griffin will become one more Black GI to come home with "bad paper." Currently Blacks comprise

33% of the "all-volunteer" armed forces, almost three times the proportion of Blacks in this society. The Congressional Black Caucus has found that Black GIs are discriminated against in terms of promotion, job assignment, stockade time, and less-than honorable discharges.

Economic conditions in the '80's have made the military one of few alternatives for jobs, job training and educational possibilities.

Like thousands of other poor youth, Griffin entered the military, as he explains, "Because I needed a job and I thought I could use the education to get the skills and training." The present social crisis in the Black community forces young people to be cannon fodder in military adventures around the world, especially in the 3rd World.

CPL Griffin has said, "Everyone knows we weren't peace-keepers. The U.S. was the aggressor and it's against my religion to take part in any such war."

This country has not addressed the needs of all veterans who fought

in the last major war, Vietnam. Over 275,000 less-than-honorable discharges, mostly among Black and Hispanic vets, are leftover from the Vietnam War. In CPL Griffin's home state, New York, there are over 75,000 unemployed Vietnam veterans. Twenty-eight percent of these are Black. How are these problems going to be solved at home? We cannot and will not support another needless adventure abroad, especially with the situation the way it is at home.

This latest example of GI resistance must be supported by all veterans. Send telegrams, letters, mailgrams to demand Griffin's immediate release, restoration of rank, pay and an honorable discharge to:

Sec of Defense Caspar Weinberger

Department of Defense
Washington, DC

and to:

COL John Paul Brickley
HD CO, 8th Marines
Camp Lejeune, NC 28542

Send copies to:

CPL Alfred Griffin
Camp Lejeune Correctional
Facility

Camp Lejeune, NC 28542

---Clarence Fitch
NY/NJ VVAW

New York Film Festival the secret agent

We've dumped it on our enemies, and on ourselves. On the upland forests of South Viet Nam, and on the dusty back roads of Southern Missouri. And now, the spreading awareness of dioxin — recognized as the world's most toxic man-made chemical — is creating a climate of fear, frustration and outrage among people across the United States and around the world.

The Secret Agent is the first comprehensive look at dioxin, the contaminant of the herbicide 2,4,5-T, a main ingredient of the defoliant code-named Agent Orange during the Viet Nam War. In all, more than 11 million gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed over the crops, the jungles and the villages of South Viet Nam. And while this film focuses on the tragic legacy of the American spray program, the scope of the dioxin problem — and of the film itself — is much larger.

Using rare archival and striking war footage in support of interviews with veterans, scientists, attorneys, and representatives of the U.S. Air Force, Veterans Administration and Dow Chemical Company, The Secret Agent documents the extraordinary history of chemical warfare and agricultural herbicides... the damage to our environment... and the plight of people exposed to Agent Orange during the Viet Nam War.

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AGENT ORANGE TRIAL page 4

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Vol. 14 No. 2 Spring 1984

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Looking for someone you served with in 'Nam? Agent Orange Victims of NJ (Box 233, Englewood, NJ 07726) is acting as a clearinghouse for this information. Send them names, dates of service, unit and location in 'Nam and they'll try to match up people. Please include a Donation to Cover Costs

KNOW THE ENEMY

and know yourself;
in 100 battles
you will never
be imperiled.

sun tzu

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Quarterly newsletter on anti-military affairs: draft counseling, U.S. troops abroad, chemical warfare, military-industrial complex, direct action against the Pentagon, and books for organizers. Subscribe for \$10 to RECON, P.O. Box 14602, Phila., PA 19134.

Info Wanted

New Hampshire writer would like to interview anyone involved in Operation Phoenix. If interested, call or write Doug Valentine, 118 Public Street, Manchester, NH 03103; phone: (603) 669-7193.

RECOLLECTIONS

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



"NURSE"

I don't go off to war;
so they say,
I'm a woman.
Who then
has worn my boots?
And whose memories are these,
of youths suffering? Of
blood and burns, of their
tears and their cries?
I'm a woman
and I've tasted man's war.
Our war. And
he knows that I
love him in
no greater way
than to share in his life
or his death.
What are the rules?
Man or woman,
we are prey
to suffer and survive together.
Please don't forget men.
I've been through war's hell
and if only you will listen,
I've a story
of those chosen
to sacrifice for us all.

This poem, written by Diane Carlson Evans, expresses the heart of the Vietnam Nurses Memorial Project. In order to recognize the sacrifice and efforts of Vietnam nurses, to pay tribute to them as vets and to raise public awareness of women who served in Vietnam, the Nurses Project commissioned Rodger Brodin, a Minnesota sculptor, to create three small and one large statue. For more information or to contribute to this effort, contact:

Vietnam Nurses Memorial Project, Inc.
511 Eleventh Avenue South
Box 45
Minneapolis, MN 55415

I Could Not Believe It ...We Would Get Out It Alone."

I have had psychological problems relating to my duty in Vietnam, feelings of being used by my own government and the military which backed it. At times I was used as a guinea-pig just to flush out the enemy and have contact with them so we could get a body count. Not to take and hold a strategic area but just so we could add bodies to our unit's total count. We were offered a three-day pass in-country if we produced a dead body.



Going through thick vegetation one time our point man was allowed to get close to the enemy's five-foxhole position before they ripped him from the legs up to the chest with an automatic rifle (AK-47). He was hit in the legs, groin and chest and was screaming for us to help him. A squad went in to try and get him, but another man was hit and they pulled back. The enemy knew just what they were doing.

Now the poor guy was screaming for God, his mother and even yelled out for us to shoot him and finish him off. Hearing his screams and moans was just too much to take, so we tried going in at different angles by squads to try to reach him. As soon as we were getting close, the enemy would open up with their weapons and kill or wound more of us. By the time we had lost three men and had about five wounded, the captain called for assistance to a tank and APC unit a couple of miles away.

Our colonel who had flown to the area in the meantime in his two-man bubble helicopter

came over the radio and said that permission was denied, that we got ourselves into this mess and we would get out of it alone. I heard this with my own ears and could not believe it.

So we were ordered to go in as squads again and again. After a total of about 13 dead and at least 20 wounded, we finally pulled back and started to surround the enemy with the help of another company called in to assist. We surrounded

them for that night and in the morning an air strike was called in on the enemy position. A couple of "gooks" tried to get past us in the night and were killed. We saw their bodies ahead of our positions in the morning. The air strike from the jets killed the rest in their positions.

Myself and two friends went in to see if there were any left after the strike. When we were close enough to the foxholes we threw grenades into them to make sure. On the way we found our friends. We did not know if any were wounded and could have been saved. But the napalm burned up one of our men who we knew was alive earlier. The colonel was decorated for this. Our platoon leader said he was going to have the colonel investigated or something for this incident. I don't know what happened but I think the colonel was transferred or left.

Anthony Fiore
Livingston Manor,
New York

Poems

HIS EYES

His Eyes Were Meant To See
Do not try to take my son
to kill him on your battlefields.
And do not test a Mother's fighting rage,

I warn you here and warn you now;
My wrath do not engage.
You've taken all I wish to give;
My husband's lived your pain.
Do not attempt to draft my boy,
what is mine, I shall retain.
You shant use war to thin the herd,
To rob us of our young.
This Mother's tears shall not be shed,

Nor my apron strings unstrung.
Take the boys whose Fathers lead,
The sons of those who rule;
Perhaps if they were sent to die,
There would be no wars at all.
But dare you not to take my son,
He breathes a part of me,
His limbs are fine just as they are,
His eyes were meant to see.

Rena Kopystenski

LET'S

Let's take them out of malt shops
And send them off to war
Let's spray them all with poison
And make them sick and sore
Let's bring them home all broken
And teach them to feel shame
Let's send them all on guilt trips
And convince them they're to blame
Let's call them anti-social
And claim they love to kill
Let's tell them they need schooling
And destroy their GI Bill
Let's tell them to have children
And deny that something's wrong
Let's make believe they're lying
And pretend their kids are strong
Let's disclaim Agent Orange
And all the harm its done.
Let's hope their offspring do survive

And pray that they have sons
Let's watch them raise their children
And then start it all once more
Let's wait until they come of age
Hello--El Salvador!!!!

Rena Kopystenski

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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