



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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SPRING 1985

## Reagan's War Budget Proposal VA SYSTEM THREATENED

### PTSD BILL TO AID VETS

On the first day of the 99th Congress, Rep Robert Kastenmeier (D-WI) introduced H.R. 362 renewing his battle to create a presumption of service-connection for Vietnam vets claiming VA disability benefits for post-traumatic stress disorders. The proposed legislation would shift the burden of proof from the veteran to the VA unless the VA could establish that a stressor other than Vietnam service might have caused the vet's PTSD.

Kastenmeier distinguished himself during the last session of Congress when he introduced H.R. 4711, the first substantive federal legislation dealing with compensation for Vietnam vets suffering from PTSD. Forty members of Congress joined Kastenmeier in co-sponsoring the bill which was a respectable and en-

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## VIETNAM AS HISTORY

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### Bill to Fund Guerillas Allied with Kymer Rouge

## VIETNAM WAR REPLAY

Congress has decided to celebrate the anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War by re-involving the U.S. in that war-scarred land.

While farms are being stolen by the banks, nutrition programs for children are ended and aid to veterans is cut, Congress is taking up a \$5 million aid package for Kampuchean (Cambodian) guerillas opposed to the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea.

Civil war has raged since 1978 when Vietnamese forces drove out Pol Pot's Kymer Rouge. Since then, forces allied with Pol Pot, Prince Sihanouk or former Prime Minister Som Sann have fought the Vietnamese from base areas in Thailand. While humanitarian aid has been scant, military aid, especially to Pol Pot forces has been plentiful.

Cambodia, more than any other country in IndoChina, has suffered though one holocaust after another. First came the murderous mass B-52 bombings by the U.S. followed by the murderous excesses of the Pol Pot regime and now a continuous guerilla war kept alive by Chinese and U.S. aid.

Today, this hapless land, where almost half the populace has been destroyed through war and starvation is again being eyed by the U.S. as a pawn in the great power game.

Voices in Congress are calling for support to "bleed Vietnam white" through support for the

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It is a rare veteran who has not had some bad experience with the VA. Late checks under the GI Bill, endless red tape in getting almost any of the vets benefits we were promised, disability pensions suddenly cut, or lines that seem to go on forever in a VA hospital. With all the problems, however, veterans have always know that, in case of need, the VA had the medical facilities to take care of the country's veterans.

But today, with the rush to preserve military spending at the cost of every other program, the Reagan Administration is preparing to dismantle or, at least, dismember some of the vital features of the VA system. As is often the case, veterans will be sacrificed for something or other which politicians decide is more important.

The attack on the VA is coming from several directions at once. The Reagan Administration has already floated out a trial balloon to bounce from VA care any veteran who is receiving treatment for non-service-connected disabilities. At present, under a 1971 law, veterans over the age of 65 will receive free VA hospital care on a bed-available basis. Other veterans with problems not directly service-connected may receive care (if it is available--a service-connected problem will be dealt with first) if they say they haven't the necessary funds to pay for private care.

Only about 30% of present VA patients are being treated for conditions which are service-connected. Removing all other patients would mean the end of the VA system; as one VA official was quoted as saying, "There would be a lot of hospitals going up for sale cheap." The Reagan Administration has long favored the report of the Grace Commission which advocates dismantling the VA system in favor of private healthcare facilities: that report suggests that the number of patients treated by the VA be cut drastically, and the few remaining patients then be placed

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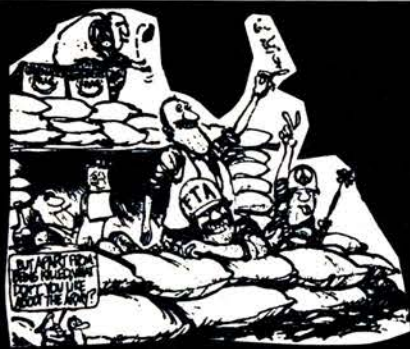
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# FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)



Well, the Inauguration is over and now we've got the Bonzo in for another four years--that is, if he doesn't get us all nuked. So, how did it happen? How did this guy who falls asleep in his own Cabinet meetings get re-elected in a landslide? Maybe it was the Jonestown syndrome. People want to commit mass suicide.

All the political writers came up with their theories as to how this happened. I think that most of them were taking a shot in the dark trying to figure it out, but I read about one guy who compared the U.S. presidency to the way things are run in England. There they have one person running the government with another as head of state. So, while Prime Minister Maggie Thatcher starts a war with Argentina, Queen Elizabeth attends the opening of the Holly Festival and everyone is happy. Here in this country, the President has both jobs. He has to run the government and be head of state. And that's this guy's theory--that even though Reagan doesn't know how to run the government, he's a pretty good head of state.

Maybe that's true. People voted for Reagan as a guy who had a handsome smile and could look tough and strong even though he couldn't answer simple questions at news conferences. Compare this guy with previous presidents: before him you had the guy who smiled like the cat in Alice in Wonderland and gave speeches where the networks could have sold commercial time between paragraphs. And before that you had the guy who kept bumping into doors and hitting his head on planes. And before that you had the sneaky guy with devious eyes. They didn't look like heads of State, and Mondale seemed to be just like them. Reagan looks different. He could do a good job at the opening of the Holly Festival.

And then there were the plans for the Presidential Inauguration which sounded more like a coronation. The Pentagon had assigned 12,000 personnel to act as aides, color guards, chauffers, ushers and to shovel snow, direct traffic and provide security. The plans called for a major production, sort of like the Hollywood awards ceremony or the coronation of a head of state. Just think: Inauguration Day cost the taxpayers over \$2 million and was supposed to involve 12,000 troops. He's probably thinking of himself as King Ronald I. And he has his own palace guards just in case the masses rise up against him

when he has to make policy. And all of this spoiled by a little cold wave so we didn't even get a TV spectacular for our tax \$.

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Lots of people are talking about reinstituting the draft. They say that it will be necessary by the 1990's in order to get the people they need to run the sophisticated equipment that will be used by the military of the future. I understand their needs. Heaven knows, if it takes 12,000 personnel to conduct one fool's re-up ceremony, then we'll need a lot more personnel to take on the Nicaraguans because you know, of course, how cunning and devious they are.

And while we wait for the day when they restore the draft, do not worry. Be comforted in the thought that your Selective Service System is not standing idly by. They are remaining ever vigilant for that glorious day when they can again get to work drafting young men to serve and sacrifice to preserve American business interests.

The Selective Service is keeping in practice by keeping a roll of potential draftees who are supposed to register for the draft. They send out cards to young men whose eighteenth birthday is approaching to remind them that they must register. They even sent out a card to Johnny Klomberg in Palo Alto, California to remind him to register.

The only problem is that Johnny Klomberg doesn't even exist. You see, seven years ago two eleven-year-old kids by the names of Greg and Eric Hentzel signed up for a birthday club at the local ice cream parlor which was then part of a chain owned by the Marriott Corporation. These kids got the great idea to invent Johnny Klomberg and sign him up so that when his birthday came around they could use his name to collect extra goodies from the ice cream parlor.

The Hentzel kids used their own address when they turned in the phony name. They forgot it until seven years later when a notice to register for the draft came to Johnny Klomberg at their address. Obviously what happened is that the Marriott Corp turned over their ice cream par-

lor birthday lists to the ever vigilant Selective Service who wanted to make sure no Johnny Klombergs escaped their grasp.

Now some people may be appalled to think that the Selective Service would go to such lengths to invade our privacy by collecting birthday lists of 11 year olds. Others may think this kind of activity on the part of the Selective Service is laughable. I differ. I suspect that they Johnny Klomberg is real. I suspect that he does exist and is a mole--a Soviet spy--planted in this country by the Soviets as an eleven-year-old boy. And I am thankful that Big Brother is out there searching the ice cream parlors, video game rooms and Ronald McDonaldlands to find these Russian moles.

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If I am wrong and Johnny Klomberg is not a Russian mole but really is a non-existent American, I imagine that when they draft him, they'll put him in a non-existent company such as the 160th Task Force of the 101st Airborne out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The Knight-Ridder newspapers reported that this super secret company lost 16 members in accidents in 1983. I suppose all of these accidents had nothing to do with their mission of flying helicopters around certain Central American countries at night while wearing civilian clothes. According to the relatives of the deceased, the men purchased their own weapons and carried around bribe money to be used to buy their way home if they should be shot down. Sounds like the ideal job for Johnny Klomberg. Since he doesn't exist, Reagan wouldn't be lying when he says our troops are not involved in direct fighting in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and that's important because this country's President must keep the proper image and follow the tradition of George Washington and never lie.

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Another value to having Johnny Klombergs as part of you military personnel is that he would help improve diplomatic relations with Australia. The current problem with Australia is that the Australians are wor-

ried about American sailors who are lusting after Australian women.

It seems that this whole thing came up when Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden met with U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz. Hayden complained to Schultz about magazines circulating aboard U.S. navy ships. The magazines talk about the availability of local girls, particularly in the city of Perth. The battle of the hearts and minds and whatever of the local women have been a success for the Americans, claim the magazines. They claim that the local women and even schoolgirls melt in the presence of American sailors.

So, Foreign Minister Hayden registered an official complaint with the U.S. over the lust of American sailors. I bet Johnny Klomberg never lusts. If all our sailors were Johnny Klombergs, lust could be eliminated and relationships with Australia would improve. And, I bet Johnny Klomberg would never be bothered by radiation leaks aboard the U.S. nuclear ships either.

## GRENADE OF THE MONTH

This issue's Grenade of the month goes to Frank Fahrenkopf Jr, Chairman of the Republican National Committee. Frank was on his way to South Dakota's Republican State Convention and decided to visit Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills. As you know, Mount Rushmore has the famous and impressive carvings of the faces of Presidents Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

Frank viewed the site and was inspired. He was so inspired that he wanted to improve upon it. And he came up with the idea that a fifth face was needed to make it complete. That's right. He wanted to add the puss of Ronald Reagan to Mount Rushmore.

Fortunately, the Ronald Reagan fad, like Ronald himself, is only a passing nightmare--I think. But if Fahrenkopf and other Reagan worshippers had their way, which Reagan face do you think they'd want to put up? The steely-eyed rugged individualist staring out over the Badlands of South Dakota? The big smile? The Bonzo look? Which ever one they used, they'd have to do some reconstructing of the rest of the monument. They'd have to make Lincoln's head bow down and put a hand over his face in shame.

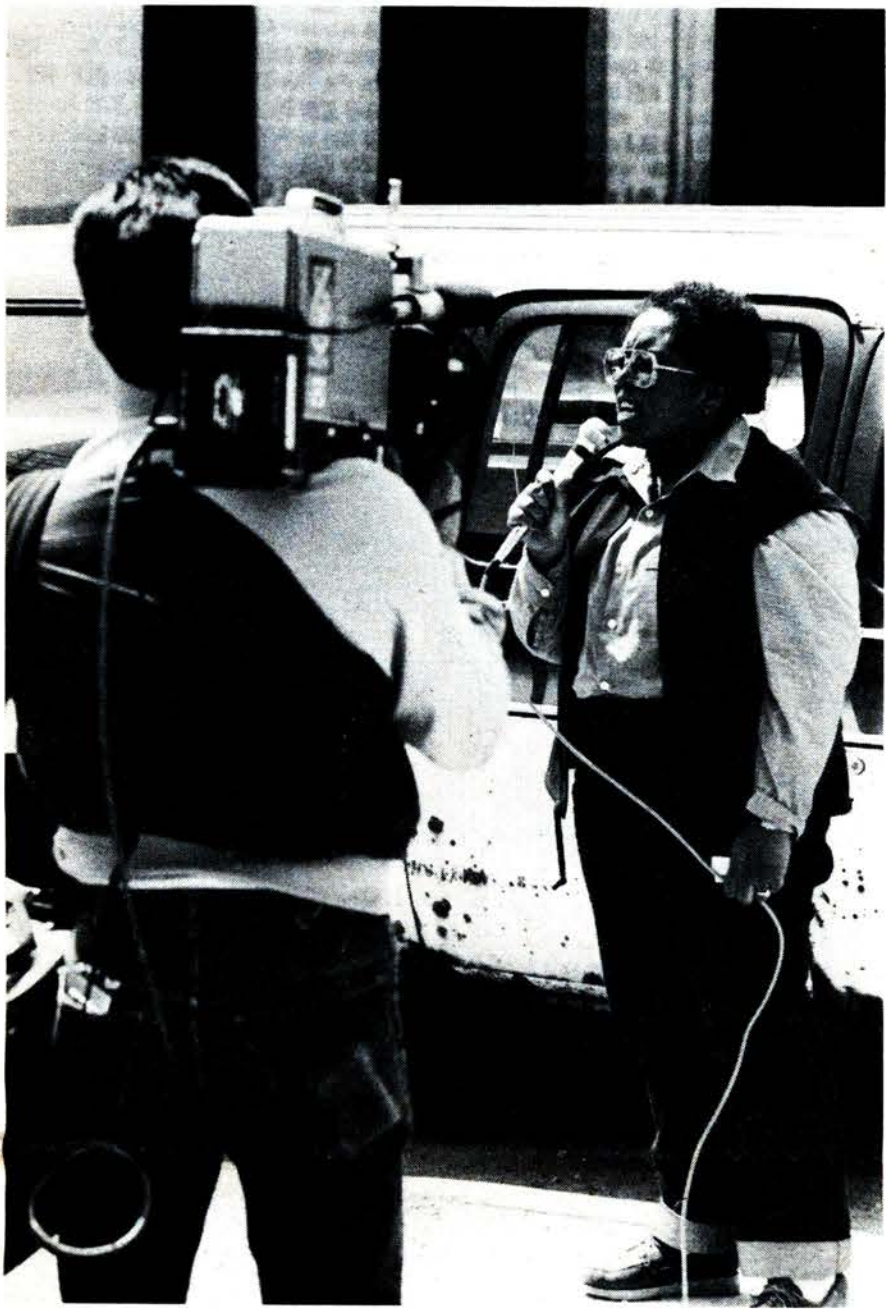
--Bill Shunas, aka  
SP4 Willy





# Fired for Helping Agent Orange Victims

## MAUDE DEVICTOR



MAUDE SPEAKS OUT ON AGENT ORANGE

No single individual is more responsible for exposing the dangers of Agent Orange to Vietnam veterans than Maude DeVictor. As her reward for serving veterans and their families, Maude was fired by the Veterans Administration.

"I wasn't in Vietnam, although I'm a veteran," Maude said. "But I felt as though I've been there because I've interviewed so many fellows, so many wives, so many families."

Maude first ran into Agent Orange (or, as she puts it, "Agent Orange ran into me") in

June of 1977. At that time Maude was a VA counselor assigned to assist veterans filing for service-connected disabilities. She received a phone call from Mrs Ethel Owens, the distraught wife of a Vietnam veteran dying from cancer. Her husband, Charlie, had told her he thought it was connected to his work with the defoliant Agent Orange while serving with the Air Force in Vietnam.

When Owens died his wife called Maude to file for survivor's benefits. Not surprising-

ly, the VA turned her down although she did appeal.

In the process of trying to help Owens' widow, Maude called and wrote to any and everyone she could think of to gather information about chemicals used in Southeast Asia.

The Air Force finally admitted the use of chemical defoliants in Vietnam. She had the proof and Mrs Owens ended up getting survivor's benefits as a result of the death of her husband.

Maude did not give up with one victory but continued to talk to Vietnam vets, compile information and challenge the VA position that there was no real proof of a connection between Agent Orange and life-threatening health problems.

In early 1978, CBS-TV aired the documentary "Agent Orange: Vietnam's Deadly Fog," a program which later won an Emmy. The program showed the link between Agent Orange and cancer, birth defects and a host of other health problems. Maude helped to provide the information on which the program was based.

Rather than commend Maude for her diligence in helping Vietnam vets, the VA went after her. She was transferred from one position to another. "I've had many battles about Agent Orange inside the VA hierarchy. It's changed my life completely. Just to show you--the fellows who are dying call me--but the VA suggested I get an unlisted number so I wouldn't be bothered with there numerous calls," Maude said in an interview with THE VETERAN at that time. VA harassment continued, and included a reduction in her grade by VA management.

Maude had to file grievances with the union, the merit systems protection board and the offices of Equal Employment Opportunity to protect her job.

In September of 1983 the VA finally moved, firing her for (among other things) being AWOL from her assignment. This is the reward for a VA worker with 20 years of service, and a conscience. Maude has continued to fight for her job through union arbitration. VVAW has continued to fight by her side, holding picket lines at the VA to publicize her case.

Vietnam veterans owe Maude! She was there first before many of us had even heard of Agent Orange. She put her job and career on the line, refusing to be a paper-shuffling VA bureaucrat.

A lot of veterans groups and individuals are running around claiming to have started the ball rolling about Agent Orange, but Maude is the one, and Vietnam vets must now support her.

VVAW will be holding picket lines and demonstrations at the Chicago VA offices in the future for Maude, and we hope that others will be there too.

## An Apology

# WHY WE ARE LATE

This issue of THE VETERAN is late--very late. We apologize, particularly to those of you who keep close track of when the paper comes out. We appreciate hearing from many of you, even though you were complaining, and rightly so. As you can see from the contents of this paper, the time since the last issue was filled with activities by and of interest to Vietnam vets and our other readers. We believe in both the importance of these activities and of THE VETERAN's reporting of them.

Here's what happened. VVAW has no paid staff or officers; we all have full-time jobs, not particularly connected to veterans' affairs; we have families and other interests in addition to VVAW. And we sometimes wear out.

In the past series of events outside our VVAW work--deaths, births, changes in address, other activities which have made it difficult or impossible to get out a newspaper. We doubt that such a collection of events will happen again; we plan to come out on a better schedule in the future because we believe what the paper says and reports is important.

For those of you who have missed an issue, we will extend your subscription. For those of you who have asked about the paper, thanks for your interest. A lot of your letters have not yet gotten answered either.

Finally, there is a way you can help avoid this kind of problem in the future. We have before used this space to ask for money to help keep the paper and the organization alive; we still welcome contributions (tax deductible), but we also need contributions of articles. "Recollections" always needs your remembrances of Vietnam or other experiences. And all the time there are local events or activities which would be of interest to the readers of THE VETERAN. Please write them for us. In this issue, the book review by Rick Tingling-Clemmons, and the article about the Westmoreland trial by Danny Friedman are contributions from readers of THE VETERAN. Please think about what you can write for us and send it in--we'll use it if we can, perhaps with a little editing. And we'll put your name on it.

So, we're sorry we're so late. We'll do better in the future. And please help.

--The VVAW National Office



VVAW DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF MAUDE



A journalist by training, minister by calling, and war correspondent by fate, Wallace Terry, soft-spoken father of three, covered the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's before leaving for the jungles of Vietnam, an experience that inspired his best-selling work, Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans, published by Random House. With exceptional candor, compassion and a deep-felt concern for and sense of history, Terry visited 112 publishers and spent over a decade trying to spark interest in those who either disagreed with his manuscript or who honestly felt that enough had been said about Vietnam. Finally he met Mark Jaffe of Random House who led him to Erroll McDonald--and at long last, Bloods was produced. Nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, acclaimed by a long list of distinguished persons, Bloods captures the waste, horror, corruption, futility and heroism of the Vietnam War more graphically than Anything else I have read.

"The Bloods were there and they make excellent reporters," said one reviewer. Terry's book says it all. An anthology of eyewitness accounts of 20 Black Vietnam veterans, the book shows perspectives that cross the gamut of viewpoints within American society. During the peak of the civil rights movement at home, the Bloods were in the paradoxical situation of defending the valor of a nation not willing to absorb them into its mainstream. As a Vietnam veteran I was struck by the beauty of Terry's unique exploration into some of the psychological torture to which these veterans were exposed upon their arrival home after the war. "I used to think that I wasn't affected by Vietnam. But I been livin' with Vietnam ever since I left. You just can't get rid of it. It's like that painting of what Dali did of melting clocks. It's a persistent memory," said PFC Reginald "Malik" Edwards in Bloods.

Bloods also covers the thoughts, feelings and actions of members of a group whose rate of attrition in Vietnam ranged from 23% to 14% (although only 11% of the population); who were disproportionately unemployed at home; who faced racism and Confederate flags often supported and sanctioned by the military and/or its officers; while knowing that they were fighting, dying and being maimed 8000 miles from home to (in the words of Dr Martin Luther King) "guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they have not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem." The need for such a book as Bloods has its basis in a system that has historically denied the tremendous contribution made by Blacks, both in building this nation and in defending it. In a recent

## Book Review

# BLOODS An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans



television interview, Terry responded to the contention that Bloods might have been superfluous, that books about Vietnam were "old hat." Terry countered, "The story of Vietnam has not fully been told.... when you look at today's atmosphere, with its emphasis on military readiness; when you look at the disproportionate numbers of Blacks dying in Lebanon, the US aggressive posture in Central America, in Nicaragua...you know that the story has not been told, the lessons not learned. Blacks not only died unequally, but were decorated--and came home." We came home all right--to disproportionate unemployment, incarceration, harassment, drug addiction and benign neglect.

However one feels about Bloods or Vietnam, it is certainly important reading. For,

it provides an excellent forum to talk about a period in history that laid bare the problems inherent in interfering in the internal affairs of other nations, a situation that is not only illegal and unethical, but serves to confuse us, drawing our attention from problems that exist unresolved here in the good old USA. The apparent contradiction of the centuries of oppression faced in this country by Blacks and their fierce loyalty and patriotism--proven in every war this country has ever participated in--must also be addressed and questioned. In explaining why he wrote Bloods Terry recounted just one more story of tragic human waste: "Did you know that the youngest American to die in Vietnam was a 16-year-old Black kid from Bedford-Stuyvesant? His family was very poor and he lied about his age and joined

the Marines when he was only 15 so that he could help out his family--and he lasted six weeks in Vietnam before he got wasted.

He's one of the reasons I came to write Bloods."

My own personal assessment was expressed quite well by Black abolitionist Thomas Van Rensselaer in 1841, who wrote: "Let it be understood from one end of the country to another that we will never again take up arms in defense of this country unless all of the institutions are thrown open to us on equal terms." Because, for me, the true struggle for justice, for equality, for democracy--like charity--begins at home. You can start by buying and reading Bloods. From one Blood to another, thank you Wallace Terry.

--Rick Tingling-Clemmons  
VVAW-Washington DC

## N.Y. Tribute Honors GI Resister

# ALFRED GRIFFIN

On Sunday, October 27th, a reception was held in honor of Cpl Alfred A. Griffin for his heroic act of courage in refusing to participate in the invasion of Grenada and the occupation of Lebanon.

At the time of the ceremony, Cpl Griffin had been recently released from the Camp Lejeune Brig after four months of confinement.

It was a moving ceremony that was both inspiring and a source of pride.

Solidarity was expressed

by members of the labor movement, veteran's movement and by various politicians. Cpl Griffin was presented with various tokens for his courageous stand. The veteran's contingent presented Cpl Griffin with a medal for heroism. Telegrams were read from all over the country. VVAW, New York/New Jersey was proud to be a part of the ceremony to honor this brave marine.

Cpl Griffin is still officially in the Marine Corps but continues to speak out against unjust U.S. military adventures

around the world, although he has been warned to remain silent.

It was heartwarming to hear this brother speak in support of Third World struggles, and be an example of resistance to young people who also will find themselves facing orders to Central America or similar places around the world.

VVAW salutes and supports Cpl Griffin and all who say, "Hell no! We won't go!"

--Clarence Fitch  
NY/NJ VVAW



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

# VA CUTS



in private nursing homes or hospitals.

The immediate cause for much of the concern about the future of the VA system in the release of a report entitled "Caring for the Older Veteran." This document has been circulating inside the VA for some time, but has recently escaped into the outside world. It recognizes what should have been obvious some years ago: since VA care for the older veteran is more expensive (more older vets need VA care and also need more of it), and since the age of World War II vets is well into the sixties (even a vet who was 20 at the end of the war in 1945 will be 60 this year, and many World War II troops were considerably older than 20.) By 1990, six of every ten American men over the age of 65 will be veterans since, unlike Vietnam, World War II was fought by a

large cross-section of the American population.

Forecasts say that in 15 years there will have to be a 70% increase in VA staff, 22 new geriatric centers, and a doubling of the VA budget to \$18 billion. The Reagan Administration wants no part of this kind of build-up and, to the contrary, wants to slash away at what VA care still remains.

Faced with a clear situation a few years down the road, with a large population which cannot afford private healthcare and which will increasingly need that same healthcare, the Reagan Administration does what it always does with groups not among the particular Reagan croonies: it says bite the bullet. We will send you to private healthcare facilities where the VA will quit paying the bill after 6 months; then you can rot. Whatever pro-

mises made to you years earlier, well, forget them!

One cost-cutting concept being pushed by some inside the government is what is called "mainstreaming." This idea would provide the veteran with vouchers which could be used in the private sector on used for contract services outside the VA. Such a program, vigorously opposed by traditional veterans' groups, points directly toward the end of the VA as a medical care system. It would, on the other hand, be a great shot in the arm for private doctors and hospitals who have always regarded the VA with some suspicion.

According to Dr Donald Cusitis, one-time medical director of the VA, and now medical director for the Paralyzed Veterans of America, he "wouldn't be surprised by consideration given to up to the promises to veterans, vouchering for veterans' care. No matter how you look at it, the VA simply can't expect the

resources that it's going to take to accommodate the huge numbers of aging veterans that are just a few years ahead."

For the immediate future the veteran with a non-service connected disability will bear the brunt of the attack. More and more we will hear that in this period of great budget deficits, the government cannot afford to treat veterans whose ailments cannot be proved to be directly caused by military service (like Agent Orange exposure?). The government can, of course, afford MX's.

And one more attack: putting taxes on disability pensions is yet another Reagan Administration idea being tossed into the hopper to see who will yell and how loudly. Like older vets, the disabled may be a group which Reagan & Co may feel it can afford to disregard.

What it all adds up to is a simple situation: as more and more vets need the VA, when cuts in medicaid and medicare will make the VA more and more essential for older veterans, VA medical services will be taken apart and handed over to powerful private interests. A major battle awaits vets; we must stop cuts wherever they occur in the smallest local program.

We have to let our communities know that we are a part of them--vets are not just some far-off group. Fight the cutbacks; make the government and the VA live up to the promises to veterans.

--Pete Zastrow  
VVAW National  
Office

## Chicago Bureaucrats Cut Program FREELANCE HATCHET JOB

VA bureaucrats in Chicago have decided to do a little freelance hatchet job on Vietnam vets. Supplementing Reagan's national program of VA cuts, the locals have decided to throw Vietnam vets out of an extremely successful sub-contract counselling program.

The subcontractors are professional psychiatrists, psychologists and social welfare counsellors who treated Vietnam vets with service-connected problems related to post-traumatic, delayed stress. Unlike the local vets centers, the subcontractors gave mostly individual counselling. They also visited vets in their homes, counselled on weekends or at night or in the mornings in order to fit into the work schedule of the veteran. They met with wives and with children, trying to hold families together.

Because of their ability to deal with vets on an individual basis, they filled an important gap for those who did not want or could not respond to the group counselling approach of the Vets Centers, or for those who needed professional help

instead of semi-professional counselling.

The Family Reintegration Consortium had branches on the north, south and west sides of Chicago, (as well as serving the suburbs) thus providing help to as diverse a group of vets as possible. They were paid on the basis of the number of vets they counselled, not for just sitting in an office waiting for vets to call. The number of patients had begun to grow primarily on the basis of word of mouth from vet to vet.

Clearly, they were providing a service needed since they were not allowed to publicize themselves as are other VA programs.

So what do the local VA bureaucrats do? In response to a relatively small national cut by Uncle Ron, they totally cut the program. Without an explanation to the vets involved; without a letter or phone call; without a public evaluation or study of Vietnam vets in the program. Once again, the bureaucrats leave the vets and their families

abandoned.

Part of the problem seems to stem from unnecessary competition which some of the Vets Centers feel toward the sub-contractors. Some personnel at the Vet Centers act as if a successful private program is a threat rather than a complement to their own programs. There is a game of body count played concerning how many vets are served. Getting the name of a vet on the Center's serviced list enables them to prove their worth. Unfortunately, there is a big difference between helping a vet with a civil service problem at work and dealing with the problems of delayed stress--the numbers do not equal out.

It was getting so bad that when Vietnam vets would go into the Centers to be referred to the sub-contractors for individual counselling they would be hijacked and directed into Center programs. Unfortunately, for the vets, almost all had dropped out by the second session.

Considering that the Vet Centers use TV and radio ads,

are in the phone book and have storefront drop-in offices while the subcontractors are forced to work almost clandestinely one wonders about the type of job being performed by the Centers.

We have no way of ranking one VA program over another, but we can see when a program is clearly helpful to the vets that it serves; when a void in the needs of vets is being filled, that's a program that should be saved. We can only ask where individuals who would end such a program are coming from. And remember the VA bureaucrats in Long Beach, CA a couple of years ago who abused vets to the point that one committed suicide and others camped out on the VA property to protest.

The tragedy of ending such a program is that it will only come to the attention of the public after some dismissed veteran can no longer hold it together without help, and makes the kind of headlines for which Vietnam vets have become famous. Only then--after it's too late--will people ask how could such a program have been ended.



An old laborer with the City of Milwaukee once said to me, "A lawyer can steal more money than an armed robber."

"Why's that?" I said.

"He can get more money with a pencil than a robber can get with a gun."

Well, that's what happened to Vietnam vets and their families. We got ripped off by the "Management Committee", a group of lawyers who took control 3/4's of the way through the Agent Orange law suit from Victor Yannacone, and then sold us down the river.

Here is an example of the type of bull shit the lawyers are still telling us. They deny that the children were excluded from the settlement. In fact, in a letter from lawyer Gregory Stayart, he said:

"Judge Weinstein has never held, to my knowledge, that children of veterans will not receive compensation under the fund. Indeed, he already authorized the payment of \$75,000 to the March of Dimes to study birth defects."

We don't need studies from a group that refused contact with veterans and their children in Madison and in New Jersey because Agent Orange was too political! As it stands, our children get nothing and the lawyers know it.

It is also our understanding that the last day to sign up for the suit was February 1, 1985. We fought against the inclusion of any cut-off date. If anyone has any questions, contact the Court Computer

## Australia

(From the Courier-Mail, from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.)

The alarming number of penguin deaths on Phillip Island could be due to Victorian Government-approved spraying of highly toxic herbicides, an MP said yesterday.

Hundreds of fairy penguins have died in recent weeks on the popular tourist resort island, southeast of Melbourne.

Mr Alan Brown said this might also explain the high level of infertility in Phillip Island koalas.

Mr Brown told Parliament late last week herbicides like the lethal 2,4,5-T had been sprayed in areas inhabited by Penguins and koalas. He said he understood the use of 2,4,5-T ended...after the local council protested strongly to the Conservation Minister....

A note from VVAW correspondent in Australia, Graham Bell, adds that "They are worried because herbicides may ruin the local tourist industry." We could only wish they were as concerned about ruined vets.

## Battle Over But 'Forever' War Continues AGENT ORANGE SETTLEMENT

John Lindquist



Center at Agent Orange Computer Center, P.O.Box 905, Smithtown, NY 11787.

The process of dividing up the settlement proves that the veterans were right when we said it was a rip-off. Over 200,000 veterans or survivors signed up to be members of the class action. The special master, Kenneth Feinburg, announced only about 7,000 people would be compensated. A veteran with a long-term disability might get \$25,000. A veteran who has died might leave his survivors \$5,000.

We will all sleep a lot more soundly at night knowing that the lawyers split up \$9

million. Out of this sum, we were told, Steven Schlager of Chicago gets \$6 million. So, after all of this what does the government plan for us?

Reagan and Stockman want to cut big on the VA this year.

As far as we can tell Reagan's vision for the VA is health care for the service-connected and dying veterans only. Agent Orange and radiation vets are not service-connected except for a few diseases.

So, was our struggle for testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims a waste of time? We say no way. Our six-year battle took a lot of time and pain and energy but it had to be done. And there were victories.

Agent Orange and dioxin are now household words. We have raised the American consciousness about chemical poisons and about the war in Vietnam.

The chemical companies said we'd never get to court and wouldn't get one thin dime. As it went on, we almost kicked their ass. If we had not been betrayed before the trial they would have been convicted. America would have been convicted. America and the world will remember Agent Orange, the Love Canal, Times Beach

and Bhopal, India.

We also met thousands of veterans and their families around the country. We fought and sweated side by side for too many years, and have been drawn closer because of our experiences.

Tuesday, March 5th is the date of formal acceptance of the plan for the administration of the fund. We will speak against it formally. There has been talk about appealing the whole settlement.

The battle on testing, treatment and compensation has not been won, but it is not over. In order to continue to fight for treatment and compensation that we need, we must stop the dismantling of the VA. Get active locally in stopping Reagan's cutbacks. Keep abreast of on-going and proposed studies, tests, and Agent Orange surveys. We always need new people to get involved to lessen our losses from burn out and battle fatigue--that's you: your fire team needs reinforcements!

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



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**Chicago IL 60625**

**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.

## Coffeepots, or the Case of the Complicated Device

Looking back on 1984, a word or two should be said about the Pentagon and their spare parts contractors. While budget cuts are on top of Ronald Reagan's New Year Resolution list, the Pentagon and their spare parts contractors are riding high on clouds of green dollars and \$3,046 coffee pots. But while most people know about these extravagant purchases, not many people have heard company officials defend their products. This month's Reaganspeak Award goes to one such official: Ken Blakely, general manager of Grimes Manufacturing in Delray Beach, Florida, for his impassioned defense of his coffee pots.

"What you have here," he said of his coffee pots, "is a very complicated device." He added, "It doesn't have much resemblance to what you can buy at the local store.... There are some people who would rather go down to the supermarket and buy these items for an airplane," he continued, "but I wouldn't particularly want to be on that airplane."

Send Mr Blakely to any supermarket to buy a coffee pot and he's apt to come back with a washing machine.

But Mr Blakely's shining moment came when he said his "hot beverage unit" had to undergo extensive tests to meet rigid standards for durability without being affected by vibration, shock, crashes, temperature, altitude and electromagnetic interference.

These problems are awesome, I'm sure. Electromagnetic interference has ruined more than one cup of coffee. And after a plane crash, the first thing I could see myself doing is sitting amid the debris sipping that hot cup of freshly brewed coffee wondering why this particular plane wasn't as durable as this magnificent crash-proof hot beverage unit.

Congratulations, Mr Blakely. This month's Reaganspeak Award goes to you and will be presented to you by Mrs Olsen!

--Ed Damato  
New York VVAW



## The Westmoreland Case

# THE GENERAL & THE VETERAN

My wife called up to me last Sunday afternoon: "Put on the TV--it's about the Westmoreland trial." I was astounded by what I saw and heard. General William Westmoreland had withdrawn his libel suit against CBS and declared victory. He had not received one penny of the \$120 million he had sued for, nor had he gotten a retraction or an apology, but he declared victory. Amazing! Then it struck me; this trial had ended just like the Vietnam War. Dan Burt was flying the helicopter with Westy hanging from the skid screaming, "We won!" I had a little more of a stake in this than the average Vietnam vet. I had been the only former enlisted man to testify in the eighteen weeks that the trial lasted, up until Westy's self-proclaimed victory just three days before the case was to go to the jury.

It was at a Brooklyn Chapter meeting of Vietnam Veterans of America last summer that I first heard that CBS attorneys were looking to talk to Vietnam vets who were in country before and during Tet. I thought, what the heck--there were only about 500,000 of us; I'd better give them a call. Besides, I didn't want them talking to Saigon Cowboys.

I spoke to one of CBS's lawyers, Randy Mastro, who asked me some questions about my experiences in Vietnam and we agreed to meet for lunch (his treat, of course).

It had to be Westmoreland's statement that I had read in the newspaper, about the reason why he eliminated the Self Defense and Secret Self-Defense Forces from the order of battle being because they were just old men, women and children and that they constituted no military threat. I was infuriated. It was an insult to myself and everyone else who pounded the paddies and jungles of Vietnam. It was especially insulting to my brothers whose names were freshly etched into a wall of black stone less than two years ago. It was the mines, booby traps and sniper fire from these forces that accounted for more than 59% of our casualties with D Troop, 17th Armored Cavalry, 199th Light Infantry and with many other units according to just about every other Vietnam vet I spoke to.

This trial was becoming inundated with statistics and semantics. Someone had to tell the story of what it was like to be there. If this was to be the only accounting of the war that changed so many of our lives, then the ground soldier had to be heard from. Circumstances dictated that it was to be me.

I hope I did a good job, guys; it was for all of you.

It almost didn't happen. Westmoreland's attorney tried to stop me from testifying. He argued before the judge (away from the jury):

"I just think to have a witness just talk at some length as to buddies of his that were injured by mines and booby traps is inflammatory and essentially irrelevant and distorts the war, much less the case."

The judge ruled:

"....It has been a sub-

be hardened by centuries of war. These people had been fighting for longer than most of us have been alive.

After my testimony, Westmoreland came up to me outside the courtroom. He said hello, shook my hand, introduced his wife to me and put his hand on my shoulder.

"Now that you're finished in there we can just talk as veterans."

I thought that was very democratic of him. Not too long ago I couldn't even shit

How many of my brothers were on that wall that he was so proud of because of his turning his back on us while playing his numbers game. It wouldn't have done any good to tell him that. He was in his own world just traveling around the country shaking hands with Vietnam veterans. Maybe he was trying to say, "I'm sorry."

In the end, Westmoreland cut and ran, again. We can rest easy, my fellow vets, for now we know for sure that it wasn't us who lost that war. The deck was stacked against us from the get and our leaders were too busy playing word games to see what was really going on.

PS:

If someone would have told me way back when that I would be hugging a CIA man at a victory party for a corporate giant at "Regines," I'd have thought him crazy. If war and politics make strange bedfellows, then truth makes even stranger ones. And if in war truth is the first casualty, then in peace it must be a first resurrection.

I thank Sam Adams and Gaines Hawkins for their courage and their truth.

-- Danny Friedman  
VVAW New York



stantial area of controversy in the case as to how dangerous the SD and SSD were. Indeed, it's one of the most important areas in the case."

Someone, a rear echelon intelligence type, testified for Westmoreland that the booby traps in 'Nam were sophisticated devices, too complicated for none but hardened cadre to set. My God, how hard is it to tie a piece of fishing line around the loosened pin of a grenade and then across a trail of dyke. Besides, you don't have to be hard core cadre to

in the same building. He said that he was travelling around the country and had spoken to Vietnam veterans in 23 different states and felt that we were doing better and standing taller since the dedication of the memorial in Washington, DC. He had heard that I was a veteran's counselor and was hoping that I was doing right by the Vietnam vets.

He's got a lot of nerve I thought, hoping that I was doing right by the Vietnam vets.

## Info Wanted

A research study is being conducted at Cleveland State University for women who served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War in any capacity (as officers, nurses, administrators, civilians, etc).

This is an extension of research and information that has been collected by others since the early 1980's. By means of a questionnaire, researcher Margaret Gigowski wants to learn more about women's experiences in Southeast Asia and how they feel this has influenced their lives today.

This could lead to possible networking for women Vietnam Veterans and other women who served in Southeast Asia.

In order for this study to be as representative of the many women who were there during that time, your help is needed. If you wish to participate in this study or want more information contact:

Margaret A Gigowski  
Dept of Psychology  
Stillwell Hall, Cleveland  
State University  
1960 E. 24th St  
Cleveland, OH 44115

Ms Gigowski's research is being conducted under the supervision of John Wilson, author of The Forgotten Warrior Project. All replies will be confidential.



In April 1985, Vietnam is ten years ago. Ten years since the last American troops and diplomats lifted off the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. For those who were part of the war 10 years may have dimmed the memories, but in few cases has the experience been forgotten. There are, however, lessons left to learn, and 10 years is plenty of time to have learned at least some of them.



Vietnam was an ordeal for a generation of Americans: those who went off to fight as well as those who stayed at home. Yet administrations since 1975 have tried to persuade the American people to forget Vietnam in the interests of getting involved again somewhere else. Vietnam meant 58,000 dead American troops; 300,000 American troops disabled. The deficit that hangs over the American economy can be traced to the Vietnam War.

So, what was Vietnam? A mistake? A "noble cause"? Foreign aggression? A case of U.S. troops with their hands tied by politicians? The debates have not ended after 10 years.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam began during World War II. The OSS (the forerunner of the CIA) sent agents to make contact with anti-Japanese guerillas in Southeast Asia. Among a number of different Vietnamese nationalist groups, only the Viet Minh under their leader, Ho Chi Minh had the national network of underground organizations and guerillas necessary.



Ho Chi Minh met with the U.S. operative Major Archimedes Patti and they agreed on anti-Japanese actions. The U.S. dropped supplies behind the lines to Ho, and the Viet Minh helped Americans downed behind Japanese lines. The first American advisors helped train, equip and arm the Viet Minh. In 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed in Vietnam with Ho Chi Minh as its president. American planes flew over Hanoi in celebration of the founding. The

Vietnamese Declaration of Independence was modeled on the American version, and Ho asked Americans to honor their commitment to independence.

The U.S. government, meanwhile, was trying to improve relations with France, and the French price was the return of former colonies. U.S. relations with Vietnam turned sour. President Truman refused to answer Ho's cables or letters. France finally got all her old colonies including Vietnam and the U.S. got the closer ties it wanted.

The French return to their former colony was not easy. At first they had to use former Japanese POW's to get a foothold. They could retake the towns, but never the countryside. By 1950, Vietnamese General Giap launched a general offensive against the French which, though premature, still resulted in 6000



French killed or captured. Though the French called it a "victory" the commentator Bernard Fall described it as France's "greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm died at Quebec." France turned to the U.S. for aid. First it was \$10 million a year, but grew to \$1 billion by 1954 at the time of the final French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, when the U.S. was footing 80% of the bill.

The French were driven out. The U.S. moved in. According to international agreement Vietnam was temporarily to be divided into North and South, with free elections to take place nation-wide in 1956.

Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese Catholic living in Boston was chosen by the U.S. government to be Premier of South Vietnam (which was 95% Buddhist). The U.S. set up MAAG (the Military Assistance and Advisory Group--forerunner of MAC-V) to train a "nationalistic" Vietnamese force of a quar-

# Ten Years Doesn't Make THE VIETNAM W

ter of a million men. It turned out to be mostly Vietnamese who had fought for the French and were far from popular. In 1956 the U.S. refused to go along with promised elections because, in the words of President Eisenhower, "Ho Chi Minh would win 80% of the vote in a free election." U.S. involvement grew as did U.S. money and manpower. American troops rose to 500 under Eisenhower, 15,000 under Kennedy.

Diem was in trouble despite American support; former Viet Minh helped to support a number of groups opposing Diem and the U.S. Buddhist unrest rose in the cities; in the countryside Diem cronies were killed. In its paranoid view of the situation, the U.S. government could not understand people who were nationalists or Buddhists or other 3rd force supporters who were neither Communist nor were for Diem and the



"The war in Vietnam is one of the most barbarous

tutes, cowards and gangsters, masquerading as a government and a military.

This situation was bad enough. But, it was coupled with incredible arrogance on the part of U.S. governmental and military leaders. They could not believe that Asians could stand up to the might and technology the U.S. threw into the war. The U.S. war plan progressed from one stage to another with little change: we tried strategic hamlets, Vietnamization, search and destroy, pacification. All of these programs had been tried by the French without success. They didn't work for the French and they didn't work any better for the Americans.

The American people were not being told of the plans or policies of the government. To the contrary, Lyndon Johnson ran as a peace candidate in 1964 saying, "I won't send



American boys to do the fighting for Asian troops." Americans were told that Vietnam was two countries (skipping over 2000 years of history) and that the North was invading the South.

All of this didn't do much to answer the questions of the 19-year old Americans fighting the guerillas in South Vietnam. Somehow, in order to save Vietnam we had to destroy it. We

bombed phans, and des to save lets to ed Viet. house t ture fro



As G saw the country a to the "tr people w corrupt S their poc nor their saw hate lagers wh as "liber of flower who seem also wan exchange women or saw the e admire bo tenacity planes an nades an valued hu my did no for each (to the ov plantation \$120 in c rents of a mistaken

We f what the





# Make It Any More Glorious WAR AS HISTORY



barbarous wars in history." U THANT

mbled hospitals to save or-  
ans, we sprayed Agent Orange  
d destroyed the land in order  
save crops, we burned ham-  
s to save villages, and turn-  
Vietnam into a huge whore-  
use to save Vietnamese cul-  
e from Communism.



As GI's in Vietnam we often  
the stark realities of the  
try and could compare them  
e "truths" the American  
le were hearing. We saw  
pt Saigon generals stuffing  
pockets while neither they  
their armies would fight. We  
hate in the eyes of the vil-  
s who never welcomed us  
liberators" with bouquets  
owers. The only Vietnamese  
seemed to want us there  
wanted our greenbacks in  
ange for drugs, booze, or  
en or all three. We also  
the enemy fight and had to  
re both his bravery and  
city in taking on U.S. tanks,  
s and helicopters with gre-  
s and rifles. We supposedly  
d human life while the ene-  
d not. Yet, we paid \$600  
ach rubber tree we blew up  
e owners of the Michelin  
ation) and a top price of  
in compensation to the pa-  
of a child killed during a  
ken U.S. bombing.

We fought up hills, winning  
the press called "victories,

but what we saw was that half  
our friends were killed to en-  
hance the career of a lifetime  
military officer who wanted a  
high body count. And then we  
would leave the hill, only to re-  
turn a week or month later to  
fight for it all again. The war  
was not something to be won or  
lost, not by the grunt on the  
ground; it was 365 days to be  
survived.

The U.S. tried everything  
to win the war. We dropped  
more than three times the total  
tonnage of bombs dropped by  
both sides during World War II.  
We conducted "Operation Phoe-  
nix" during which the CIA and  
Saigon government killed up to  
200,000 suspected Viet Cong.  
We defoliated 10% of the land,  
much of it permanently. We  
bombed, shot, killed, and burned  
for more than 10 years at a cost  
of \$140 billion (with more still  
to come). And we still lost.

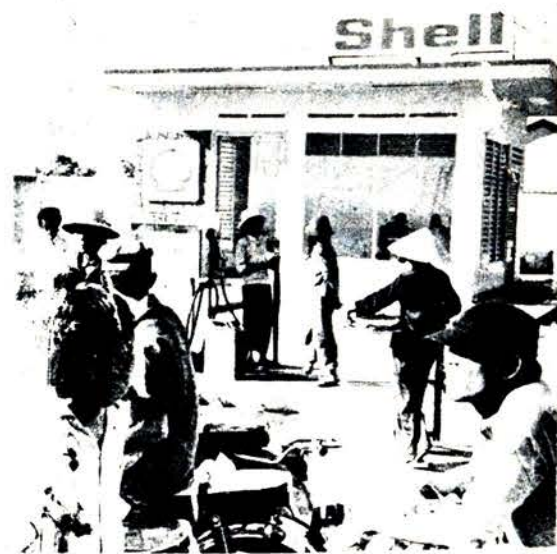
The U.S. did not pull out  
of Vietnam because we were  
winning, but because the Viet-  
namese were. Some generals  
today are saying that we lost  
the war but never lost a battle--

but what the hell did we "win"  
at Khe Sanh or in the Iron Tri-  
angle or in Laos or Cambodia  
besides having some officer's  
career card punched in the right  
places?

The simple fact is that nei-  
ther the American people nor  
American GI's in Vietnam thought  
that the goals--real or imagined--  
were worth the lives and money  
being squandered. The war was  
lost on the battlefield and in  
the hearts and minds of the  
American people.

During the war VVAW led  
tens of thousands of Vietnam  
veterans demonstrating against  
that war. No comparable group  
of Vietnam vets ever rose to  
challenge VVAW or our goals.  
In fact when VVAW brought  
1500 vets to protest Nixon's  
renomination the Republican  
Party could only come up with  
6 vets to support the war (and  
not even all these supported  
Nixon). Vietnam vets knew  
firsthand about the real war--  
and opposed it.

Today the Reagan Admin-  
istration seems determined to  
see us involved again. In a



place like El Salvador U.S.  
allies are at least as corrupt  
as Diem or Thieu or Ky in  
South Vietnam. Vietnam was  
not just a mistake; neither  
will be a U.S. venture in  
some other part of the globe  
except for the GI's who buy the  
government's lies. Vietnam  
was not a "noble cause" ex-  
cept for those who fought to  
Bring Our Brothers Home after  
they had made the mistake of  
going. Foreign aggression?  
Each time the U.S. government  
condemns the USSR in Afghan-  
istan or the Vietnamese in Cam-  
bodia it lists the actions taken  
by the U.S. government during  
the Vietnam War. The Vietnam  
War was simply foreign aggres-  
sion which the U.S. government  
could not win.

The war was never in the  
interests of the vast majority  
of those of us who fought it.  
That war was in the interest  
of the majority of the Vietna-  
mese who fought against us.  
The Freedom and Independence  
for which they fought are still  
worthy goals today.



Việt Bắc 1951

The wheel of nature turns without pause  
After the rain, good weather  
In the wink of an eye  
The universe throws off its muddy clothes  
For ten thousand miles  
The landscape spreads out  
like a beautiful brocade

Light breezes  
Smiling flowers  
High in the trees  
Amidst the sparkling leaves  
All the birds sing at once  
People and animals rise up reborn  
What could be more natural?  
After sorrow, comes joy.

FINE WEATHER  
by HO CHI MINH



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

### A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

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

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

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

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

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

### NATIONAL COORDINATORS

**Bill Davis**  
(312) 386-1413

**Barry Romo**  
(312) 327-5756

**Peter Zastrow**  
(312) 761-8248

**John Lindquist**  
(414) 963-0398

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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.

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## Membership Form

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

DATES OF  
SERVICE \_\_\_\_\_

BRANCH \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

OVERSEAS DUTY \_\_\_\_\_

DATES \_\_\_\_\_

MILITARY OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

RANK \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War



continued from page 1

## LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

# POST TRAUMATIC STRESS

VVAW Member Helps Refugees,...

## VICTORY IN SANCTUARY TRIAL



Jack Elder and Stacey Merkt

Jack Elder, Director of Casa Romero (a halfway house for Central American refugees), Vietnam vet, VVAW member, and leader of the sanctuary movement was sentenced to 5 months in a halfway house for aiding illegal immigrants. Elder had refused a judge's offer of probation if he would not speak on behalf of the sanctuary movement and if he would move out of Casa Romero. Elder's refusal to accept this sentence after having been found guilty, surprised the court which immediately imposed a one year prison sentence. After a day's consideration, however, the judge decided on the halfway house sentence, suggesting that the government did not want to provide the sanctuary movement with another martyr.

With his family Elder has lived and worked in the Casa Oscar Romero shelter for a number of years; the shelter has provided refuge, particularly for

Salvadorians fleeing political persecution in El Salvador. As Elder put it in an earlier statement, "As one of the growing number of Americans who are repulsed by the war we are waging in El Salvador, I am proud to be able to live my life in a way that allows my own alleged illegal actions to illuminate our nation's shameful policies."

An earlier trial had upheld the position of Elder and other members of the sanctuary community, that it was the U.S. government that was acting illegally by trying to send back refugees from El Salvador, and that U.S. law forbade the government from sending them to death for political reasons back home.

Stacey Merkt, a co-worker at Casa Oscar Romero was sentenced to 179 days in jail.

In San Antonio, Texas, the VVAW Chapter declared that its members would act to give sanctuary to refugees from Central America and provide shelter and transportation when requested.

couraging level of support that prompted Kastenmeier to reintroduce the legislation as H.R. 362.

H.R. 362 is again attracting Congressional as well as veteran support. In less than three months, 50 members of Congress have already joined Kastenmeier in co-sponsoring H.R. 362. Last session VVAW was the only national veterans organization to endorse ptsd legislation. This year, DAV has already joined VVAW in backing the bill and Kastenmeier's determined efforts. Other veterans organizations are expected to lend their support in the months to come.

In a March 1985 letter asking all members of the House of Representatives to co-sponsor H.R. 362, Kastenmeier noted that the VA acknowledges that at least 20% of Vietnam vets have substantial war-related psychological difficulties impairing their lives. "This means that from 700,000 to 800,000 veterans, plus family members, are still suffering the effects of this tragic period in our history," Kastenmeier observed.

While noting that legislation passed by Congress during the last session provides for a study of ptsd in Vietnam vets, Kastenmeier called it only the first step since final results of the study are not due until 1988. He stated that the study approach would only postpone for three more years key decisions on how to deal with ptsd, but that vets could continue to suffer the effects of ptsd with only sporadic compensation.

H.R. 362 is without question one of the most significant pieces of Vietnam veteran legislation introduced to date. VVAW members have played a crucial role in helping this bill get as far as it has. VVAW members need to increase their efforts if hearing are to be held by the House Veterans Affairs Committee this session. That means that H.R. 362 has to have as many co-sponsors as possible. Listed below are the names of the present co-sponsors. If your representative is not on the list, contact him or her to urge co-sponsorship. Thanks to those who have co-sponsored already are also in order.

Rep. Kastenmeier introduced H.R. 362 for us and he is doing all he can to have it enacted because he cares about Vietnam vets. The battle for passage of H.R. 362, however, is really ours as Vietnam vets. It is one battle we cannot afford to lose.

--Marv Freedman  
VVAW Madison

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## Continued

## AID

anti-Vietnamese resistance. But though calling for the blood will not do the bleeding themselves. As with the "earlier" war, Congress will be willing to fight to last drop of someone else's blood.

There is no real chance of the guerilla forces kicking out the Vietnamese; if they could what decent American would really want a return to Pol Pot?

Humanitarian aid is needed. That should be through the UN not through the CIA. Negotiation not military confrontation is needed, not new U.S. intervention. Americans should let their Congressmen know that they oppose any new U.S. involvement.

NO AID!  
U.S. OUT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA!

--Barry Romo  
VVAW National  
Office



# War and Starvation CAMBODIA 10 YRS LATER

With the United States, China, and the Soviet Union deadlocked behind the scenes, peace in Cambodia is a distant prospect at best. But until the situation is resolved, the lives of undreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees hang in the balance.

A sideshow to the Vietnam War, Cambodia became the focus of international attention from 1978-1979, when Khymer Rouge atrocities and reports of impending famine were widely publicized. Then, all too quickly, problems of an overwhelming magnitude disappeared from the news. Other crises--in Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia--were easier to understand politically, easier to resolve in humanitarian terms, and far easier on the consciences of many Americans.

But though forgotten by many, Cambodia's problems have not gone away. The land is still occupied by 180,000 Vietnamese soldiers. As of mid-1984, an estimated 235,000 Cambodian civilians were living in refugee camps on the Cambodian side of the Thai-Cambodian border. And last December, fierce Vietnamese attacks in and around Rithisen, the largest refugee camp in Cambodia, killed at least 63 civilians and wounded 78 others.

Cambodian border camps are typical villages, with schools, hospitals, Buddhist temples and markets. They are internationally recognized as civilian population centers. Nevertheless, the civilian camps are unavoidably connected with the political and military groups in the area. Thus, refugees are frequent victims of attacks which Thai Foreign Ministry officials describe as "cruel, savage and brutal."

Historically, Cambodia and Vietnam have been uneasy neighbors. The Vietnamese were hailed as liberators when they overthrew Pol Pot's Khymer Rouge--a government responsible for the deaths of at least 2 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1978. They have since become oppressors. The government of Heng Samrin, which the Vietnamese installed and continue to support with troops, is not recognized by the United Nations. Instead, the UN has regularly called for a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, and free Cambodian elections.

The UN recognizes a three-party coalition as the legitimate government of Cambodia. The coalition is made up of the anti-Communist Khymer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), led by former Prime Minister Son Sann; an anti-Communist group loyal to former chief of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk; and Pol Pot's Communist Khymer Rouge.

The coalition government is supported in varying degrees by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), by most Western governments, and by the United States. Washington, however, has nothing to do with Pol Pot's organization and has repeatedly turned down Son Sann's requests for American military aid for KPNLF guerrillas. Both Singapore and China are said to supply the KPNLF with arms. And China is one of the few nations standing behind the Khymer Rouge as well as non-Communist members of the coalition government. Peking says it will not withdraw its support from Pol Pot as long as Vietnamese troops remain in Cambodia. But the Vietnamese, who are supported by the Soviet Union, say they will be willing to begin serious peace negotiations only if Pol Pot is repudiated.

Following the December Vietnamese attacks on Rithisen, over 60,000 civilian refugees--perhaps as many as 100,000--fled to Thailand, where they have been given temporary sanctuary. They will be moved back across the border as soon as the Vietnamese retreat, but that does not appear to be soon.

Meanwhile at least 45,000 Cambodian refugees have already been living in holding camps across the Thai border, some for years. However, in the summer of 1984, the Thai government withdrew its blanket offer of first asylum to Cambodian refugees. In fact, Thailand announced on July 29th that Khao-I-Dang, the largest holding camp, would be changed to a processing center and that refugees there who were not already being processed or accepted by a third country would be placed in a repatriation program. For many, a return to Cambodia under the Vietnamese would mean death. The Thai's estimated that as many as 25,000 to 30,000 refugees would be left unaccepted by third countries and not in process at the end of 1984.

The consequences of 15 years of warfare have been devastating. Disease, malnutrition, continual uncertainty about their future and the ongoing fighting that regularly destroys their crops, homes and



families have made life nearly impossible for hundreds of thousands of civilians. Efforts to improve the lives of Cambodian civilians at the Thai-Cambodian border are a major concern of the Cambodian Humanitarian Organization of America (CHOA), a Chicago-based group of concerned Cambodians and Americans.

The aims of CHOA are to improve the quality of life among Cambodians in Southeast Asia, to facilitate the protection of human rights for Cambodians and other oppressed people throughout the world, to work with international organizations which provide relief for the Cambodian people, to assist any Cambodian associations or projects in the realization of their goals and the meeting of their needs.

Current CHOA fund-raising projects include the production of a Cambodian language tape for English speakers working here or in Thailand with refugees, slide presentations and a day-long seminar to introduce Americans to Cambodian history, culture and life. The goal of fund-raising projects is to provide direct relief in the form of food, clothing and medicine to refugees on the border. In addition, involvement with other organizations

to facilitate reunification procedures is an ongoing effort. Finally, CHOA seeks to keep events in Cambodia in the public eye, knowing that problems are more likely to be resolved

when they are recognized.

CHOA encourages everyone who is willing to remember--or cannot forget--to do as much as possible to relieve the incredible suffering of the Cambodian people. Individuals can write to local newspapers and national magazines requesting continued coverage of the Cambodian situation and stressing the humanitarian concerns that are at stake. Congressional representatives must also be kept informed on the latest developments and of their constituents' concern. Sponsors, advocates and friends of the Cambodian people are needed.

CHOA is an all-volunteer organization that gratefully accepts time, talent, information and (tax deductible) contributions. To join, to help or form more information, contact the Cambodian Humanitarian Organization of America, P.O. Box 408353, Chicago, IL 60640. The phone numbers are (312) 878-7092, or 929-5805.

--Marilyn Sutkus  
for CHOA



**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.





The reality of South Africa is grim for the non-white peoples living there; the weight of apartheid is everywhere. Things we take for granted--voting, freedom of movement, the right to association and speech--virtually do not exist. There is no shortage of holding pens, areas of restriction, reservations or jails. Detention for any Black man, woman or child without a charge is a way of life. A long line of Black writers, dissidents, and politicians have faced detention, and many have not emerged alive.

White South Africans who unite with or support anti-apartheid measures have had their lives made unpleasant, and have often been manipulated

out of the country, but all too few have stood up for their fellow human beings.

This Christmas-time in South Africa, cities saw a massive police crackdown, forcing Blacks off the streets to allow white shoppers "room" to make last-minute holiday purchases. Christmas is one of the few holidays Black people are allowed by law to travel to their homes and families. Obviously, this is not a positive reform of the creeping type now being advertised so loudly by the Reagan Administration in hopes of keeping alive their whole-hearted support for the South African government.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Black Anglican whose

anti-apartheid views are outspoken has once again focused world attention on the brutality of South Africa. In the U.S. Congressmen and women stepped on picket lines to be arrested at the South African Embassy in Washington, and there were demonstrations at South African buildings around the country. Ultra-Conservatives pressured Reagan to make statements condemning apartheid. The statement came grudgingly, weak-kneed and half-stepping, under the title "constructive engagement," a diplomatic trickledown that gives the South African government freedom to continue their policy of brutality, detention and murder without fear of diplomatic or economic sanctions from the U.S. government.

Pointing to the recent reforms such as the ability to purchase land and homes by the Black population of South Africa, the Reagan Administration will firmly resist economic sanctions, divestiture, or even cultural boycotts. Not a large number of Black people can buy a house on wages amounting to 25¢ to 50¢ an hour. The 300 U.S. corporations who have combined South African assets of \$2.3 billion with companies or subsidiaries are not exactly the share-the-wealth boys either. Divestiture of their South African assets is not a considered option. U.S. corporations support apartheid; it's good business. The Reagan Administration will continue to use half-assed studies and facts and figures to paint a rosy picture of racial oppression in South Africa.

Bishop Tutu was asked by the press reveal his views on divestiture. His response was that, "You realize that for me to say to yourselves that I support economic sanctions is an indictable offense in South Africa and, until recently, the penalty was a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years."

In South Africa no Black person is above the law--Nobel prize winner or freedom fighter.

--Bill Davis  
National Office  
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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Turn to page 12

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you will never  
be imperiled.

sun tzu

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#### 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.



# VETERANS DAY

## Vietnam Veterans Memorial

(The following article was written by VVAW Regional Coordinator Elton Manzione from Athens, Georgia, who was VVAW's representative at the Veterans Day dedication of the statue at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. The article first appeared in an Athens paper.)

As a highly decorated Vietnam combat veteran and a long-time peace activist, my emotions are always mixed on Veteran's Day, but never more so than last week. Memories of the last war were overshadowed by the possibility of the next.



Just the week before I had made a speech at a rally on Central America. I had said Vietnam veterans would not let it happen again. I had said Nicaragua would not be Grenada. I talked about an informal group of veterans called the Never Again Club. In both cases I was guessing.

In the intervening days the situation had become tense. Talk of buildups, alerts and preemptive strikes was in the air. I would soon get a chance to discuss my feelings with my brother veterans in Washington as well as get a sense of the feelings of the "other side" during my arranged interview at the Nicaraguan embassy.

"Nicaragua will not be another Grenada," one of my fellow veterans told me on Friday. "It will take five or six years to gain control of the cities and they will have to fight forces in the mountains for another 20 years." We were both painfully aware of the similarity of the situation in Nicaragua and that which we had faced 15 years earlier in Vietnam. We spoke quietly in a meeting room at the embassy. Roberto Vargas was a Vietnam veteran, but he was also the current liaison officer for the Nicaraguan embassy.

Three other veterans joined us. They had just returned from a mission delivering medicine in the combat areas of Nicaragua. Not all Vietnam vets were fighting for the contras. "There are 2,300 Americans in Nicaragua right now, about 1,500 of them are Vietnam veterans,"

Vargas said. Those 1,500 made CMA's handful of contra supporters pale by comparison.

Vargas and I talked of elections in his country where the Sandanistas polled more than 60 percent of those eligible to vote and elections in my country where Ronald Reagan polled just over 31 percent of those eligible to vote. Guess which government's legitimacy was being questioned and which government was claiming a mandate?

Saturday more than 150 veterans representing various organizations gathered to discuss the role of the Vietnam veterans in the unfolding Central American situation. We agreed delegations of observers, medics, and perhaps even advisors would be in order. We agreed we must respond. We agreed, never again.

Sunday was the real test of our feelings. Thousands of vets representing a general cross section, would be present to hear what was expected to be a call to arms by the President. To be sure there were the usual number of Jane Fonda effigies, but there were more anti-war slogans. There was more discussion of the new conservatives who equate war with glory.

"We ought to drop them in some mosquito-, malaria-, leech-infested jungle and let 'em see what it's really about," one vet quipped.

Reagan got more catcalls than applause. The reception was cool as the Park Police closed off the Memorial grounds to vets and opened it to politicians and generals who did not know the names of anyone on "the wall."

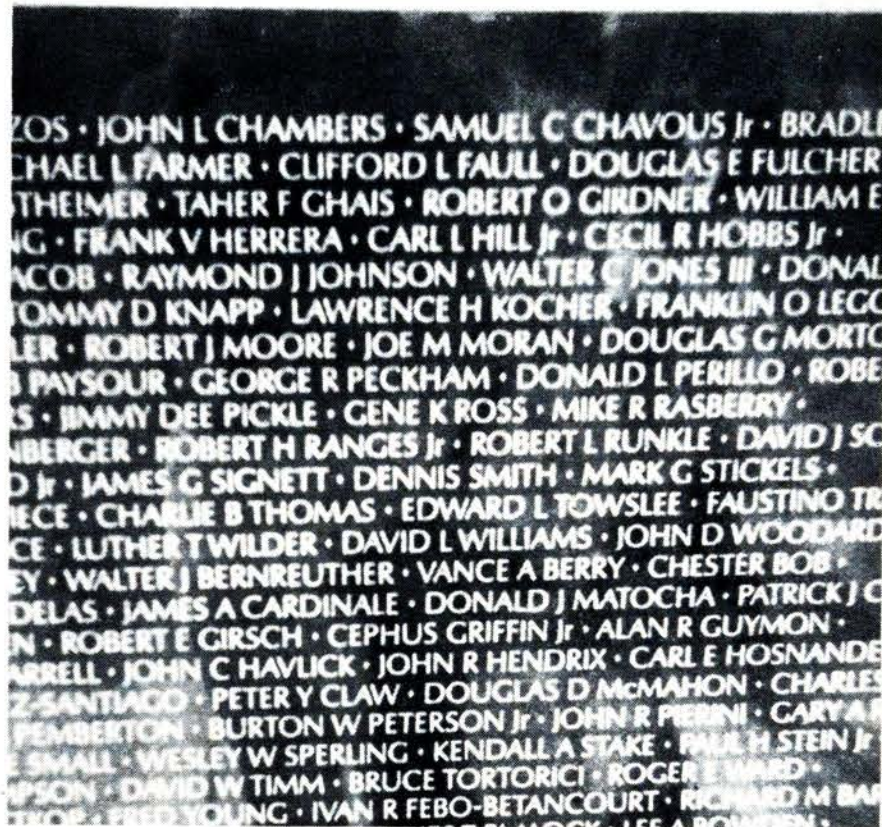
Reagan's speech was so low key as to be inaudible. A representative of the VFW was soundly booed as he spoke of the "glory" of Anzio and Normandy. Clearly this was a group that would not sit idly by while we marched headlong through the next bloody page on history.

On the train back a dozen vets sat in the club car talking of our concerns. Isolated individuals from Virginia, Florida, North Carolina and Georgia agreed we must not let it happen again.

I left with mixed emotions. I returned with mixed emotions: a mixture of pride and hope. Pride in my brothers in arms who do not see Central America as a way to make up for our perceived "failure" in Vietnam and hope that their combined voices will halt any future fiasco.

The Never Again Club was a reality. Its message was clear--patriotism is one thing, foolishness quite another.

--Elton Manzione  
Athens VVAW



Veterans Day ceremonies have, for years, carried the stigma of dry, flag-waving programs put on by the traditional vets groups like the Legion or VFW, mostly leaving the community bored or indifferent.

VVAW has, for years, emphasized the necessity of fighting for the benefits for living vets and opposing U.S. military involvement abroad. Often smaller than traditional ceremonies, in most cities, VVAW programs center around Vietnam vets and speak directly to the heart of issues.

The annual Vets Day program in Madison, WI, is a major departure from past trends. Held in the Wisconsin State Capitol building rotunda, the ceremonies consist of a solemn

program emphasizing the futility and waste of wars.

Growing by leaps and bounds, the Madison VVAW chapter has brought together veterans of all eras, local and state political leaders, and the Madison community.

1984 Veterans Day began with statements by or on behalf of World War I, World War II and Korean vets, and haunting music by Jim Wachtendonk of the Madison Chapter. A honor guard of Vietnam vets and their families replaced the symbolic coffin with a body bag--an image of Vietnam.

The crowd, some seated, many standing filled the first level above; the balcony circling overhead was jammed. Seated alongside fatigue-clad

## BUTTONS



VVAW BUTTONS with a three-color VVAW insignia surrounded by the words Vietnam Veterans Against the War. \$1 each; VVAW will pay the postage on all orders. For larger orders, we'll work something out--contact the VVAW National Office.

WHAT IS AGENT ORANGE...page 10

THE VETERAN

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# VETERANS DAY



VVAW Veterans Day Ceremony in Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda in Madison

vets were city and county officials and the citizens of Madison; in front of them, the Governor of Wisconsin listened to the program. As members of VVAW read the history of U.S. military involvement by country and year, the entire assembly filed by the body bag to lay flowers provided by a local florist.

The simplicity of the ceremonies coupled with an emotionally involved community exemplified the depth of work and commitment the Wisconsin VVAW chapters have brought to Veterans Day activities in Madison.

For Veterans Day in Chicago, the Governor didn't make it; neither did a number of others, but Vietnam vets, their families, and the Chicago media were in attendance. Held in direct competition with the "official" ceremony which was taking place at Daley Plaza in the middle of the city, VVAW's ceremony was held

at the Vietnam Veterans Monument, a fountain near downtown, in the midst of swirling cold winds, quite unlike anything we could recall from Vietnam.

The hearty group that joined together was treated to the thoughts of veteran, now Father

Bob Bosse, a Maryknoll priest and Chicago peace activist, and the songs of Bright Morning whose stirring music made warm what could have been a cold occasion. Barry Romo of VVAW's National Office spoke of his experience of bringing home the body of his nephew from Vietnam as he placed the wreath in front of the Monument.

The ceremony looked to the past and to those who died, but also to the future and to those who should never be put in a position to have to sponsor a similar ceremony in years to come.



## Chicago

Each year a Vietnam veteran is asked to lay the wreath, and does so with a special someone in mind. Barry Romo laid the wreath this year to honor his nephew, whose body he escorted home from Vietnam. The vet who was originally asked to lay the wreath was told by his employer that, if he participated in this way, he would lose his job. As a government employee he was denied his right of free speech, free assembly, his right as a human being and Vietnam veteran to honor not only all Vietnam veterans but that special someone he wished to honor. This is America, the home of the "free," where a veteran, or anyone for that matter, can have his livelihood threatened, his feelings squashed like a bug, and his rights denied. "Makes me proud to be an American."

Virg McFadden  
VVAW Chicago

# THE FEW THE PROUD THE DISOWNED

(The following article is taken from the Hartford Courant; the original was written by Ron Winter.)

When Vietnam veterans stream into Washington for the dedication of the new statue, most will gather for reunions or reminisce in hotel hospitality suites. But former Marines will be on their own.

The Marine Corps Association, the organization that usually arranges Marine reunions will not participate.... Association officials say the group does not want to be associated with the Vietnam vets they maintain don't fit the traditional spit-shined image the Marine old guard holds sacred.

Retired Brig Gen. George Bartlett, who heads the asso-

ciation, an organization of former Marines and their families, said bitter encounters during 1982 dedication ceremonies for the Vietnam War Memorial soured his organization on dealing with Vietnam era Marines.

"They were a bunch of god-damn crumbs," Bartlett said. "I'm not going to encourage them to join."

And the only official Marine participation will be by the Marine Corps Band, Col James L. McManaway, a spokesman for the office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, confirmed. The band's participation was added at the last minute.

Bartlett said he has heard no official word about the Marine Corps' participation, but

"I can...read the tea leaves

and see which way the wind is blowing."

Gen Paul X. Kelley, Marine Corps commandant, could not be reached for comment.

...The statue--titled "Three Fightingmen"--depicts three young soldiers, one black, one white and one Hispanic, dressed in Vietnam era fighting gear. It was commissioned after complaints that the sunken V shaped, black granite monument dedicated in 1982 projected an image of shame and disgrace rather than an image of honor.

But Bartlett is critical of the new monument by sculptor Frederick Hart. Bartlett said of the soldiers, depicted, "the uniforms are askew, they're not wearing hats. They don't look like servicemen."

Bartlett said many career servicemen were in their 30s and 40s when they fought in Vietnam. The statue "could have been more representative" of all groups who fought in the war, he said.

In 1982, the Association rented a suite at a Washington Hotel as a reunion center for

Vietnam era Marines and to recruit new association members. Bartlett said more than more than 3,000 former Marines visited the room. "They had beards and mustaches," Bartlett said. "They wore dirty jeans with medals (awarded during their Vietnam service) hanging all over them."

"I was amazed at the crud that came two years ago. I fought twice in Vietnam, but we fought, then came home and joined society....They just were not Marines. They didn't respect the Corps. If those are our representatives, I don't want anything to do with them."

McManaway agreed with Bartlett's assessment of the association's efforts at the hospitality suite.

"It was absolutely the grossest error," he said, adding that the Marines who attended were "the great flea-bitten masses."

"Where are the guys who go to work in a coat and tie?" McManaway asked.

\*\*\*\*\*

Reprinted by THE VETERAN without comment.



# RECOLLECTIONS

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

## "LZ 24"



### THERE YOU GO AGAIN

Now we all know that this country does not tolerate unpatriotic and disloyal individuals. There are penalties for such behavior. In this country tis of Thee sweet land of liberty, patriotism is rewarded and praised highly. Without question one is expected to answer the patriotic call of one's country. Without question one should be prepared to go into the battlefield. Without question one should be prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice. To go or not to go. We answered the "call," and went to war. To be or not to be? There was no guarantee. We knew this truth to be self evident as we were led through dark pastures. There was no promise that we would reach our homeland. To be or not to be? Think about it Mr. President. Without question some of us will never be....the same. Without question there are those who have long been buried in the name of patriotism and are not to be.

Do you remember us Mr. President? I must repeat, we are the ones what responded to our country's calling. The stage was set and the script was handed out. Now this was not the back yards of Hollywood....this was real. Without question....people were dying with real bullets and there was real blood you should have been there Mr. President!

It was no act! Shooting on location! People really died....but not as a result of an act of God, but rather as a result of an act of Congress! But hey, it's OK, we responded like good ol' american boys, we simply stuck alittle bit of patriotic chew between our brain and skull and went fer it! So thousands of arms, leg, minds and bodies later our country made a decision to let Saigons be Saigons....oh well, boys will be boys. So we returned to you war torn and utterly confused. Our young hearts and minds perforated with emotional shrapnel, not knowing yet the full and endless repercussions of our experience. But he, no sweat GI, you numba one! No problem! We're covered. The foundation was laid down by our forefathers (not mine, I'm of Navajo and Yaque descent.) On March 4, 1865 Abraham Lincoln said something of great importance for America's patriots. "To care for him who shall have borne the battle."

Mr. President it sounds as though you would like to rephrase that....how about "To slightly care and tax him who shall have borne the battle."

Sounds as though we have another battle. So let the truth be known that this battle is with and against America's own patriots! Hello, is the Caller there?

There you go again. Don't ignore us, for we did not ignore our country. Our country spent millions on the French connection, spent millions on sending us to war and kept us well stocked because we were expendable. Political relations, Draft registration, military occupation, physical and mental degradation let's talke Compensation. As patriots we were rewarded with metals and colored pendants and the GI bill to go to school and use to purchase a home. But now these benefits are under attack....by one of our own! Friendly fire?....hey, it's us!

They say the war is never over. How true, how painfully true these words are Mr. President. But isn't it a sad state of affairs that America's patriots have to quarrel with the President over something that has been theirs all along?

What is it? It is the right to call upon "The Caller"....our country. The right to be treated like humanbeings. So is it with respect and regards to our rights that you threaten to take away and tax our due benefits?

Have we not given enough Mr. President? This is all done in the name of Defense and in the best interest of our country...right? Hell, we went to war in the best interest of our country and yes we did pay a price for being patriotic.

But the truth is becoming self evident Mr President, that we are not in your best interest! The mere fact that our benefits are being threatened is completely ABSURD! It is as if Veterans OWE the government....for being Veterans....for being disabled!! It's like, "Hey Mr President, here's a couple of hundred dollars for the legs I lost; I'm really sorry."

This country cannot withstand this kind of betrayal. It only weakens the structure of the relationship between the government and its people. But wait! Isn't this a government for the people? Or is it simply one nation under Reagan? To us there seems to be an impairment on the part of our Leader's ability to see the value of taking care of its own. The morale of this great country will certainly decline. Oh well, Lincoln will never know!

Juan Lara...A Vieteran

On my first trip to the West Coast to organize for Dewey Canyon IV, I had spent some 150+ hours riding on a Greyhound. On my second trip after only 30-some hours on the dog, my back was starting to take on the shape and the smell of a bus seat. After taking the trip from Portland down to L.A., I knew it was time for a little R&R.

The bus had dropped me off at the gate to Dana Point State Beach Park around 11 PM, and I no more than had my poncho's strung up when it started to rain, and the rain lasted for days.

I was startled when I peaked out from my hootch the next morning, but not as startled as the other "campers" were to see me. I thought I had seen some big-ass motorhomes before, but these were bigger than big-ass. The occupants were looking out of their rain-streaked patio doors and I was peeking out of the hole in one of my poncho's that kept me moist throughout the night.

Around noon the sky dried up and I pulled out my rucksack and dug out some chow. I'd brought along some heat tabs, so I had a lunch of warm Pork 'n' Beans. My neighbors pulled out their patio deck, unrolled their awning, and cooked their steaks on a grill they had plugged into the side of the motorhome. By the time I had heated water for a cup of coffee I thought I was having a flashback. In the distance I could hear the sound of choppers, not just a few, but what sounded like a full-scale combat assault.

Six waves of Hueys went over, including gunships and Cobras. Five minutes later came the Chinooks and Flying Cranes.

I walked down to the Ranger Station and found out that there was a joint military operation going on in the desert. So, for a few days, listening to the sound of the rain and choppers, smelling the wet ponchos and the heat tabs, my R&R turned into my own personal combat zone.

To kill the time and keep some peace of mind, I wrote

some short stories and poems. Here's one of them:

LZ 24  
(Campsite #24)

How could they know that a war was raging on at Campsite #24.

Their motorhomes and limousines plugged into their own realities. I in mine, a poncho hootch, I lock and load a magazine...

Now almost thirteen years later since I was traumatized and abused

I light my heat tab and warm my beans.

I'm bitter for having been used.

So when they hear my cry and wonder why a helicopter disturbs my sleep, I'm not dreaming only weeping from scars buried deep.

--Dennis Kroll  
Madison VVAW

### Info Wanted

Dear VVAW:

As some of your readers know, my first book, Battle for Hue: Tet 1968 (Presidio Press/1983) was based on interviews with 35 Vietnam veterans. For my second book, I had the opportunity to interview 90 Viet vets who served in the 1971 invasion of Laos; Presidio Press will be publishing this soon.

I'm presently starting a third proposed book. I hope to chronicle the activities of the 1st Marine Division and Americal Division in the area of the Arizona Valley-Que Son Mountain-Hiep Duc Valley from 7 June-7September 1969. This period saw the Marines involved in several rough battles in the Arizona, then shifted south into the Que Son to assist the Army which was fighting a bloody, bunker-to-bunker action in the Hiep Duc Valley. Unites involved included: 2/1, 3/21, 4/31 and 1/46 infantry; 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division; plus the 1/5, 2/5, 1/7, and 2/7 Marines; 1st Reconnaissance Battalion; 1st Tank Battalion; 1st Marine Air Wing; and various smaller units.

I would greatly appreciate hearing from any vets of these operations so we can arrange an interview. No matter how big or small their personal role, each vet's help would be invaluable. Call or write anytime: Keith William Nolan, 220 Kingsville Court, Webster Groves, Missouri 63119 (314) 961-7577.

Thanks for printing my letter in THE VETERAN.

Sincerely,  
Keith William Nolan



"Three thousand, six hundred and seventy-two statements and statistics released to the press, three hundred appearances before special investigating committees... and not a grain of truth in any of it. Congratulations, Colonel."