Federal Judge Jack Weinstein has approved his final plan for distributing the Agent Orange settlement money. As it first appeared, it is the lawyers ($30 million to date) and a few vet "leaders" who have made out like bandits; vets and their families are left out in the cold.

No one who is partially disabled will receive a cash settlement. Children disabled due to birth defects as a result of Agent Orange will remain penniless. The $150 million will be distributed over a 10 year period. The maximum payment to a disabled vet is $12,800 ($1280 per year for 10 years) and widows can claim, at most, $3,400.

The interest on the settlement is not being distributed; indeed, the estimated $50 million will be given to a non-profit vets organization run by veterans (chosen by the judge and paid salaries comparable to the lawyers’ fees) to provide non-cash services to an estimated 250,000 vets and their families who are not "eligible" for the settlement.

The final plan, the judge said, is "a case of tragic, tragic errors." The error that vitiated the first plan was to create a two-tier system for allocating the settlement money. Vietnam veterans were divided into two groups: those with service-connected disabilities and those without. The plans approved by Judge Weinstein is a compromise that addresses the complaints of both groups.

As we are printing this issue of THE VETERAN, the Reagan Administration has revealed that it is seriously considering the use of U.S. combat troops in Nicaragua.

These threats to use troops coming on the heels of recent aggressive moves against Nicaragua are partly being used as political pressure on Congress to restore aid to the contras. However, they are of great concern to veterans and all Americans who vividly remember the quagmire that was the Vietnam War, and who do not want to see a repetition of our government sending Americans to fight against a people defending their lives and liberties from foreign domination.

In fact, on May 1st, Reagan used the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War to order a total economic blockade of Nicaragua, cancelling all imports, all export, the landing of Nicaraguan planes in the U.S. and the docking of Nicaraguan ships in U.S. ports. Having faced the loss of the contra aid vote in Congress, and widespread criticism for honoring Nazi war dead in Bitburg, Reagan moved quickly to tighten the economic vice in which he had already placed Nicaragua over the past 4 years.

The current economic embargo is indeed an escalation in the Reagan Administration's economic warfare against Nicaragua, which is attempting to weaken and demoralize the widespread popular base of the Sandinistas, while creating a disunited middle class fifth column in Nicaragua that can link up with the contras. By weakening Nicaraguan society internally, Reagan hopes that the government will either collapse or become a less susceptible target to the military intervention that he is now contemplating.
I was thinking about the word "pig" the other day. Seems like no one uses that word anymore. Back in the days when every other day brought a demonstration against the war for civil rights, the police used to club demonstrators, gas them or set dogs loose on them. Soon, demonstrators and their supporters began calling the police "pigs" because of these and other acts of brutality. There were objections by various farm groups and swine raiser associations, but the word stuck. Gratification of farm swine was expanded to include members of the ruling class, police agents and various anti-people flunkies who were appointed for the politics of the ruling class.

Over the last ten years or so, people stopped using the word "pigs" extensively. I guess that's because the cops aren't busting heads anymore except here and there. But I miss the "war." War was a phrase of a few minutes speech or writing seven paragraphs to explain why someone was a "war pig." That made everything simple.

So why am I having a nostalgia attack about pigs? It's because of a report coming out of Lower Saxony which is in Germany. There, some of the police used the term "pigs." They've been using dogs to sniff out heroin and other drugs, but now the police are replaced by--you guessed it--pigs. Luise, a 100-pound sow is one of the newest rookies on the police force in a small town near Hanover. There are claims that Luise and her colleagues have an acute sense of smell. I guess we've come full circle.

There's a new word appearing on the scene today: "war wife." Congresswoman Andrew Jacobs, a Korean War vet, is referring to those political wives who are willing to fight the Red Menace or the peasants in Nicaragua to the last drop of somebody else's blood; but who, at the same time, avoid military duty when there was a war going on and they were of fighting age.

Writer Jack Newfield of the Village Voice writes that war wives--and lo and behold, some of the leading congression al defense appropriations pushers such as Reps. George Miller of New Jersey, John Dinghith and Trent Lott are on the list. There are even several in the Defense Department. Most of these were of fighting age during Vietnam, but managed to get out of going by enrolling in school or failing the physical or joining the Coast Guard Reserve.

The White House even has a few war wimp's. They recently hired Patrick Buchanan, a noted flaming conservative. One of Buchanan's jobs will be to set up a "response desk" to return fire when the President is attacked by his critics. He uses all the words that make life sound like a battle, but when a real battle was going on in Vietnam where he could have shot some of the real "commies" he talks about, Pat Buchanan pleaded a bum knee to his draft board.

The, of course, there is the Supreme "War Wimp, the Commander-In-Chief Ronald Reagan who managed to remain at 4F during the Big One. C'mon now. A guy I work with was missing two fingers when he was drafted for WWII so you know that Ronnie could have gone if he was such a patriot. They were taking anybody for that war. But, Ronald Reagan set out his war in Hollywood. Now that he is Commander in Chief behind a desk in Washington, he has become a militant. From Lebanon to Grenada to Nicaragua, he's ready to send the boys into battle at the drop of the stock market.

There are no wimps in the Army. At least not around the Pentagon or on various bases. These soldiers are tough--so tough that a little rain water can't hurt them. The Army Clothing and Equipment Board found that out recently. They had the audacity to suggest that uniformed men around bases and the Pentagon be allowed to use umbrellas. The issue went all the way up to the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff where is was disapproved because they feel the image of male Army officers walking around with umbrellas is somehow intrinsically unmilitary.

I know a lot of us thought our officers were all wet, but we weren't aware that it was SOP. The Navy and the Marines feel that way too, but Air Force officers are allowed the use of umbrellas. Pilots always were a strange breed.

Notice that they were concerned about the "image of male Army officers." Women in uniform aren't allowed umbrellas. I never looked closely. I wonder if umbrellas are OD. Or camouflage. I wonder if women officers get to use the umbrella because the rain will spoil their perm? Is it macho to be all wet? I thought the dry look was in. I don't know. If it rains, give me my poncho!

I guess when you talk about women in the military, double standards do apply and I am bound for quite awhile. Take the case of Marine Lance Corporal Candy Clark. She was raped by an officer who subsequently got an honorable discharge with all the bennies.

One year later Marine Corps Captain John Moulatt fell in love with Candy. When handing down his dishonorable discharge, the court martial board at the Marine Corps Air Station In El Toro, CA, ruled that Moulatt's wanting to marry an enlisted woman was "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

I guess the rapid uptake of the image of a Marine Corps officer. He probably never uses an umbrella. He's one of the few. The Proud. The Marines. But Captain Moulatt didn't make the grade. He evidently didn't understand the Marine Corps' concept of how gentlemen should behave towards women.

I don't support the Navy is any better. At least not at the Trident Refit Facility in Bangor, Washington. There, the civilian executive director, Hal Singleton used the Navy photography lab to print up posters of a group of women hitched to a plow. Singleton passed out copies of the photo to Navy employees, telling people, "That's what God put women on earth for--to replace horses."

There was a flap, a complaint to Congresswoman Patric Schroeder and an investigation. The Navy investigation found that Singleton was going to use the photography for Human Relations Week and gave him an oral reprimand. I don't know what kind of human relation's program the Navy has, but they ought to get themselves some umbrellas. They can use them to hide their faces. As for Hal Singleton, I bet he's pretty good at flushing out drugs--just like Luise.

One final note here. I came across an interesting piece of history that deserves mention in any column called Fraggin'. It was back in 1857, in India, that this happened, when the British were there to colonize and subjugate the people. Colonel John Eyre was a British Army Commander. Evidently the good colonel, although not a war wimp, was probably a pig. He decided to give his troops a lecture. His topic for the day was insubordination. Upon completion of his lecture, his troops immediately terminated Col. Finnis, Touche.'

GRENADE OF THE MONTH

This month's John Finnis memorial grenade goes to a civilian--Robert A Rowland, an appointee by the War Wimp as head of the Office of Safety and Health at the supposed guardian of the health of America's working people. Rowland gets the grenade for a recent decision made regarding farm workers.

Over the objections of five of his婶叔 brothers, one of whom didn't have civil service protection and was fired, Rowland ruled that farm owners did not have to provide toilets and running water for their workers. Even enlisted Marine women get to have toilets and running water.

In the uproar following this decision, personal information came out about the stockholdings of this buddy of the War Wimp. It seems that he has a generous stockholding in Tenncos, a company which, among other things, employs 3,000 farm workers to work over 10,000 acres of farm land in California and Arizona.

And this wasn't the only time he made an anti-worker ruling affecting a company in which he had stock. His extensive stock holdings include companies that manufacture formaldehyde and ethylene oxide. He has recently ruled against setting standard limits of exposure to these chemicals which are believed to be health hazards.

Robert Rowland seems to be a prime example of conflict of interest by a man in a high position in government, something that seems quite common nowadays. Rowland probably never uses an umbrella to tarnish his image. He's just too driven, I guess. He probably doesn't need one, although he might feel just as comfortable rooting around in some mudpile.
Remember Diem?

EL SALVADOR'S
JOSE DUARTE
VIETNAM

STARRING
RONALD REAGAN AS LYNDON JOHNSON
EL SALVADOR AS SOUTH VIETNAM

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO REGISTER FOR THE DRAFT AGAIN...

(The following article was written by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador—CISPES.)

The Reagan administration justifies sending over 1 billion dollars to war torn El Salvador by claiming that its president, Jusep Napoleon Duarte, is a democratic moderate. But what is the reality behind that image? Duarte’s rule began with the assassination of El Salvador’s Archishop by army death squads who then continued their terror campaign until over 50,000 Salvadorans had been killed. Congress almost cut off aid to El Salvador for its murder, but backed off when Duarte promised to investigate the crimes. Reagan says that because four soldiers were convicted for the notorious 1980 rape and murder of four U.S. churchwomen, Duarte is making “progress” in human rights. But the lawyer who defended the soldiers recently fled El Salvador saying that when he began to look into the involvement of higher officers in the crimes he was arrested and severely tortured. Even as the lawyer was being tortured Duarte was assuring the U.S. press that a “full investigation” had been made.

Now that Duarte has U.S. aid safely in his pocket, death-squad-type murder is again on the rise. According to the Christian Legal Aid Office, 501 people were assassinated by the government forces in the first three months of this year, twice the figure for last year.

Under Duarte’s government, a new and much deadlier kind of “death squad” has been turned loose; helicopters and bombers which drop about 7.5 tons of bombs a day on the countryside, where a rebel movement is growing. It is the most intensive bombing in the history of the Western Hemisphere.

“When the planes spot villages they attack indiscriminately,” explains a rural priest. “If someone has their clothes out to dry and bears the plane, they rush to take them down, for wherever the pilot spots drying clothes the bombs are sure to fall. So the people live in the hills and mountains, sometimes sheltered only by trees and bushes.”

Our taxes pay for these planes, the bombs they drop, the fuel that powers them and the training for their pilots. U.S. advisors are directly involved too, choosing targets, dropping bombs, mapping strategy.

Most of the country folk support the guerrilla movement. The bombing is intended to drive these people out of the mountains so the guerrillas won’t have a civilian base to give them food and supplies. The country people support the guerrillas because the guerrillas have promised to:

- end the government repression and prosecute the responsible officers,
- lift the state of siege and allow freedom of the press,
- implement a large-scale land reform,
- raise wages, hold elections, and
- seek a negotiated peace to end the war.

These are the same things Duarte has been promising to do for four years. It is just as likely Duarte believes in those ideas, why does his government bomb and murder an opposition movement that wants the same things? Why doesn’t he just do these things himself?

Reagan says we should support Duarte because he won the last elections. But were these elections really democratic?

The opposition was excluded from the ballot. The army published a “death list” of people it calls “subversives,” including every major political figure who would have offered a real alternative to military rule. These people don’t dare show their faces in public, much less run a presidential campaign.

There is no freedom of the press. All the opposition newspapers and radio stations have been bombed out of existence by government forces.

The CIA bought the election with $2 million they spent to insure Duarte’s victory (about $3 a vote in a country where many only earn a dollar a day).

While Duarte has fulfilled none of his promises to his people, he has succeeded at one thing: convincing the U.S. Congress to pay for his war. Every few months our involvement increases: more money, more planes, more advisors. The last update we have got a quote about this was in Vietnam. The wounds from that tragedy have yet to heal. Let’s stop this one now, before it’s too late.

CISPES National Office
P.O. Box 3019
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 887-5019

CISPES (the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) was formed in 1980 in response to growing public opposition to the new violence developing in Central America. The goals of CISPES are to help spread the message of the public against U.S. intervention; aid and support the Guatemalan and Salvadoran peoples in their struggle for justice in El Salvador; we also support the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the revolutionary movement in Guatemala.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NATIONAL OFFICE HAS CHANGED ITS MAILING ADDRESS TO:
VFW National Office
P.O. Box 418554
Chicago, IL 60640
The U.S. may have lost the war in Vietnam, but it is sure as hell is winning the movie version of the war. The latest in a crop of crap is Rambo: First Blood Part II.

This is the fourth movie to be released about 40-year-old Vietnam vets returning to the MIA’s alive: It is grossing millions and is probably almost as profitable as the war itself—to some people. If these movies were merely the dream of some REMPs about what combat was about, they would be harmless. After all, middle-aged men running around the jungle (and I do mean running) without getting heat stroke, drinking paddy water without getting dysentery, surviving in the jungle without losing weight, and able to leap tall buildings at a single bound, all of whom have seen real combat. But unfortunately, these movies carry a very subtle message to the younger generation which does not remember the Vietnam War. Killing is fun again! Like the John Wayne movies of our youth, death and killing have been cleared up as the nation looks forward to another Vietnam in Central America. Where do men have their legs blown off and live; no one is confined to a wheelchair; no one has children born handicapped because of chemical defoliants.

In fact for the most part the “good guys” don’t even die, just thousands of nameless, faceless “gooks” who don’t respect life anyway.

There is an interesting twist to all these movies. In order for Americans to be the “good guys,” and in order for them to win, they become guerrillas. There is a grand role reversal in which the American fights with his hands (instead of with B-52’s) and the “bad guys” have the helicopter gunships. Pardon me if

my CIB is showing, but I seem to remember the VC making grenades out of C-ration cans and facing the overwhelming power of battle ships, gunships, Puff and all the rest.

who bombed his home—and this is the same “enemy” the U.S. is likely to face in Central America.

I suppose some will think it is cheap to attack the person

*REMP stands for “rear echelon mother-fucker.

*CIB is the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

These new attempts to entice young people set a challenge to WAW. Already many chapters and members do work in high schools and with youth groups to counter the lies and promises of military recruiters. Coupled with this is the necessity of explaining what Vietnam and combat are really like. And there is the further necessity of putting a face on the “enemy” who was, like as not, a 14-year-old fighting against the foreigners who were invading his country and allies starting in these movies, but I just can’t help but turn watching these new John Wayne types play. Nam vets. Most of these “heroes” are old enough to have had the chance to “play” war for real if they had tried. Stallone is a prime example. While Vietnam was an act in the process of looking for extras, “Rocky” was in Europe going to school. As Vietnam continued, “Rambo” was making bucks making buck teeth: as Vietnam ended Stallone became a true patriot. It seems that from one generation to the next the ones who make the wars and the ones who make the movies are never the ones who do the fighting or the dying.

—Barry Rono 
VFW National Office

Nam Vets Picket Rambo

A group of Vietnam vets in San Francisco have been picketing “Rambo: 1st Blood, Part II.” The veterans expelled from the Vietnam War by the United States, or for whom the war was not a patriotic duty, are protesting against the film which depicts a war they do not believe in.

The Vietnam vets have long been active in protest against the Vietnam War, and their picketing of the film is just one of many actions they have taken to raise awareness about the war and its effects.

For Those Who Fought

For those who fought and died, a bitter wall Rises before the eyes of those who went A city of young people out to fall For old men’s greed and vanity. They went With young men’s courage, fought the best they knew, Better than the bureaucrat did: They did for more than generations could To save the honor of the land they served. And we who by our best lights fought for peace And walked the path of march, and prayer, and fast, Who worked to make the death and killing cease, Now walk, un-monumented toward the past. We ask no wait—just some small guarantees, Or hope, at least—that they will be the last.

Marian Henriquez Neudel

FLASHES

Old men’s fissured lips in history’s aged mirror sneer Again. War becomes peace. Peace becomes war.

Flashes of blinding white light belt churches to graveyard ash their pilgrims disillusioned disappear. Leaden days bear barren nights. Silent winds rage through time and slowly cease spent of will. A ray of light. A seed is sown. A chaos of grass. A bide is born. A mirror cracks again.

—Ed Damato
VFW New York
Once Was One Time Too Many
VIETNAM ANNIVERSARY

The 10th anniversary of U.S. Marines jumping into helicopters amid a squalling mass of Vietnamese who wanted to get out—and the end of U.S. occupation of South Vietnam—has come and gone. New York City held a ticker-tape parade, there were kind words and pats on the head from politicians around the country, a smattering of new memories and ritual bows to the newfound "heroes": the Vietnam vet! Meanwhile, vets without jobs are still unemployed; vets suffering from various forms of post traumatic stress have not been cured; vets whose problems led to alcoholism or divorce and still drunk and divorced. And the Vietnam vet suicide rate—well over 100,000 and rising—continues to grow.

Fifteen years ago VFW tried to understand and tell others what it meant to separate the warriors from the war. You can and should hate the war, we told people; but don’t hate the warrior. Hate the generals who plan the tactics, the politicians who plan the strategy, or the corporations who make billions in profits, don’t hate the GI who carries out these god-awful policies.

The distinction between the two sounds simple today. Fifteen years ago we faced those who supported the war and were sure the reason we were losing was the hicky, drug-crazed troops over there; and, on the other side among those who knew that the war was wrong, we faced those who were sure the blood-thirsty GI’s were slaughtering innocent Vietnamese.

But much has changed in 15 years, much more stays the same. Reegan and the Reagan-influenced media have begun to make bricks out of Vietnam vets and, not only were the vets “heroes,” but the war itself was an “heroic” effort. The war and the warrior are being confused all over again. This time there’s a purpose; make Vietnam heroic, show the real American “heroes,” and especially let the youth understand the patriotic zeal of these heroes. Make enough camouflaged fatsigues (In Vietnam, of course) so that everyone can prowl their jungle jungles looking like a refugee from an army surplus store. It’s guaranteed to pay off at the recorder’s office.

Patriotism is in again. Notice how often we are being told that the “wounds of Vietnam are now being bound up.” “Bound up” means healed means forgetting. A wound is a scar, but the scar is somehow heroic.

Recruiters, and if ROTC, reappear in schools. The National Boy Scout Jamboree is treated to several days of Special Forces exhibition—all you need to do is change uniforms. And, of course, Rambo rams through the theaters, his pockets stuffed with box office receipts.

If we are honest with ourselves almost any Vietnam vet openly or secretly gets off on the new adulation, even when we know it’s for all the wrong reasons. Our experiences let us live up to the John image: “I’ve stared death in the face, and death blinked” which our society has so thoroughly ingrained in us. “We’ve been driven on for so long it gives us a little thrill to be a sort of role model for high school males.”

The Image of the Vietnam vet—that is, what others see us as—has shifted drastically in the last 15 years. For us as children of a more open age the image is particularly important; once the myth has been set up we try to grow into it.

In the last 60’s, the early days of VFW, we were “alleged vets” as if our authenticity determined our credibility. During Operation Dewey Canyon III, in 1971, climaxd by vets throwing back their Vietnam medals on the steps of the Capitol, the medals, the artificial limbs, the crunches and the discharge papers all spoke directly to our “alleged” status.

Since vets from Vietnam were not joiners, for the most part (we had joined one thing once and that had got us to Vietnam in the first place), the next image foisted on the American people was the vet as loner. And, as a loner, he tended to go berserk. For years we worried each time we picked up a newspaper that headlined an act of violence, because somewhere in the story—usually in the first line—there would be a Vietnam vet. Vietnam holds hostages. Vet goes berserk—kills family. Vet turns sniper—kills 31. And on and on.

Still, the power structure hoped people would believe this and said that vets had nothing worth saying about the war that did, in fact, drive us crazy. By lumping all vets together the powers that be could minimize the effect of what any vet’s perception was concerning what had happened to him or her and why. And who can say how many vets, already balancing uneasily on the edge of sanity, drive their final rush over the edge from stories that made all vets seem crazy.

The vet myth had moved from groups of vets to stories about individual vets; the next step was not too far, the drug crazed vet. Neglect was the key: don’t talk about them and maybe they’ll go away. Sweep them under a rug, press down hard on the rug, and they will disappear and take their war with them. It was a time when the government seemed to believe if people would only forget Vietnam then the government could get on about its important business of investments, occupying land, and wars of unfriendly governments, etc.

But with events like Agent Orange, with the mounting of many vets themselves, today’s vet image is no longer neglect. Check your newspaper, especially around Veterans Day or Memorial Day and you’ll find the new vet—a weeping vet. “Weet returned to lost comrades,” the caption will say. Weeping is an act that binds wounds; it shows we’ve come to grips with our grief and with the problems, that, once again, we’ve put the war behind us. Or so they would like us to believe.

The weeping vet fits, too, with half of VFW’s Memorial Day message: Remember the Dead. And the Living.

The answer to the vet images and the vet myths, to the children prowling their jungle schoolyards in camouflage fatigue, to the recruiting ads that hope to reap the harvest of American youth to fight the war, is the answer to all of this is truth. Just simple truth. To understand that a 11-year-old child may be the enemy with whom we fought in Vietnam—that truth stands far above any Rambo-type vision of Russian evil-doers pulling all the strings. The enemy of the Vietnamese whose shrapnel wound still pulses when the weather is damp is a fine antidote to the recruiter’s promises of glory.

Yes, there was a lillge rush of adrenaline at the moment we thought we were just about dead, but there was also dirt and leeches and weariness and blood and men who lost fingers and feet and eyes and balls, and there was incredible boredom. There are better ways to get the rush of adrenaline.

If we learned anything from the Vietnam experience, it is that the war was stupid; looking back it made the situation in Vietnam worse than before we started. And for that America disbursed over 58,000 there and more to come.

There were heroic acts in Vietnam—many of them. But it was far from an heroic war, and we have to make sure it is not a repeated war. Once was one time too many. Again could only be worse.

--Peter Zastrow
VFW National Office
In a driving rain storm with 50° temperatures and 20 mph winds, VVAW-Chicago held its most successful Memorial Day program since the Chicago Chapter initiated the activity in 1971.

Coinciding with a city-sponsored event, the program brought out the political richness that is the best and the worst of down-and-dirty Chicago politics.

VVAW has a consistent history of timely, interesting Memorial Day programs speaking to the issues affecting not just Vietnam veterans but a wider audience. Combined with an active life in the many communities where Chicagoans and a high profile in the Vietnam veterans population, the Memorial Day programs have survived the worst possible weather, police harassment, indifferent press, and less-than-friendly city administrations.

With Chicago Mayor Harold Washington in Washington, DC lobbying for more federal funds for Chicago, attacks in the press began on his administration for the lack of veterans programs, but more specifically for not having a parade "like New York City." A cluster of muckrakers with the Chicago Tribune tried, through their daily gossip column to launch an attack on the Mayor. Spokesmen from the VVAW National Office pointed out that the New York parade, like the Washington DC Vietnam Veterans Memorial, were projects put on by Vietnam vets for Vietnam vets with planning and funding coming from private sources.

Unfettered by facts, the Tribune writers, joined by a Chicago Sun-Times columnist stepped up their efforts to show a division in the 'Nam vets across the country. With the announcement that Mayor Washington would speak at VVAW's annual Memorial Day program and then invite all Vietnam vets and their families to a picnic afterwards, the fuse was lit.

According to the Sun-Times, VVAW's group "...more often surrounded by police than by dignitaries" was being elevated to a level slightly better than pond scum. Officials of the VFW and American Legion were hounded to make statements about their distaste for VVAW and our Memorial Day activities; they declined, at least in public.

Attempts by foes of Washington in the Chicago city council to steal the limelight and glory faltered, mostly from lack of experience with Vietnam vets and ties only to the more traditional veteran groups. Chicago Park Czar Kelly refused to allow the Mayor to dedicate a flower garden to 'Nam vets and instead dedicated it in a nearly secret ceremony to someone, presumably veterans.

Before I begin my prepared speech, I want to make a few things clear to those attacking this event, "stated Mayor Washington. He continued: "I am not against war, for peace, for a nuclear freeze and anybody who doesn't like it can go to hell."

Pete Zastrow of VVAW's National Office, took it further by stating, "We've got our parades and we got our monuments now, but anyone here would trade think of the good jobs program."

Mayor Washington announced the formation of a Vietnam vets task force to plan a "fitting" Memorial for Vietnam vets and a liaison to his office to Vietnam vets groups.

The ceremony closed with the present laying flowers at the base of the memorial fountain. A city-sponsored outdoor picnic followed, attended by 500 people, primarily Vietnam vets and their families. The entertainment of jazz, rock and blues performers were all Vietnam vets. The food was delicious, the mood informal and relaxed as the Mayor moved through the crowd talking to any vet who cared to, smiling but seriously listening to the vets who spoke with him, pausing for pictures with vets and their families.

The invitation to Harold Washington to speak at the VVAW Memorial Day program brought more attacks on VVAW than one can recall in recent years, but resulted in strengthening the Chicago Chapter. The response by the membership, old and new, has put the work of VVAW far ahead of what anyone anticipated.

Linking Mayor Washington to VVAW, the press, rather than souring his image, made his administration look good. Beyond VVAW's presence in communities throughout the city, the Black community considers any attack on Washington as an attack on the Black community.

VVAW in Chicago deeply appreciates Mayor Washington's participation in our Memorial Day program, helping to bring alive the theme of the day: "Honor the dead--Fight like Hell for the living!"
10 Years Later
STILL TAKING CASUALTIES

More than 150 people (plus 40 kids under 16) attended this year’s July 4th Campout in Wisconsin. Here, John Zutz, John Lindquist, Annelise Reiley and Eddie Zutz marinate a pig, donated by the Zutzes. See you there next year. (Photo by Virg McFadden)

Hiroshima and Nagasaki
BOMBING ANNIVERSARY

Ten years ago, on the thirtieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an American delegation traveled to Japan for the observances there, marking the events themselves as well as a huge international conference opposing nuclear weapons.

With delegations from over 100 countries present, the program took on an added significance as the first meeting of an American peace delegation with their counterparts from Vietnam where the war for liberation had just ended.

The month I spent travelling Japan, meeting with the Japanese people and speaking at the Vietnam experiences was offset by the realization of standing at ground zero in two different cities and beginning to appreciate the real sense the death and suffering that atomic explosions brought there. Without malice or condemnation, members of Genkolyko, a group of several Japanese anti-nuclear and peace organizations, patiently led myself and other Americans through the cities and countryside of Japan, meeting the A-bomb survivors in their homes and schools, the wounded survivors of the bomb blasts and seeing the museums of death that no one who passes through can ever forget.

Aboard our ship the “Freedom” in Japan the delegation was a feeling of unity among young and old, men and women, military and non-military, workers and students; a feeling of being in a truly global protest movement.

The meetings with government officials; the meetings of hundreds of thousands conversations with American GI’s and Japanese students faded in comparison to the experience of being seated at a small table in Hiroshima with two Vietnamese veterans of the war. With nothing more dangerous than a bottle of beer between us, we never spoke but still communicated the horrors we had seen that day, horrors that for that brief moment offset the horrors and suffering that had been our common experience in Vietnam with the knowledge that this could have happened to us by us.

Nuclear proponents should be led through Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the children and grandchildren of the survivors; it wouldn’t hurt them but it may save all our lives.

--Bill Davis
VVAW National Office

Monday, April 29th, 1985 was the 10th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam. Twenty-five people from the Milwaukee VVAW chapter picketed the offices of Senator Kasten in Milwaukee.

"Bobbie Kasten is a slime. Put him in the unemployment line..." bounced off the walls downtown along with others of the world-famous VVAW logo. Senator Kasten sits on the Senate Budget Committee and has personally endorsed $320 million worth of "painless" cuts to the VA budget. They included:
1. 1% staff cut.
2. 5% cut in staff and workers salaries.
3. A total wipe out of one year's construction funds.
4. A user fee of 5% on VA home loans.
5. An attempt to seek payment from private insurance for care at a VA hospital. A cap of $5,000 for veterans income to get non-service connected medical care.

6. And don't forget that they still want to tax VA disability checks as income.

VVAW was warmly received by guards who were 75% Vietnam vets themselves. Senator Kasten's office refused to meet with us and then said they would meet with three people. The group voted not to split our forces, so no meeting was held.

We need all the veterans and families who read THE VETERAN to write or call their Senators or Congresspeople to stop these VA budget cuts. Every VA budget since '79 has been cut. Last year 250,000 veterans were denied care at VA facilities because of cuts in staff and beds.

All this is coming at a time when the 10 million World War II vets are reaching the age of 65. Not all of these vets will end up at the VA, of course. But the veteran population needing care will increase until at least the year 2010. This is no time to cut the VA budget.

Ronald Reagan and David Stockman want to see the VA "privatized" like the report of the Grace Commission says. Mr. Grace makes hundreds of millions, but wants to see "waste cut" and big government off our backs. He'd like to see the multi-national companies on our backs, even more than they are now. Members of VVAW know that the way to stop them is to say cut back, we say fight back! Taking care of the veterans is a part of the cost of war and we will not let them forget. No More Vietnam! Vets of All Eras, Close Ranks!

--John Lindquist
VVAW National Office
Interview with “Mother of Agent Orange”

Maude Devictor

The following interview was done for THE VET as part of a series on Agent Orange. Maude Devictor is one of the few survivors of the chemical warfare that occurred in Vietnam. Devictor put together the case history of her own experiences, which eventually made vet doctors and the American public more aware of the dangers of Agent Orange.

Q. How and why did you decided to come to Nicaragua?
A. After the Vietnam War, I began to realize that we were not fighting just for the Vietnamese people, but for all the people of the world. I felt that I had to do something to help those who were suffering the consequences of the war. Nicaragua was one of the countries that had been deeply affected by the war, and I wanted to see firsthand the impact of Agent Orange.

Q. What was the most important source of revenue for Nicaragua during the war?
A. Tobacco was the most important source of revenue for Nicaragua during the war. It was a cash crop that could be easily exported.

Q. How did you become involved in Nicaragua?
A. I became involved in Nicaragua through my work with the International Rescue Committee, which provided aid to refugees from the war.

Q. What was the main purpose of your trip to Nicaragua?
A. The main purpose of my trip to Nicaragua was to visit my son, who was a Peace Corps volunteer.

Q. What was your overall impression of Nicaragua during your visit?
A. Nicaragua is a beautiful country with a rich culture and history. The people are welcoming and hospitable.

Q. What was the most challenging aspect of your trip to Nicaragua?
A. The most challenging aspect of my trip to Nicaragua was the language barrier. I had to learn Spanish quickly in order to communicate effectively.

Q. What were your thoughts on the situation in Nicaragua before and after your visit?
A. Before my visit, I had heard a lot of negative things about the situation in Nicaragua. However, after my visit, I realized that the people were working hard to improve their lives despite the challenges they faced.

Q. What advice would you give to someone planning to visit Nicaragua?
A. My advice to someone planning to visit Nicaragua would be to be open-minded and respectful of the culture. It is important to understand the people and their way of life in order to fully appreciate the country.

Q. How has your experience in Nicaragua influenced your perception of the United States?
A. My experience in Nicaragua has made me realize that the United States has a responsibility to support countries that are struggling to improve their lives. It is important to support countries that are working towards peace and development.

Q. What do you think the role of the United States should be in relation to Nicaragua?
A. The United States should be a constructive partner in the efforts to support Nicaragua. It is important for the United States to provide assistance and support to the people of Nicaragua in order to help them overcome the challenges they face.

Q. What do you think can be done to help the people of Nicaragua?
A. I think that the people of Nicaragua need support in the form of education, health care, and economic development. It is important for the United States to provide assistance and support to the people of Nicaragua in order to help them overcome the challenges they face.

Q. What do you think the future holds for Nicaragua?
A. I think that Nicaragua has a bright future if it continues to work towards peace and development. It is important for the people of Nicaragua to work together and support each other in order to achieve their goals.

Q. What do you think the United States can do to help Nicaragua?
A. The United States can provide support and assistance to Nicaragua in order to help the people overcome the challenges they face. It is important for the United States to work closely with Nicaragua in order to achieve common goals.
The case. Nicaragua did not appear in the U.S. government, it was the other way around. The Nicaraguans do not want anyone telling them what to do. They will accept a peaceful offer that is looked at for what is gained and what is to be given up. They are not about to give up their hard-won independence.

The Nicaraguans know that Reagan is not the spokesperson for North Americans. They have seen with their own eyes many different kinds of people from different walks of life—even doctors and lawyers put on blue-jeans and help them and learn from them. They see the distinction between the U.S. government and the U.S. people.

Q. Most North Americans don't know that much about Nicaragua and its people. Could you describe some of the different kinds of people who make up the population?

A. We have much to learn from Nicaragua's rich culture and the different political forces building up the country. There are six cultures in Nicaragua. They include the Spaniards, the Somoans, the Miskito Indians, the Afro-Colombians, and the Creoles, with similarities to the Virgin Islands people.

The Pacific side was more subjugated under Spanish influence. The Atlantic side kept much of its cultural identity. This is why Somoza said that the moral and economic victory of the revolution would be the Atlantic side.

Since the Spanish side incorporated some elements of Spanish macho emotionalism, the Atlantic culture was preserved by the Moravian Church, experienced over 200 years training in elementary logic as an overlay of their culture. The differences between the Atlantic and Pacific cultures are very much like equatorial Africa, with a water-based culture which has a broader protein base, including different kinds of fish, turtlemeat (which is rich in vitamins and has an anti-aging element), 7 kinds of yams, sugar cane, yucca, mangos, bananas, etc. Because of this, the multinational conglomerates were more concentrated on the Atlantic side.

The different cultures experienced different forms of oppression and resistance. Under Somoza, the Pacific side experienced the repression shown by blood on the sidewalk, the rapes, the disappeared, and the people fought valiantly against that oppression. On the Atlantic side, the company store and the long hours in the fields of the campesinos brought other forms of resistance. There is a long history of Nicaraguans fighting for their independence.

I remember one story of the Miskito women swimming across coral reefs through shark-infested waters to get supplies from one of Somoza's boats.

Q. Can you describe some of the class differences?

A. Different trends with different histories support the revolution. For instance, an entrenched middle class grew under Somoza and through the Moravian church network. These people travelled and became educated as doctors and lawyers, etc. They were literate and worldly and expected to lead the government. But the campesinos say, "we did not make revolution to replace Somoza with an intellectual elite." They maintain that everyone has a place in governing, not just a few. The lifestyles of those who united with the Sandinistas were different from those who automatically thought they were entitled to govern.

What many North Americans don't realize is that the Sandinistas want their country to survive and prosper—else there would be no need for their party. Also, many people do not realize that there are many forces who were and are involved in building the new Nicaragua. And they did it on their own. It is a unique situation—they took the best from democracy, Marxism, tribalism, the churches, and mixed the best elements together. The Nicaraguans deserve their chance and our support.

Q. You mentioned before the importance of Black Americans learning about Nicaragua. Could you expand on this?

A. Freedom is a yearning and a sense we are born with and sometimes take for granted. Liberation is a catharsis within a cultural and political orientation. The Nicaraguan revolution has set up the conditions to support freedom in its culture and politics. There you get a vision of all being possible, that each person can develop to his or her fullest. You don't get the signal you are crazy for wanting freedom. It is not the same signal we Black Americans grew up with here with separate water fountains. When I see President Reagan handing out a Medal of Freedom, or something, to one of his friends, I just say cancel that thought, Maude. That will not happen to you. In the U.S. the government does not honor you for trying to accomplish something for the people. But we cannot glamorize the revolution. Conditions are not easy. One Afrique woman, who looked like she was straight from Ethiopia, asked me to give her something to "remember you by." I had some things like a flashlight and needle and thread. When I gave her the thread, she broke down crying, and hugged me. Thread costs 70 cedebes a spool. There are many shortages of things like that—scissors, Q-tips, which the Nicaraguans have not seen for years, things we take for granted. Reagan would have you believe that all the Nicaraguans want are guns and grenades.

Not many Blacks from the U.S. have been to Nicaragua. There need to be more. The Black leaders in the U.S. need to pay attention to what is happening in Central America. We need to find out the facts for ourselves and educate our people. We cannot afford to listen to a bunch of old, white, power-hungry men, but must learn the truth for ourselves.

Q. Do you think that North Americans can learn more and do more about the situation in Nicaragua?

A. First, if it is possible, go to Nicaragua yourself. Help organize through church groups here. One of the women on our board is from a primarily Spanish-speaking school in the States, and she picked coffee right beside me.

If you want to travel, by all means go to Nicaragua, but don't go through the military to get there. We don't want to be mortal enemies of grave diggers. It would be good for our churches to sponsor youth to learn from the Nicaraguans about democracy. It would be great if our kids could earn college credits from the learning experience down there. The trip should be more universal.

Second, contact solidarity groups here and learn from the speakers and films and slide shows available. Educate yourself and other people.

Third, put material aid campaigns in order to help send much-needed everyday items like bandages, etc. Fourth, keep up a steady flow of communication with your Congressman through phone calls and letters, opposing U.S. intervention in Central America.

Fifth, and this is more long-term: We need to take a global approach to events like what has happened in Nicaragua. We need a monitoring device under the auspices of the U.N. to keep an eye on the panel. For one thing our youth should be encouraged to learn Spanish, particularly because, in Nicaragua, Spanish is the language which predominates. And our youth need to be more realistically educated in order to be vigorous leaders for the 21st century. Finally, there needs to be a cultural depositary—artefacts and craftspeople who can produce unique craftsmanship of the country and make it available all over the world, and perhaps an intellectual exchange to share Nicaragua's beauty.

I would like to conclude by saying that there are people like Reagan who would rather turn back history, who hold certain outdated precepts which are not technologically advanced in the world; their ideas could unleash terrible destruction. We have a stake in upholding the right of people to self-determination. There are no absolutes except in nature. You cannot outlaw a rainbow from the sky.
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 to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of veterans and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other wars 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, comprised of the national officers, the regional coordinators and an elected representative from each chapter shall meet once a year. 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 VVAW and "The Guardian."
NICARAGUA

of Contras, who have killed over 8,000 Nicaraguans, and provided the aid and expertise that is ultimately responsible for the deaths of 100,000 Guatemalans and 50,000 Salvadorans at the hands of rightwing government troops and death squads.

SOVIET ASSISTANCE IS VERY LIMITED

No Soviet or Cuban military bases exist in Central America; many U.S. bases exist. For example, the U.S. maintains its main command center for Latin America in Panama (the Southern Command), including agricultural loan to Nicaragua.

REagan's ILLEGAL TRADE EMBARGO

Given the foregoing, there can be no justification for the escalating economic warfare being waged by the Reagan Administration against Nicaragua. In addition, Ronald Reagan's trade embargo against Nicaragua is an illegal act.

The Charter of the Organization of American States, to which the U.S. and Nicaragua are signatories, states in Article 19 that:

"No State may use or encourage the use of coercive measures in face of this widespread opposition, the embargo's continuation continues to push for aid to the contras by saying that the only alternative will be the commitment of American combat forces in Central America. Many of the same arguments used to sell the American public on Vietnam are being revived—wars with claims even being made that an invasion of Nicaragua would be an easy military task—by many of the same policy makers who lied to us before, and who have lately been trying to rewrite the history of the Vietnam war to make us forget the lessons of the past:

The Reagan Administration daily presages future regional and nuclear war, asking those of us who can least afford it to foot the bill. While the military budget for next year will be approximately $300 billion, Vietnam vets are given inadequate care, with proposed social cutbacks including a year's freeze on veteran's pensions, disability compensation and other programs. We all have a stake in opposing Reagan's dangerous and costly aggression, and it is our responsibility to support widespread U.S. Congressional and public opposition to continuation of any aid to the contras. We must also end the embargo and economic war that Reagan is waging on the Nicaraguan people, which reflects the U.S. economic destabilization of the Allende regime in Chile. That result in the resulting coup that killed Allende. Whether Reagan plans a Chile-style economic overthrow of the Sandinista government, or an Indo-China-style military debacle, we have to put a stop to him now!

—Robert Gould

U.S. Out of Central America (USOCA)

For additional information about the situation in Nicaragua and the USOCA opposing U.S. intervention, please write or call:

USOCA National Office
2940 1st St., Suite 7
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 350-8006

when it proposed a political co-

Continued From page 1

plating.

The question are the arguments Re-

1. That Nicaragua is engaged in "aggressive activities in Central America," and

2. That Nicaragua is a Soviet satellite whose "massive arms buildup" threatens the U.S.

Both these charges are blatan
tly false.

WHO IS REALLY ENGAGED IN AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES? 

U.S. State and Defense Department officials have told the New York Times (March 30, 1985) that they believe Nicaragua has any intention of attacking its neighbors. A Congressional position paper states that Nicaragua's military capabilities are inferior to the combined military power of its U.S.-allied neighbors in Central America, in both land-based military power and air power.

According to David MacMichael, former CIA analyst in Central America, the U.S. has not been a verified report of arms moving from Nicaragua to the insurgent forces in El Salvador since April 1983.

Nicaragua supported the proposed Contadora treaty for peace in Central America. The Reagan Administration has refused to sign that treaty, and pressured its Central American pacts to also refuse to sign, mostly because the treaty calls for all outside military personnel to be withdrawn from Central America. Although Nicaragua has agreed to remove all Cuban advisors, the U.S. would never consent to withdraw its massive Central American military presence that is the mainstay of the brutal right-wing regimes of El Salvador and Guatemala, and which has turned Honduras into an armed camp in preparation for the threatened U.S. military invasion of Nicaragua. The Honduran buildup has included the construction or enlargement of eight airfields, and the staging of a virtually continuous series of war games over the last two years, involving thousands of combined U.S. and Honduran troops at a time.

The only aggressor in Central American is the U.S., which has funded a 15,000-man army

8 U.S. command posts and training centers: at least 10 military bases in Honduras alone are being increased by the U.S., with more on the way. In addition, there are two U.S. naval fleets patrolling off the Caribbean and Pacific coast of Central America, and five other military bases within close striking distance of Central America, including the U.S. military base in Cuba itself. Nicaragua has agreed a protocol prohibiting any foreign troops or bases in Central America: the U.S. has rejected this proposal.

A leader of the U.S.-supported contras, Adolfo Calero, has stated that his own contra troops have seen no evidence of a major buildup of Soviet arms in Nicaragua (New York Times, Nov 22, 1984).

Jaime Chamorro, editor of the anti-Sandinista newspaper La Prensa, has stated that the Soviets are providing little assistance to Nicaragua.

Nicaraguan President Ortega's recent trip to the Soviet Union was planned in January to request agricultural credits for the U.S., had pressured the Inter-American Development Bank to hold up a $58 million loan to Nicaragua.

The 1956 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the U.S. and Nicaragua allows for freedom of commerce and navigation, and the treaty requires a one-year notification before it can be terminated. Reagan's embargo violates the friendship treaty since the treaty is still legally in force.

Finally, the embargo may likely violate the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and also the 1974 UN Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

REagan MORE ISOLATED (AND DANGEROUS) THAN EVER

While the embargo is a dangerous escalation of the war against Nicaragua, it is also costing the U.S. a great deal of worldwide respect. The foreign ministers of Canada and a number of European countries, including Reagan's strong allies of Great Britain and West Germany, strongly disapprove of the embargo. The Executive Committee of the Common Market on May 15th voted its opposition to
Memorial Day
Milwaukee Action

"It always seems that Memorial Day in Milwaukee is cold and wet. 1985 was no different, 46° and misty. For the 8th year in a row VAW attended the official VA Memorial Day at Woods, Wisconsin. About 15 of us met in the parking lot and marched behind our wreath up through the old Civil War Soldier Home buildings and up to the cemetery. Two hundred and fifty people representing 30 different veterans' groups, Congressman Kuczkas, and veterans from the hospital came to the wreath-laying ceremony.

A couple of sour apples told us to go back to Hobi, but everyone else that came up thanked us for coming. Congressman Kuczkas must have been listening during the budget hearing he held in Milwaukee, because he purposely mentioned no cuts in the VA health-care budget. In fact, Congressman Moody's office let us know that the House requested $250 million as an increase in the health-care budget.

After the ceremony and the laying of the wreaths, we went to the VA hospital for a reception, and that went well. We want up to some of the wards and brought the veterans down for coffee and doughnuts. We passed out copies of THE VETERAN and talked about proposed cuts in the VA budget. Like VAW has always said, "Honore the Dead, Fight Like Hell for the Living."

(A special thanks goes to Buds and Blossoms for the wreath they made and donated for the ceremony—thank you.)

VAW Milwaukee

Verona, Wisconsin, a small community in the South central section of the state, honored Vietnam veterans with a three-day festival, on June 6-9.

Back in 1966, Senator D. Schmidt, a Verona resident stationed in Vietnam with his buddies of the 3rd Detachment of the 101st Airborne, adopted the sleepy town of Verona as a "perfect example of hometown U.S.A." The men of the 3rd Detachment felt that Verona personified our county's spirit, and bestowed the title "Hometown U.S.A."

As a result, Verona has celebrated with an annual festival every summer since 1966. This year's three-day celebration was dedicated to the men of the 3rd Detachment, as well as to all of those veterans who served in Vietnam.

The city and residents of Verona concluded the festivities this year with a Hometown U.S.A. sign dedication, and a Memorial service to honor those who served during the Vietnam War. The residents also organized a Welcome Home Parade for vets that they felt was long overdue.

VAW brought up the rear in parade, with our colors and a marching unit consisting of members of the Madison and Milwaukee Chapters. We were well received by the crowds, calling a new cadence, provided by Milwaukee VAW:

Heidy Heidy Heidy Hey This is Hometown U.S.A.
Heidy Heidy Hey Hey We're just here to let you know
Heidy Heidy Heidy Hey Thanks for having us today!

VAW members enjoyed the applause and the hoops—it was obvious the crowds appreciated our lively steppin', our banners declaring NO MORE VIETNAMEES & TEST, TREAT & COMPENSATE AGENT ORANGE. Ali along the parade route we were greeted by cheers and standing ovations.

It was great.

Following the parade we gathered at the festival grounds, manned the information table, sold buttons and talked with the folks. Over and over we told we were a welcome sight and a nice break from the traditional vets organizations and their usual, boring routines. Thanks again for the Hometown welcome!

--VAW Madison

MARCHING IN "HOMETOWN U.S.A."
GEORGIA MEMORIAL

Under a partly sunny sky the vans rounded the last curve and passed under a banner which read "FRIENDLY. A cheer went up as we pulled into the drive marked by a totem-style sign topped with the words THE WORLD. A tall man doffed his cap with a box and said in an affected southern drawl, "Welcome to Georgia." Thirteen VFW members from Wisconsin and Illinois tumbled from the vans wanting to do everything at once; unfold their bodies with a good stretch, meet old friends and new, and set up camp. What's all the excitement?

Well—it was the first annual VFW and Northeast Georgia Vietnam Veterans Coalition campout held in Hull, GA during the Easter weekend. The high point of which was the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial pictured here.

After the camp was set up we got into what was uppermost in our minds, talking to other veterans and their families. About 60 folks camped for the entire Easter weekend and each evening the number swelled as local veterans gathered with us around the campfire.

John Snyder, 26 month Vietnam veteran, and his wife, also a veteran, hosted the event on their farm. John and Elton Manzione, VFW co-ordinator for the region, got together some two months ago to organize the event. And, an event it was! Food for every taste from hot dogs to roast goat; bands during the day and at night; fun for the kids (of all ages) including a magician; and most importantly, veterans, veterans, veterans.

The non-partisan, non-political event drew many veterans who were just beginning to deal with their Vietnam experience, as well as those who have been coming together at events such as this for years. They came together with a spirit and comradeship that was refreshing, joyful and hopeful. The exclamation, "Wow, really?" traveled across the campsite more than once. "Where were ya?" "Where were ya there?" "Did ya' ever meet so-and-so?"

An eerie displacement occurred as I walked past a group of men good-naturedly talking about the shopping habits of their wives. Their burst of laughter, and mine, was accompanied by the blare of the sound track to Apocalypse Now and someone yelling "outgoing" as the nearby mortar fired wads of paper and puffs of smoke into the air. Some apocope occurred there, a paradox of life, where the parallel existences of the same man met for a brief moment on a sunny GA field 10 years after.

A request that 3 Huey helicopters pass over in formation was officially denied; but, a lone Huey appeared, lumbered slowly overhead, its blades thumping out a rhythmic beat, and disappeared behind a forest flowering with dogwood.

The national and local TV and newspaper reporters swarmed over the campsite all weekend filming and interviewing the vets and their families. Some set up tents and joined the vets around the evening campfires. With the cameras put away, the full moon, and low of the fire, warm calm settled over the camp as small groups talked in muted tones or wandered from the beer-soft-drink coolers to tents and back again.

There was laughter and chuckles as we heard it had snowed "up-North." For a short time at least, we were enjoying sunny days and mild nights and had the sunburn to prove it.

It’s impossible to separate people from their politics and this gathering was no different. So, along with "How does your garden grow?" and "Tall Tales" was the ever-present talk of economy, jobs, the military build-up, the VA, intervention into other countries' internal affairs, and concern for "how the Vietnamese are handling their orphan problem." To which Chicago Bob said, "That's dead complete foolish. What do you mean?" she said. "Well, if it wasn't for us and the French they wouldn't have an orphan problem." he replied. "Anyway, why should they be accountable to us since we've maintained an embargo against them and never paid reparations as agreed by treaty." This was followed by nodding heads and a new topic.

Early Easter morning I stumbled from my tent and by an act of will made it across the campsite to a huge coffee pot. I collapsed into the nearest hugging the warm brew and gazed across the field I had just crossed. Inside the firebreak tents ringed the field, each one its own colorful balloon floating overhead. This was the morning we had awaited. Each of us with our private thoughts. I thought, wouldn't it be grand if this was the last monument to the last combatants of the very last war mankind makes on himself. My eyes came to rest on the granite monument nestled in the corner of the field. The sun, just peaking over the trees, struck the face of the granite, turning its Pink/Gray color to a brilliant White glow. Folks began to fill the field with the familiar look of 'greens' and boonie hats.

The dedication started with speeches: some short and direct, one long and tedious. A few hundred people walked respectively, each with a flower to place at the foot of the monument.

The crunch of gravel underfoot was the only sound as the long march approached its destination. Veterans soon stood in ranks before the monolith, VETERAN 1941-1975 LEST WE FORGET. An M-16 was placed, a pair of jungle boots below, a helmet aloft. The salute was accompanied by the slow notes of Taps. After the flowers were laid the crowd and the veterans came together laughing and crying at the same time.

There was a feeling of completeness and a renewed vitality in our commitment to fight for the human and legal rights of the veterans of Vietnam and other wars.

Across our huddled group I looked up at Elton, and with tears streaming down my face, laughed and said, "I don't look like this now, but I've had a good time."

---Virg McFadden Chicago VFW (This article is reprinted without editing from the Chicago VFW Chapter newsletter.)
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Tunnels....

the Vietnamese who could use one man to plant a mine or a couple to fire a few rounds and tie an entire convoy. In every aspect the war against the tunnels and their inhabitants showed the stupidity of the U.S. effort in Vietnam as a whole. Not understanding the nature of tunnel warfare led to suicidal (and no doubt expensive) attempts to solve the problems of the tunnels by U.S. technology. A "concept" team worked from USAID plans for some new brainchild—liquid explosives, for instance, that ended up injuring only the tunnel rats who were ordered to carry out the experiments.

The book begins with a Vietnamese poem, "The Mother—The Native Land." That too in its way shows why the Vietnamese were going to win the war against the Americans just as they had won countless wars against the Chinese, then the Japanese and the French. A sense of continuity flowed from their ancient Vietnamese past to their modern Vietnamese future. The American rat was just one in the long line of Rats of many nationalities, many races, many species.

Pocket money, both of which could be used on patients.

The attempt to bill 3rd party insurers is another smoke screen. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) used to say that the VA could save $300+ million through this device. Now they have cooled down to $65 million. In fact most insurance policies exclude payments to the government.

3. The raising of the GI Bill used from 1% to 3% would wipe out the GI Bill home loan program. Why would vets pay out $3-$5,000 with not a penny going to the principle. Yet this is a VA program of particular value to the Vietnam-era Vet, and a stimulus to the housing market.

4. The new cuts would wipe out 8,000 healthcare staff jobs.

Budget Proposal

VA CUTS

This will happen at a time when the DAV reports a quarter of a million vets a year are being turned away at VA's across the country. We wait 45 days for an out-patient appointment.

5. The new Senate budget freezes the construction of 2 new hospitals and 320 new nursing home beds. Since 1971 the VA has eliminated 1700 nursing home beds, cuts that aim directly at World War I and II veterans.

6. Not directly related to the budget cuts is the idea by Kemp/Kasten/Reagan to tax service-connected disability payments. Under this plan, the greater the disability, the greater the tax. This proposal, part of Reagan's tax simplification plan has angered as much as any. The country owes a moral debt to the men and women who fought for their country, no matter what war they fought in. As Reagan said during his first campaign, "Veterans' benefits are part of the cost of war." Seems like more empty words, like those at Normandy.

At present the House version of the budget for the VA would cut nothing and increase healthcare by $500 million. The budget goes to a Senate-House Conference committee for compromise. Pressure on both houses of Congress is now needed. The time to save the system of VA benefits and healthcare is now. If cuts absolutely have to be made, make them in the VA's front office!

This nation spends billions on nukes and bombers we don't need, and on wars like Vietnam or Central America. The government learned nothing from the experience of Vietnam. Now it wants to discard us like used Dixie cups. Vets are getting to know how it feels to be a welfare mother, a school kid with no breakfast, a homeless person on the street, or an old man with no medical care. We are all in the same boat.

Together our fight can be won. Reagan, Stockman, Sena- tors and all of them—can be stopped, but we must stick together.

For our enemies in Washington do not worry about the cost of wars, much less the pain and death suffered by the men and women of this country, I'd like to see the truth. These vets have won these battles before—and we'll win again! John Lindquist National Office WVAW
Any leftover questions about why the Vietnamese won the war are answered in the book The Tunnels of Cu Chi.

The authors, Britshers Tom Mangold and John Penycate make a detailed case for the strategic importance of the hundreds of miles of tunnels in and around Cu Chi. They tell the story of how the tunnels were used by the Viet Cong to ambuscade American troops. The tunnels were also used by the Viet Cong to store supplies and as a place to hide from American bomms.

The best of the tunnel rats, like the best of point men in Vietnam, were those who could somehow sense that the enemy was there. They were the ones who got out alive, who had the right combination of ferocity and cunning. Others still died, the ones who died out of the tunnel business early to go back to the relative ease of combat.

The book is a compelling read, but the authors' conclusions are often made clear. In and around Cu Chi and the Iron Triangle were where the Viet Cong had two U.S. Divisions (through most of the war): the 1st and the 25th whose division base was at Cu Chi. The 25th never did get it together to deal with the tunnels. While the 1st Division created tunnel rats units made of volunteers and operating under the Division Engineers, the 25th assigned point men to tunnel rat duty with less than 1 year of experience. The tunnels were "neutralized." For tunnels with thousands of Viet Cong, these efforts were more than a mosquito bite.

The ineptitude of the U.S. command was brilliantly demonstrated by the treatment of Viet Cong villages and tunnels during Operation Cedar Falls, at the time the largest U.S. operation of the war. Despite turning the Iron Triangle into a vast wasteland, in the words of one U.S. commander, "we couldn't even carry lunch," U.S. forces found the guerrillas were still there. From tunnel house to tunnel house, there were houses, houses, houses. Craters left by B-52 bombings. Large open-air theaters for the guerrillas; patrol routes, new paths; an area cleared of guerrillas (according to the U.S. command) and which was really still being a vital transit area for Viet Cong troops on their way to Saigon during Tet of 1968.

The authors of The Tunnels of Cu Chi are not only surprised by the 25th Division's stupidity concerning the tunnels, they seem amazed at the Cu Chi base camp, an amazement which must reflect the feelings of the Viet Cong. The 25th Division probably could have been almost any small city in the U.S. with all the comforts of home (since U.S. troops had no vested interest in the war, the military command had to try to provide things from hot meals in the field to organized clubs as a tribe). Once the base was built (and it was built over some of the tunnels) then the base exhausted large amounts of tunnel resources just to keep it supplied, and the truck convoy would be a tremendous and fruitful target for.
RECOLLECTIONS

WAW invites contributions to "Recollections"—stories or poems describing the military of Vietnam.

I Was Coming To the Horrible Awakening That WE WERE THE ENEMY!

The following story is reprinted from an earlier issue of THE VETERAN, and from the booklet of "Recollections" put out by WAW. We reprint it for two reasons: it is a good story with a point we often forget about Vietnam and, second, because we have nothing better. If we could print half the "recollections" that various people have promised us, we could go on for many, many pages. But we cannot print them until you get them to us. Please try—there is no more effective tool for pointing out the nature of the war in Vietnam than some of these "recollections. And high schools are full of youth who should have the chance to read them.

Our jeep moved slowly along the crowded road. Highway 1 was always crowded. Bicycles, motorbikes and Lambrettas filled with Vietnamese as well as our jeeps and 1/4 ton trucks and other equipment made for some strange highway traffic. Two different societies—the motorized U.S. Army and the Vietnamese peasants—were thrown together, getting in each other's way.

We finally reached the cutoff road to Phu Loi and turned off. Away from the traffic we were in a different world—the peaceful countryside. Officially we had some business to take care of in Phu Loi, but unofficially, the three of us just had some free time and wanted to get away from the base.

Lots of GIs have talked about how beautiful a country Vietnam is—it's true. Driving along that road was so peaceful. We only ran into a few American vehicles. Here and there would be parked off the side of the road a jeep where a GI would be fooling around with a short-time girl.

Most of the people we saw were Vietnamese peasants going about their daily routine. Women walked along the side of the road in twos and threes. They all wore the traditional outfits: black silk pants with the wide-brimmed conical straw hats. Children could be seen playing in the dirt of the hamlets. Here and there an old man could be seen standing in the doorway of one of the wooden shacks.

That country was something else. We passed thick green forests and brightly painted Buddhist temples. Small green stalks were shooting up above the water in the rice paddies where the peasants were working alongside their buffalo. It was hard to believe that all this was in the middle of a war.

We finished our business in Phu Loi and headed back. Along the way we decided to stop at a village to get a drink of coca-cola. When we pulled over to the side of the road, about fifteen or twenty villagers came up to and surrounded the jeep. A few were old ladies, but most were young children.

"Hey, GI, you want coca-cola?"

Americans and their big jeep. Cut it. We looked disappointed.

It all happened so fast. A young girl asked Jim in the front if he wanted to buy some melons. "No," Jim said.

"Why not?" she asked.

"I don't want any."

"You have candy for me?"

(Was this a World War II movie I wondered?) We didn't have any.

"You give me money," she said.

I was confused, surprised, a little hurt, on edge. The little girl told Jim, "You snotfabbitch! Fuckin' GI."

She walked around the jeep and kicked it a few times. The two little girls jumped out of the back seat. "Fuckin' GI's, Motherfucker bastards," the girl continued.

An old woman in the crowd cried out, "Motherfucker, Cook-sucker. No give us money. Bastards! Bastards!"

It was fast becoming ugly. The whole crowd was yelling at us. All these women and small children, a woman stuck her face right up mine. "Fuck you, GI."

Jim gently, but firmly picked up the kid in the front seat and placed her on the ground. He started the engine and moved the jeep slowly forward. Some women were in the way, but he kept moving and they jumped aside and kicked the sides of the vehicle. Once past the edge of the crowd, he hit the gas pedal hard and sped away as the crowd screamed and threw fruit at us.

We rode silently back to base, each lost in his thoughts. So much for winning hearts and minds. I had come to Vietnam thinking we were doing the right thing and helping these people fight the enemy. Because of this and a few other things I saw, I was coming to the horrible awakening that just maybe, we were the Enemy.

--Bill Shunas

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