

EXTRA! Vets Peace Convoy

As THE VETERAN is being printed, the Veterans' Peace Convoy, headed to Nicaragua with needed humanitarian supplies has been turned back at the Mexican border by US Customs

officials. Few actions could better underline the bankruptcy of the Reagan Administration policy in Central America: while the Administration grabs our tax dollars to squander on helicopters which it sends as "humanitarian" aid to the Contras, those hoping to aid the victims of Contra crimes are refused their right to help our Nicaraguan friends.



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

Vol.18 No. 1&2

REFUSING ORDERS IN THE ISRAELI ARMY

Remembrance of a Vet's Wife



THE SILENT SHOT..... P.8

The massive Palestinian protests taking place on the Israeli-occupied West Bank have focused world attention on the Israeli military and its repressive policies towards Arabs. What is not so widely known is the opposition to these policies that has grown among Israeli soldiers themselves.

In the following interview, Israeli activist Guy Levi offers the unique insights of a peace organizer in the Israeli army.

Levi was a founder of Soldiers Against Silence and a participant in the soldiers' and reservists' resistance movement known as Yesh Gvul (it translates as "There is a Border"). Now a veteran, Levi is studying at the New School for Social Research in New York City. He spoke with the understanding he is not an official spokesman for Yesh Gvul: his views are his own. The interviewer is Chris Deisinger, member of Milwaukee VVAW.

Q. What is the cause of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and in Gaza?

A. After 20 years of Israeli occupation, those taking the most active part in the uprising are a new generation with no knowledge of the earlier Jordanian or Egyptian occupation. They are mostly 15-20 years old--a generation born after 1967. All they know is the occupation by Israeli soldiers.

Under the surface a revolt was always boiling. You just needed something to happen--the meeting in Amman, the car accident in Gaza where Palestinians died. It didn't matter what happened to start it. Now it has found its own dynamic. Taking into account the Israeli policies on settlement, semi-annexation and repression by the military authorities, I don't think it's surprising.

Q. Would you tell us some of your background as a resister?

A. I was part of a volunteer unit when I refused to serve in Lebanon. It took me two months to decide because of social pressure from my family and all my friends in my unit. We were all members of Peace Now, but it had the policy of obeying all orders and not

TURN TO PAGE 6

VA DOWN & OUT

--John Lindquist
Milwaukee VVAW

1988 and 1978 are the same. Veterans of all eras are still getting cut badly. We are not blaming thousands of caring VA workers in the understaffed VA: they could probably be holding their own were it not for the actions of Ronald Reagan and the last three presidents.

In the last 15 years veterans' programs have taken many cuts at a time when many veterans are reaching age 65 and are desperately in need of the medical care promised to them as they the human cost of war. They are denied care as are 100,000 younger veterans of Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon and Grenada. This makes veterans and their families angry. And

there is much to be angry about.

As reported in the December, 1987 issue of the DAV Magazine, "Recently, we learned that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs had spent some \$2 million in order to ensure a recent political appointee to the VA Central Office of an office with a view of the White House.

"When Wilfred L. Ebel was appointed Chief Memorial Affairs Director at VA's Central Office, he was assigned space occupied by the VA's Compensation and Pension Service.

"So that Ebel could have an unobstructed view of the White House, the staff of the Compensation and Pension Ser-

TURN TO PAGE 14



**Vietnam Veterans
Against the War
National Office
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**Nonprofit Organization
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FRAGGIN'

Sp5 Willy(Ret.)

**A.K.A.
Bill Shunas**



The wimp factor strikes again. In case you've forgotten, let me remind you of the ad New York Mayor Ed Koch placed in the New York Times around the beginning of March. After a New York policeman was killed by drug dealers, Koch shelled out \$12,900 for a full-page ad. Among other things Koch said that we are in a war with drug pushers and the commander-in-chief (meaning Reagan) is acting like a wimp. Koch said that we ought to cut off aid to Mexico, Panama and other places that supply the country's heroin, cocaine and pot.

Now there's three things you don't do in life. You don't spit in the wind. You don't pull the mask off the old Lone Ranger. And you don't call Ronald Reagan a wimp. George Bush--maybe. He'll just stomp his feet a little and trip over a few words. But not Ronald Reagan. You might start World War III.

After all, this is the man who helped win the war in "Hellcats of the Navy." He was America's best football player in "Knute Rockne--All American." And on "Death Valley Days" as a cowboy, he was rugged American individualism personified. And the networks actually have film clips of this man chopping wood on his California ranch. In a T-shirt, for God's sake. With a little sweat showing under his armpits.

Ed Koch called this man a wimp? This is the man who, during diplomatic maneuverings with the Russians, uttered the two words that forever be immortalized in fifth grade history textbooks. Standing steadfast before the crafty treachery of the Evil Empire, Ronald Reagan claimed victory by calmly declaring, "They blinked." Can you imagine when they make the movie? Ronnie will be there in his sweaty T-shirt, facing into the wind tunnel they used for "Superman," black-dyed hair blowing back, staring ahead, ramrod straight, saying, "They blinked."

And Ed Koch called him a wimp! How dare he. Just for that we tried to starve out Panamanian cleaning ladies and cab drivers. We put the economic squeeze on Panama because that was supposed to get rid of General Manuel Noriega--a multi-talented man who had the ability to run drugs and work for the CIA at the same time. And all this because Ed Koch said Reagan was a wimp for not dealing with the drugs coming from Panama. Watch out Mexico: Koch talked about you

guys too.

Ah! Ronald Reagan. He's a writer's dream. If you lack a subject to write about, Ronnie will there to help fill the void. A real stand-up guy. In him stupidity, incompetence and bronze-age policies coalesce into one historical figure. He is going to leave behind a legacy of stories that will be hard to match by any writer of fiction.

For example. At the press

Actually, the books have started. Former presidential spokesman Larry Speakes has one out. He says that preparing Ronald Reagan to meet the press was among his biggest challenges. That, of course, is no surprise: you have to speak without a script.

Speakes called Vice President George Bush "the perfect yes-man." Is that something like a wimp? Bush better hope that Ed Koch doesn't read Speakes' book. If Jesse Jackson

choice than (as revealed in the next "insider" book, this one by ex chief of staff Don Regan) a crystal-ball gazing astological buddy of Nancy. Or than Ed Meese.

And speaking of Meese, there's trouble over at the Justice Department where Ronnie's loyal friend of 20 years got caught with his hands in the cookie jar. You think Ronnie can fix this one? Maybe he'll send Meese down to straighten out Mexico. That ought to scare the cocaine out of them. Either that or they'll have to put locks on the cookie jar.

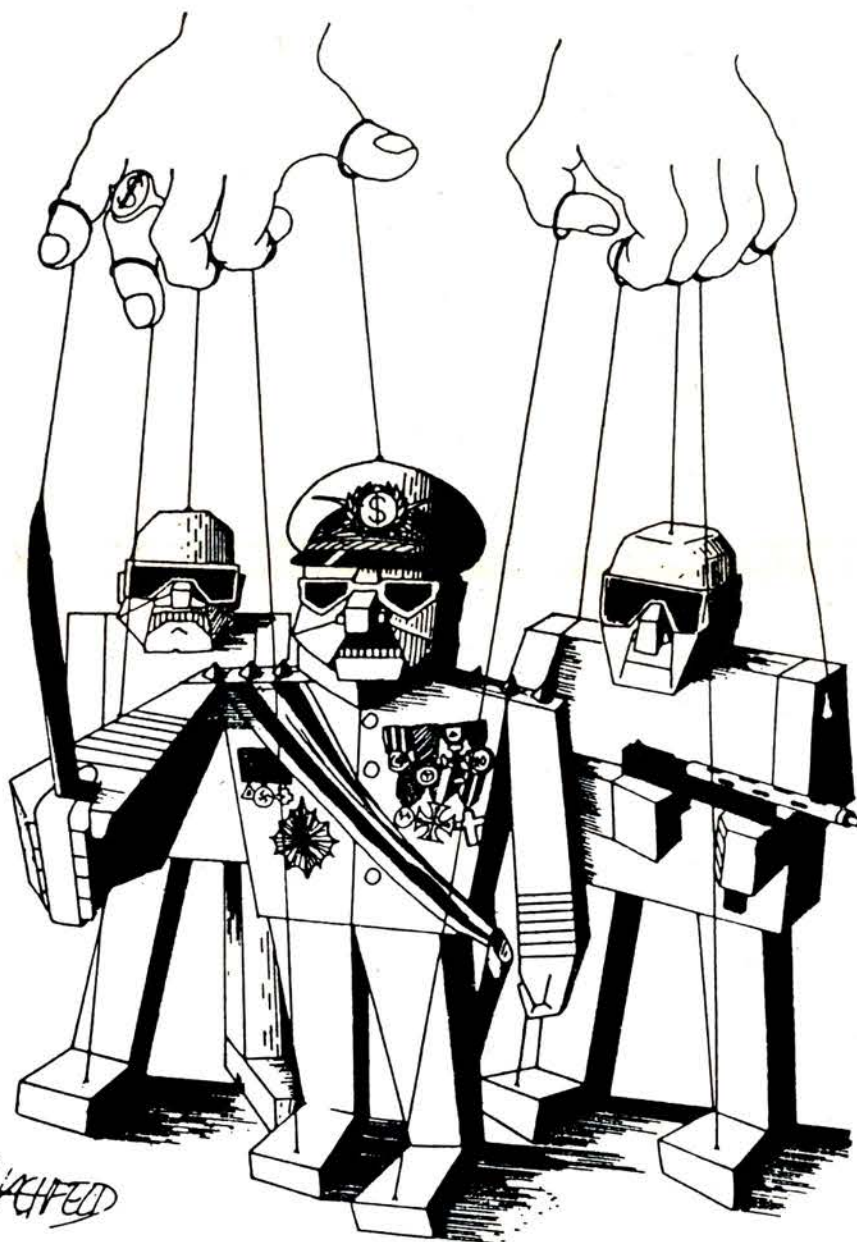
GRENADE OF THE MONTH

Did you know who is weakening the moral fiber of this country? Mothers, that's who. So says former commandant of the Marine Corps, General P.X. Kelley.. Are mothers running cocaine into New York City? No. Kelley was just trying to explain Ollie North's behavior and the behavior of the marines in the Moscow embassy who allegedly traded embassy secrets for sexual favors.

It's the mothers. P. X. Kelley says that 50% of the mothers work today, and that means the kids are stuck in "some nameless, faceless child-care center.". That's funny. I thought the problem was that there weren't enough childcare centers around the country so that mothers, many of whom are single, had a place to put the kids so they could work to bring home the bread to feed the kids. Maybe P.X. Kelley didn't think of it that way. After a lifetime of three hots and a cot in the Marine Corps, he forgot how it is in the real world.

Oh well: at least we now know where Ollie North went wrong. It was back in the local Mother Goose nursery when he was just a tot. Some nameless, faceless subversive caretaker planted some evil notions in his head. Probably told him that there's three things you don't do in life. You don't spit in the wind. You don't pull the mask off the Old Lone Ranger. And you don't let anybody call you a wimp.

So, P.X. Kelley should get the grenade this time for making a statement so stupid it was worthy of Ronald Reagan. He's an insult to working mothers of this country who do their best to raise their children. One thing about P.X. Kelley. Like Ronald Reagan, he's no wimp. Just a real mother.



conference after the recent NATO summit meeting, Reagan read the communique summing up the conference. Later one reporters asked him if he was satisfied with the document. And what was Ronnie's reply? "I haven't seen it yet."

Peter Sellers should have been so good. Ronald Reagan has got to be one of the stupidest men to have inhabited the White House. I can't wait until he's out of there and his former cronies start writing their books about what went on in the Reagan White House. It should make for some entertaining reading.

isn't the Democratic nominee, Koch will be shouting wimp from now until November. (But then if Jackson somehow gets nominated, Koch might show his true colors and try to outwimp Bush.)

Speakes also said that at times he made up quotes for Reagan. Ronnie, of course, didn't know anything about it. So much fuss was made over Speakes admitting that he did this, but so what? Somebody's got to do the job. Ronnie hasn't known what's going on for eight years. It might as well be Speakes as anyone else. Certainly he would be a better

WAR CONTINUES

CENTRAL AMERICA

--Evan Douthit
Editor, Central
America News Update

The first four months of 1988 have been a time of rapid developments in Central America, as years of maturing contradictions began to come to a head. The result has been a fiasco for Reagan Administration policy on almost every front.

In Nicaragua, the U.S. financed and trained Contras were forced to the negotiating table by a combination of factors. Congressional unwillingness to throw more money down the Contra rat hole at a time of mammoth deficits, big Sandinista victories on the battlefield, and the weakening of the paraplegic duck administration as Reagan gets into his last 9 months in office. Realizing that seeming to stymie peace in Central America was more than even the U.S. Congress can stomach and seeing their bargaining power slip away with each passing month, the Contras struck a deal and seem to have surrendered. (Until the U.S. government finally grasps reality in Central America, there is always some chance that the negotiation might be undone.) About all the Contras have won as a result has been the pledge from the Nicaraguan government that they will not be arrested or punished when those of them who are Nicaraguans return to Nicaragua after putting down their arms. The Contras also got a wad of severance pay from Congress after this, and this led some of the more stupid of the Contra commanders to dream on continuing to make money by sending their goons out of kill more peasants.

The decisive moment came when the Sandinistas struck hard at Contra bases near the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. President Reagan went into his standard war dance equating fighting near the border between the Sandinistas and Contras (who are illegally based in Honduras) with an invasion and 3,500 U.S. troops were dispatched even before Honduras got the hint and requested U.S. military assistance. But Congress did not fall for the routine. The Contras took another brutal drubbing, as always happened when they had to fight soldiers instead of cooperative farm peasants or health workers. Seeing the failure of Reagan to get them money, they cashed in and gave up while U.S. troops were still in Honduras. At almost the same moment they were surrendering, the U.S. Congress began to get word of what has been known everywhere else for years, that the Contras have been up to their

armpits in the international drug trade to finance themselves. Good timing, Congress!

In El Salvador the U.S. policy received another body blow when the extreme right wing fascists of ARENA won the municipal and legislative elections in which only 30% of the potential voting population took part. The voters, disgusted by the Christian Democrat corruption, and by the heavy Christian Democratic supported repression, either boycotted or voted for ARENA. They figured that Roberto D'Aubisson, universally considered a founder of the death squads and one of the main plotters of the murder of

move into El Salvador, Nicaragua or Guatemala as conditions required. But Honduran anger at U.S. policies boiled over after the 3,500 U.S. troops arrived to threaten Nicaragua. When the U.S.

forced Honduras to extradite a Honduran to the U.S. in spite of the fact that extradition is forbidden by the Honduran constitution, thousands rioted and burned down the U.S. consulate across the street from the U.S. embassy.

The Panamanian crisis heated up considerably as well as the U.S. government went all

The Reagan Administration is also punishing Noriega for not cooperating in U.S. plans to invade Nicaragua. They are also attempting to split the Group of Eight (Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, the bloc of Latin American countries which have been coalescing in opposition to U.S. policies on Central America, the foreign debt, and trade). The Administration is also trying to draw attention from the well-documented role played by the Contras in the drug trade (a role that leads to George Bush himself).

Colombia also held municipal elections in which the progressive Union Patriotica (see article about Pedro Alcantara) did very well. UP-supported candidates were elected mayor in 109 of 1009 Colombian municipalities, very impressive for a political party which has only been in existence for two and a half years. Even more impressive is the fact that this was achieved in the face of massive terror, as death squads have murdered 500 UP members in the last two years, including two senators. Just before and after the elections the terror escalated, with 33 people being butchered at an Easter celebration and dozens of banana workers being murdered in Uruba.

As one surveys these developments, one would understand if a sense of despair had begun to pervade the Reagan Administration, though the Latin American section of the Reagan foreign policy apparatus may be too stupid to even realize how desperate their situation is. The Contras, U.S. mercenaries though they are, have thrown in the towel, the Christian Democrats in El Salvador were beaten in the elections by the political equivalent of a psychopathic motorbicycle gang while the guerrillas see victory on the horizon, the Hondurans are burning down our diplomatic buildings, the Panamanians, who should be as vulnerable as anyone could be to U.S. economic, diplomatic and political pressure have taken the worst the U.S. could throw at them and are laughing. Colombians are marching through bullets to the polls to vote for the last political party the U.S. would want to see do well. Meanwhile Reagan is reduced to hoping that Gorbachov will be nice to him, and Congress routinely overrides his vetoes and ignores his requests, and even George Bush pretends to have his own personality. No wonder Reagan has decided to try and start a war in the Persian Gulf.



Disabled war veterans and other Nicaraguan and international activists protested at the U.S. Embassy in Managua during congressional debate on contra aid earlier this year.

Archbishop Romero in 1980, could not kill or steal that much more than the Christian Democrats were.

The result is that the legislature in El Salvador is controlled by a group which the Reagan Administration itself found to be so right-wing and murderous that it went to tremendous lengths to engineer Duarte's victory over them in 1984.

Meanwhile the FMLN guerrillas are striking at will throughout the country and the army's morale is falling to an all-time low. The economic crisis shows no sign of abating. The regime has been receiving \$2 million a day in U.S. aid, and to survive it probably needs to have that figure increased, a shaky prospect in an era of looming budget cuts in the U.S.

Honduras was supposed to be the stable base area for the U.S. in Central America, the place from which the U.S. could

out to oust General Noriega, head of the Panamanian Defense Forces. The Administration applied every form of pressure it could short of open military assault, and failed! As this article is being written, Noriega has won; even right-wing frothing bullies like Pat Buchanan are whining for retreat.

The Administration has been claiming that Noriega is involved in international drug traffic, and the U.S. press has so far ignored the many letters and commendations the DEA and other U.S. agencies had sent to Noriega in the past praising him for his efforts against the drug trade. The fact is that the main reason for this offensive against Noriega is that the U.S. government hopes to overturn the Panama Canal Treaty which returns the Canal to Panamanian control at the end of the century and which would lead to the withdrawal of most U.S. troops and bases in Panama.

INTERVIEW ~**ABRAHAM LINCOLN
BRIGADE VET**

VVAW was not the only group of veterans celebrating an anniversary in 1987. While we were celebrating our twentieth anniversary, the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade joined with their comrades from all over the world to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. The experiences of these survivors of the brutal Spanish Civil War hold a special significance for veterans of the Vietnam War who have chosen to join movements for peace and justice. A generously given interview by Milt Cohen, Spanish Civil War veteran and lifetime activist, provides an opportunity to address this significance in living practice.

The role of U.S. volunteers in the Spanish Civil War is given little mention in most history books. Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or its movie version with Gary Cooper are as close as many get to a glimpse of the Spanish Civil War. As Vietnam is to young people today, so was the Spanish Civil War a puzzle to me as a student. My understanding was that enemies of the U.S. in World War II, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, were the enemies of those who supported democracy in Spain. The enemy of the U.S. in the Cold War, the Soviet Union, supported those



Milt Cohen, Sam Gibbons, Abe Harris, Ernie Romero, Ted Gibbs, Ed Balchowsky, Syd Harris

who fought for democracy in Spain. Some Americans had joined the fight for democracy against the Fascists in Spain. The United States had been officially neutral in Spain. Under Generalissimo Francisco Franco, the Fascists were victorious in Spain. General Franco became an important ally of the United States. The Americans who had fought for democracy in Spain were not allowed to fight in World War II. They were labeled "premature anti-fascists". As recorded in the encyclopedias, Spain had experienced a series of unstable republics between 1931 and 1936. That year Spain's colonial army in Morocco under the leadership of General Franco revolted against the Republic. In the following days a Fascist rebellion composed of police and military units swept the Spanish nation. Almost every other faction in Spain including moderate republicans, liberal democrats, socialists, communists, and anarchists opposed this rising of the extreme right. Generally lacking in formal military training, the Republican forces pitted numbers, commitment to democratic traditions, and ideological determination against General Franco's Fascist rebels. The outcome of the Spanish Civil War was, however, an international matter. Well before his rising, Franco had assured himself of massive material and personnel support from Hitler and Mussolini. In reaction to the Nazi and Fascist involvement, the Soviet Union and volunteers from all over the world rushed to the aid of the Republicans. France, England, and the United States joined 24 other nations in a "non-inter-

vention" committee. In the United States, assistance and travel to Spain were made illegal. Essential to the struggle of the Republicans were the International Brigades. From the United States came the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

A twenty-two-year-old undergraduate at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, Milt Cohen was a student activist. He with others believed that the growth of Fascism would lead to a world war of devastating proportion. For him, stopping Fascism was synonymous with stopping war. At an anti-war meeting where speakers on a tour of college campuses described the situation in Spain, Milt decided that the conclusion of his college career would have to await the outcome of the events in Spain. Within a month, Milt Cohen, student activist, became a "premature anti-fascist." The first step on the trip to Spain was to Chicago to obtain a passport by giving false information. At that time, passports bore the warning that travel to Spain was illegal. Milt's story was that he was on his way to England to continue his studies. A long bus ride and a few days of physical (non-military) training in upstate New York preceded a trans-Atlantic crossing on an English liner with a small group of fellow brigade members. Most of Milt's companions were tough working class men from New York's waterfront. Even traveling third class, Milt notes that the liner trip exposed him to the most luxurious conditions that he had experienced in his life. After moving across France in small groups, the

brigade members assembled clandestinely in a hotel near Marseilles. Two hundred and fifty in number these men from several nations boarded a Spanish tanker named "The City of Barcelona" for the trip into war-torn Spain. The schizophrenia of Europe in the face of Fascism is manifested in Milt's memory that a liner from Italy (which under Mussolini was supporting the Fascists in Spain) was anchored alongside in the French port.

In many ways, the war experience of Vietnam vets and the Abraham Lincoln vets dramatically differ. For most Vietnam vets, a war tour consisted of varying lengths of boredom or drudgery punctuated by bursts of intensity and danger. Not so the tour of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans. Living symbols of the international character of the struggle against Fascism, the International Brigade including Milt Cohen participated in every major battle of the Spanish Civil War. They were either in fatiguing movement or heated battle. Milt's arrival in Spain serves as prototype for his year and a half in Spain. Late in the afternoon of its overnight voyage, the deck of "The City of Barcelona" began to fill with its secret cargo of internationals eager to enjoy the Mediterranean air. A Midwesterner, who didn't know how to swim, Milt noticed something coming toward the ship in the water. The torpedo's direct hit was marked by a "tremendous jar" as the ship began to split in half. Milt ran to his cabin, grabbed his passport and toothbrush, and barely managed to make the leap to a lifeboat that was luckily close to where he had re-emerged onto the disintegrating deck. Milt was more lucky than he knew. That nearest lifeboat was the only lifeboat. He and the others who had made it aboard vainly tried to save as many of their less fortunate comrades as possible before the rapidly sinking "The City of Barcelona" sucked them beneath the waves. The villagers of nearby Montenegro, who had witnessed the sinking, were already trying to rescue the drowning sailors and internationals. Thanks to the efforts of the villagers about fifty of the internationals out of the original 250 survived the sinking. Late that night, the survivors were in the real city of Barcelona ready to be immediately dispatched into battle.

For eighteen months, Milt with the other Internationalists was moved from crucial battle to crucial battle. The losses in

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

**2,4-D
at the
ZOO**

The Milwaukee County Zoo is being challenged for its use of 2,4-D, a primary ingredient in Agent Orange. John Zutz, Chaplain of the Milwaukee VVAW Chapter, and the person who helped write the county's policy on the use of herbicides, visited the zoo shortly after spraying and smelled Agent Orange in the air. He asked for official notice on what had been sprayed and how dangerous it was--there was no response. An official letter from VVAW followed.

The investigation which followed these inquiries uncovered all kinds of shady activities at the zoo. According to county policy, the least hazardous method of insect and weed control must be used, and spraying must be posted. Further investigation of these activities found the contract was not properly processed; various zoo officials were fired, and, as of the time of this article, the zoo dust has not yet settled. So keep your eyes, ears and nose open!



The Pittsburgh Chapter of VVAW was one of the sponsors of a press conference and event featuring Brian Willson and singer/songwriter Rick Duvall. Shown here is part of the press conference held at Pittsburgh's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. An evening event at the University of Pittsburgh, sponsored by the Tri-State Progressive Veterans (a coalition of VVAW and Veterans for Peace) and the Thomas Merton Center of Pittsburgh saw 100 people listening to Brian Willson talk about life since the loss of his legs, and about his travels in Nicaragua. Rick Duvall added his music to the evening, all in the cause of furthering work for peace and justice at home and abroad.

CONTINUED

Milt Cohen

lives Milt experienced around him in his arrival took place again and again. Milt will only say, "I was very lucky." Miraculously, he was only wounded once (a head wound) in those months. Finally, after eighteen months, Republican Spain, strangled by the "neutrality" of the U.S. and the other "non-interventionist" nations and responding to an appeal to the League of Nations, negotiated the removal of the International Brigades. While Milt Cohen and his comrades shared a train ride to France, doomed Republican Spain continued its sincere efforts at a peaceful settlement in the face of the advancing Fascists still fully supported by their own unrelenting German and Italian allies. In one final testament to the political confusion of pre-World War II Europe, the Internationalists' train continued all the way across France without stopping. The Democratic Socialist government of Leon Blum, in the midst of a general strike, did not want the presence of these symbols of anti-Fascism to disrupt the "stability" of France.

At the age of 72, Milt Cohen is easier to find at meetings and demonstrations than relaxing at home. Milt's service in the Spanish Civil War has served as a strong foundation for a long career of activism. While some Spanish Civil War veterans attempted unsuccessfully to extend their fight against Fascism by serving with the allies in World War II, Milt decided that his future battles would be of a more political and localized nature. As a community organizer, Milt has considered his goal the building of unity among the people who reside in the diverse neighborhoods of Chicago. For many years, the Communist Party served as the

major vehicle for his work. Identification as a communist in addition to the premature anti-fascist label earned Milt the scrutiny and harassment of the powerful political forces that have since come to be labeled MacCarthyism.

Milt's wife Sue (herself a career activist) tells the story of how a staff member at an elementary school called to inform her that the FBI had come to the school to obtain copies of Milt's signature from their children's report cards. Sue confides with amusement that she always signed the sometimes absent-minded Milt's name on the children's cards. So it was, that the FBI came to possess copies of Milt's wife's forged versions of his signature.

Milt himself speaks without humor about the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). "That committee had to be stopped. HUAC's goal was the destruction of all First Amendment rights." When the Committee brought its hearings to Chicago, Milt Cohen did not flinch in his refusal to testify. In fact, he led other Chicagoans in challenging HUAC's legitimacy. MacCarthy fell. HUAC was no more. Khrushchev exposed Stalin. Milt with many of his comrades left what had until then been the Party. Opposition to the war in Viet-



Guernica 1937

nam came and went as a central issue. All the while Milt continued his organizing work. A staff member of the Committee to Reelect Mayor Washington, Milt Cohen can be found working daily at the Illinois Public Action Council. He remains very active in the Democratic Socialists of America and other groups.

Milt's soft-spoken, attentive, well-informed, and reasoned manner of interacting with others that has so often impressed me in meetings belies the intensity of the political conflict that initiated his career of activism. His tolerance for political mistakes by others is best illustrated by his answer to a question asked of him following one of his rare personal presentations, how does he feel about the Fascist soldiers he fought in Spain. His answer focused on the fact that, for the most part, Fascist soldiers were born into the regions of Spain that were controlled at an early stage by General Franco's forces. They were conscripted into the Fascist army. Other than fighting for their lives Fascist soldiers knew no other political reality. "When I made my decision about going to Spain, I already knew a great deal about world history. My decision was a conscious and a correct one, and an easy one to make. The decisions since then have also been easy ones for me to make."

Milt Cohen's dream remains the unity of the working people of Chicago built upon their shared interests. He knows that civil rights has to be such a shared interest. Alliances between Chicago's Black and Hispanic communities are especially to the advantage of both. Tenants rights likewise benefits all working people. Milt Cohen's input to Chicago's Tenants Bill of Rights has been significant. Well before he first entered the race for mayor, the late Harold Washington received Milt's enthusiastic encouragement. When Milt is asked to select the single most important victory in his long career as a community organizer, he is unhesitant in his choice of Mayor Harold Washington's election and reelection.

For fifty years, the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade have functioned as vital sources of information and powerful role models for those of us who have tried to be activists. After twenty years, Vietnam Veterans Against the War increasingly feel what it's like to be a part of leftist history. For me, Milt Cohen and the other veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade provide living examples of going beyond the war with which we gained our veteran's status. What does Milt Cohen most want to say to the members of VVAW? "Keep up the fight. The future has great possibilities!"

--Dave Curry
Chicago VVAW

URGENT VIETNAM NEEDS YOUR HELP

Considering the economic problems which faced the U.S. (including the unimaginably huge national debt) as a result of our involvement in the Vietnam War, it should be no surprise that Vietnam is still experiencing economic hardships 15 years after reunification. Refusal of the U.S. to allow normal economic relations with the victor in the Vietnam War intensifies the hardships.

Now Vietnam faces famine as a result both of economic problems and a combination of drought and insects which have cut the rice harvest by as much as one-third (according to official UN estimates). Rice harvests have been falling for the last three years while population climbs. The average Vietnamese will receive only 70% of their normal rice diet--and those of us who were in Vietnam can recall how vital was rice to the diet of the average Vietnamese. In some places it is reported that farmers aren't even healthy enough to harvest the rice in their fields.

When a wealthy country such as the USSR sees that it will run short of grain (as was the case several years ago) it can go into the world market and buy huge quantities. For a poor country, and especially for one in a state of economic isolation, the solution to starvation is not so easy, even a country where the people are accustomed to struggle against man or nature or both.

No matter what one's opinion of the Vietnam War, there is no reason for Vietnamese to starve when simple humanitarian aid would save them. Normal diplomatic and economic relations with Vietnam are only both right and sensible for the U.S. government. Until that happens, there are private charitable organizations which will accept aid to go to Vietnam--the Vietnamese need help and we can help them.

Tax-deductible contributions earmarked for medical and industrial projects in Vietnam can be sent to: The American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102. ★

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ISRAELI VET

refusing service. When I finally decided I wasn't going, I went to my commander. He told me if I didn't go to Lebanon, then I couldn't continue to serve in the unit and had to leave. I was transferred to another unit. When they went to Lebanon, I refused again and they just let me do other work. But 150 other soldiers who refused were tried and sentenced to 21 to 35 days.

The most important thing about me was that I was an average Zionist. I was born on a kibbutz and received a typical Zionist education. I volunteered for one of the best army units and really served the country.

Refusing to go to Lebanon was hard. On one hand, I understood I couldn't go because it was political war. On the other hand, what about my friends in my unit? It just shows how much ideological pressure the typical Peace Now activist faces.

But once I decided, it was rather easy. The problem is that events must go much further before more people will cross this line. In this sense the Israeli peace movement is too connected to the establishment. It can't go beyond the mainstream line and say: "That's it--no more rules. We can't take it anymore. We have to act." Maybe the events of the last three months will help this change to occur.

Q. What is the history of your soldiers' group, Yesh Gvul?

A. Yesh Gvul started in 1982 as the Green Line group. We organized about 150 signatures on a letter to the prime minister asking not to serve in the Occupied Territories. With the Lebanon war, we set aside the Green Line group and concentrated on building Yesh Gvul to oppose the invasion of Lebanon. But the West Bank and Gaza were always on the agenda. In 1982 and 1983, there was a hot debate among our members over whether to include or exclude the issue of the territories. Even then we felt a Palestinian uprising of some kind was needed to help us make the Israeli public understand how the occupation was a cancer within Israeli society.

I've heard many soldiers who hadn't joined Yesh Gvul before are joining now. I've heard of 18-year olds sending letters saying they will refuse to serve in the territories. I don't know how major or minor these trends are, but it is a significant change in attitude. It's caused problems for the army.

Q. Why do you describe the occupation as the "cancer" of Israeli society?

A. Since 1967 we've had the era of Israeli colonialism in which 1.5 million Arabs in the Occupied Territories have no

political rights. This had an effect on Israeli society and an impact on individuals in military service. When a young Israeli starts his basic training, he goes to villages and towns with the so-called disturbances. This clearly affects his relations with Palestinian civilians and shifts his attitudes to the right. For example, everybody was struck by the number of votes Kahane got from the military in the last election.

You can compare Israel with South Africa. In the economy, a new Arab working class has emerged in the territories. Every day they come to do the so-called dirty jobs and Israeli society has gotten used to it. Our perception is of an Arab who is always down, inferior, doing menial work. It has increased racism in our society. Politically things are more complicated, but the measures used in the Occupied Territories slowly and constantly penetrate into Israeli society.

These trends are all part of a process of Israel's self destruction. The Palestinians are showing that a Palestinian state will finally be established. A Palestinian state without Israel is a possible outcome, but Israel without a Palestinian state cannot exist anymore in its contemporary form. For Israel to stay a democracy it needs a Palestinian state.

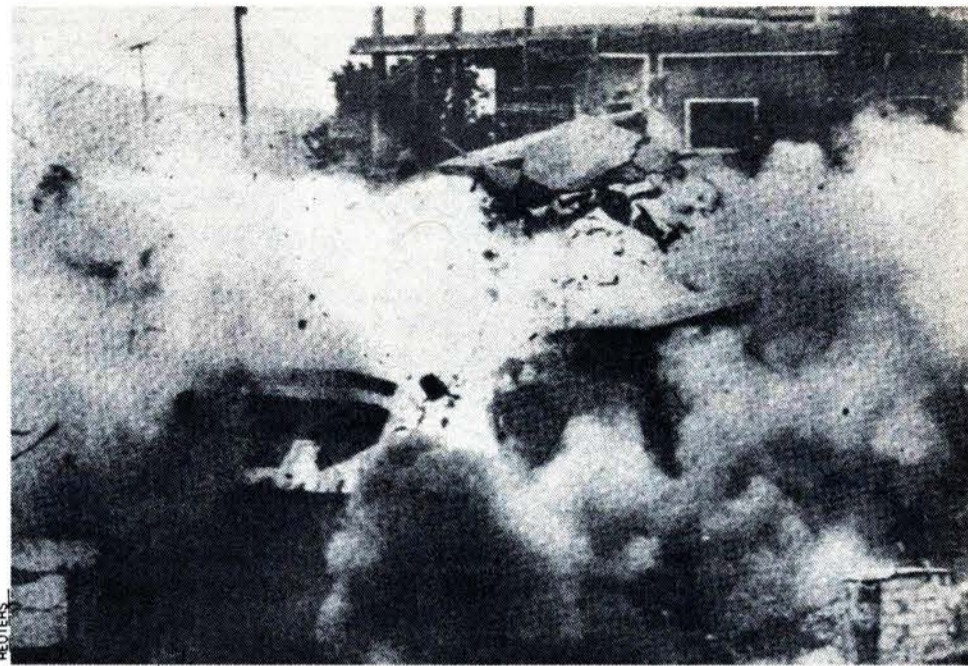
Q. What is the danger of a new war breaking out between Israel and its neighbors?

A. The current situation is weakening the military. The danger for Israel then is not being able to stand against the Syrian army. As long as Israel was a relatively democratic state--at least within the green line--and as long as the Israeli soldier felt he was fighting for his land, then his morale was high and he could identify with these basic strengths of the Israeli army and Israeli society.

Since 1967 this belief and motivation has been in decline. Since the Lebanon war in 1982, the rate of decline is much higher. This is what I mean by self destruction. If there is no solution in the long run, undoubtedly there will be another war.

Q. During the Lebanon war, there was also a group called Soldiers Against Silence. Although they did not refuse to serve, they protested the war. What was their role?

A. I was one of the three people who established Soldiers Against Silence. We organized the first meeting in Tel Aviv because we felt there was a chance to widen the protest movement. But within days, Peace Now took control of Soldiers Against Silence. Unlike Yesh Gvul, they came out with a manifesto saying they would obey orders. They held the



Israelis take "revenge" by blowing up a house in the West Bank village of Beitia.

army as a sort of sacred cow, but demanded that the government do this and that. It was good in itself, but not good enough. After two months, Soldiers Against Silence just dissolved into Peace Now.

Yesh Gvul went on. They said this is a political war and we are going to protest by acts of conscious refusal. The Yesh Gvul influence on the withdrawal from Lebanon was minor, almost nothing. But if your protests are really contrary to what's happening--refusing to serve, going to jail, holding press conferences--it's at least a step into one gray cell of the Israeli public consciousness. This is different from Peace Now. Although I don't want to underestimate their importance, they often don't know how to react because they never had a solid policy toward a solution.

Q. What do you believe is the path to peace?

A. There is no just solution but to divide the land between the two peoples. In this I share the view of Professor Liebovitz who on June 11, 1967, the day after the Six Day War, called on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. His analysis is that we have a mutual history that connects the same land, Palestine, deeply in these two peoples' hearts. The representatives of these two peoples should get down and talk. They would be the Israeli government and the PLO or whoever the Palestinians would choose--although I believe it would be the PLO since 95% of the West Bankers support the PLO as their representatives.

I don't care if they come out with one secular state or two states, but they should

come to an agreement. Practically speaking, I think the 1967 West Bank and Gaza strip borders are going to define the Palestinian state,...

Q. What about the proposals for an international peace conference?

A. Which proposals? Prime Minister Shimon Peres' proposal? The Peres' proposal is a joke because he wants to tell the Palestinians who their representatives are. It can't work--he knows it, everybody knows it. It was just for internal politics. But an international peace conference with the PLO, the Arab states, Israel and the superpowers is fine with me--so long as the Israelis and the Palestinians agree to it.

I really don't care what form the negotiations take. Myself, I would love to see a confederation of an Israeli state and a Palestinian state. Given the problem of reactionary regimes in the region, I think that both Jews and Arabs could make a contribution to the future of the Middle East.

This is sort of a utopia, but maybe we can look for it after the first stages. First we have the psychological barriers, not only from what happened since December but also from two decades of occupation. It is not easy for the Palestinian to overcome the psychological barrier presented by the Israeli soldier they have faced for 20 years. It is not easy for the Israelis to overcome the brainwashing they have been through. But it can work. I worked with Egypt and it worked with France and Algeria. It can work so long as leaders try for it to work.





BLAYLOCK/SAN ANTONIO LIGHT

On April 30th, VVAW with local organizations in San Antonio, gathered at the main gate of Kelly Air Force Base to protest the use of military installations in San Antonio for supplying military hardware to the Contras and the government forces in El Salvador. According to people who work on the

base, Kelly AFB has been quietly used as a transportation center for those supplies for several years.

Over 300 people joined in this action. Also present were Brian Willson, a vet brother who lost his legs last November in a similar action in California. And Rick Duvall, a vet song-

writer and performer used his ability to add to the power of the event.

The main gate at Kelly AFB was closed for the demonstration. Randolph AFB, also in San Antonio, is another base connected with weapons and supplies to the U.S. wars in Central America.

CONDEMN BOTH SIDES

IRAN ~ IRAQ WAR

(The following article is taken from *The Guardian* with the permission of the author.)

Hoshang Rashtee

The Iranian New Year arrived on the 20th of March with showers of missiles. Traditionally, this celebration of spring is a joyful time for reunions of family, friends and neighbors. But this year, like the past seven, Iranians have spent their New Year mourning at the graves of loved ones in cemeteries around the country.

In the month-long "war of the cities" during March more than 200 long-range missiles were fired on populated cities in Iran and Iraq. Thousands of lives were lost and more than 2000 people injured.

Why this endless war? Because the rulers of both countries are fighting for their survival--against their own people.

The slow erosion of democratic rights won in Iran in 1979 caused dissatisfaction among the masses. In the months following the overthrow of the shah, the Islamic regime moved to consolidate power. It crushed a well-organized women's movement, which progressive organizations, unfortunately, did not effectively support. Immediately after this, all alternative news media were banned. In February 1980, the peasant movement, especially the Turk Turkmen minority, was suppressed. And in April of the same year the progressive student movement was crushed with the shutdown of all universities and the declaration of the "Islamic cultural revolution."

Most of this happened in

the midst of the U.S. hostage crisis, which the Islamic regime used to consolidate its power. Although it still lacked a stable central government, Tehran sent troops to Kurdistan and bombed cities in an attempt to squash the Kurdish national autonomy movement. It attacked the linkage between left organizations and the labor movement with mass arrests and executions of union leaders, replacing independent worker councils with corporatist "Islamic associations." The regime, however, couldn't totally succeed with this until war erupted.

On the Iraqi side there was growing unrest among the Shiite Muslim majority as a result of Iran's Islamic revolutionary regime and the Kurdish uprising. Tension and hostility had already long existed between the two countries over control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway. Using this pretext--and taking advantage of Iran's internal problems--the Iraqi army attacked Iran in September 1980.

In reality, however, the war is the policy of the ruling classes of both countries to shift attention away from their internal problem, rally their citizens behind their rule and provide a cover for crushing their internal opposition. Simultaneously while the war raged, the Islamic regime launched an all-out war against its left opposition--using mass arrest, imprisonment, torture and eventually mass execution of political dissidents.

The Islamic regime further consolidated its power by trans-

forming the shah's discredited army into the Islamic army. They also built the 90,000-man-strong revolutionary guard as a parallel fighting force. Under the slogan of "Islam against infidels" over \$300 million is spent on the war each month, while people queue up for hours everyday to buy bread, rice, milk, eggs and other essentials.

Iranian casualties total more than 100,000 and twice that many injured. Since the "war of the cities" began February 29, more than 10,000 homeless have joined the 2 million refugees from the war-torn south.

In addition to war casualties, the Islamic regime has executed more than 10,000 political prisoners. Between 50,000 and 80,000 political prisoners and one million refugees live outside the country. And while the Islamic regime brainwashes school children to become "volunteer martyrs," assuring them a "ticket to heaven," parents of executed opponents must pay for the executioner's bullets in order to claim their children's bodies.

Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal is actively seeking an end to the "war of the cities." But any let-up in the carnage will be short lived. The only winners of this senseless war are the international arms dealers. Progressives in the U.S. and around the world therefore, must not hesitate to condemn both sides for this reactionary war, and to criticize the Islamic regime for its atrocities against the Iranian people. This is not a war, this is a crime against humanity.

*Vets!
We need
you.*

"Interview A Vet"--the contest sponsored by CCCO (which is the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors), VVAW, and Veterans for Peace gives today's youth the chance to ask the questions and draw on the experience of those who fought in Vietnam. And it is a chance for Vietnam vets to talk about an experience which is no longer of much interest to a lot of younger people.

This will be the second year of the contest. No one's going to get rich from it, though the prizes are certainly worth going for. I had the experience, for the first contest, of reading through the high school entries to select a few for final judging. High school students interviewed strange men they'd never heard of before (vets who had put their names into the contest booklet), listened to veterans who talked in their high school classes, talked, in a few cases to old family friends and, sometimes, to their own fathers. In every case the interview was some kind of revelation. Not everyone came away with the lesson the vet thought he was giving: a couple of vets who seemed to enjoy telling their war stories might have been surprised at the peaceful uses these tales were turned to.

The contest produced some pictures, a few videotapes, many poems and short stories, a lot of essays. The rules said for students to react to what they were told and reactions came in as many forms as there were students. Some of the entries showed a real attempt to grapple with questions raised by our participation in the War. Almost all of the questions were interesting.

For vets or for students it's worth the time to answer the ad elsewhere on the page; it takes a very little time to learn a very lot--for both vets and young people.

--Pete Zastrow
VVAW National
Office

INTERVIEW A VET CONTEST

VETS! We need you.

The Interview a Vet Contest needs Vietnam veterans to sign up to be interviewed by 15-23-year-olds. For more information, send your name, address, and phone number to CCCO/An Agency for Military, Draft, and Pre-Enlistment Counseling, 2208 South St., Philadelphia, PA 19146, phone (215) 545-4626, or P.O. Box 42249, San Francisco, CA 94142, phone (415) 552-6433.

Remembrance by a Vet's Wife

'I GUESS YOU NEVER DO....HEAR THE ONE THAT GETS YOU.'

"As I held his body in my arms," he said softly, "he just looked me in the eye, and told me he never heard the shot, the one that hit him. I guess you never do....hear the one that gets you."

All the while he spoke to me, his look was distant. As distant as Vietnam. This was just one of his many memories, some of them unbelievable, all of them horrifying. I never say much during these painful recollections.

What do you say? What can you say? Don't worry about those children you killed over there. Like the one that dropped a grenade in the gas tank of your truck as you drove past, or the cartload of villagers you and your men wiped out because you had a suspicion some were Viet Cong. Or the old man sitting atop a water buffalo whom you used for target practice. I know you still have nightmares about that one, except it's you instead of the old man.

The list goes on and on. And so does the war. Inside of him, and me. It's part of my life too, now. A part I'd just as soon forget, but one I can't ignore. He's tired of fighting and I'm tired of losing--losing to an enemy I cannot see. Though not in material form, I know he's there. Much like the one he fought eighteen years ago, which to him seems like yesterday, every day. I know what goes through his mind now when he sees little children, or oriental people, or hears a helicopter. Do you smell the napalm, Joe? Or the mud you had to lie in for days at a time? Or the dead bodies lying around that are later thrown in a pile to be burned, or to be used as human sacks of sand to protect the men in the trenches? I already know where he's at. I only wonder what scene in this never-ending film he's recalling. He hasn't come home yet. I don't know that he ever will.

"It's time to feed the dog," I told him in an effort to bring him out of his trance.

"Alright...I'll feed him," he replied slowly, as he came back to America. How long will you stay this time, Joe? I wondered to myself.

He walked over to the

kennel to let the dog out before feeding him. Luke started his usual jumping and ground-stomping, his regular ritual whenever either of us walked up to his kennel. As Joe opened the lock and lifted the latch, he gave the dog a stern "stay" command. But Luke, being the strong-willed and energetic Chesapeake that he is darted past, raced down to the end of the yard and back up again, all the while Joe calling his name, yelling "Come!" and trying to catch him. I realized as I watched that Luke was going to get a harsh correction although he wasn't the one whom Joe was really angry with.

"I told you to come!" he shouted as the dog grovelled up to him. He grabbed Luke by the scruff of the neck and dragged his 75-pound body back to the kennel door. Luke let out a loud yelp as Joe threw him as best he could into the kennel. As he closed the latch he looked at me. He could tell I was hurt. He knew as well as I that Luke didn't deserve that harsh correction, and I can't stand to see Joe take his frustrations out on him. Luke doesn't know about Vietnam. But he does know he has run out of the kennel before, only to receive praise because he did come back and not take off.

"I don't think that was necessary," I told him.

"I do. He's lucky I didn't choke him." He looked as if he were ready to. "Why do you think we spend time in obedience classes? He knows better."

"I think you over-reacted," I said. Something he does a lot of these days, but has little control over.

"Hey--I didn't hurt him. I've done worse things in my life."

I gave up the argument, I knew it was useless. I also knew, when he had time to calm down, he would regret his actions and hate himself more. As I turned and walked into the house, I thought back on our eight-year relationship. When I first met him, I thought the 14 years between our ages would be a lot to contend with, but that never became a problem. Vietnam did, although I didn't know it at first. He never talked about it. I knew he had been

there, but I didn't know much about it. I did have a feeling something was wrong, but I had blamed his sudden mood swings on myself, the only justification I could find. Now I know better, or should I say worse.

Neither of us ate dinner that evening, a common occurrence. His loss of appetite was due to stomach pains the doctors call a "spasmodic colon," the result of his bad nerves and/or Agent Orange contamination. My loss of appetite was caused by anxiety over that knowledge. When he first spoke of the chemical Agent Orange, he explained it was a defoliant that had been sprayed to kill existing vegetation in order to leave their enemy fewer places to hide. I was appalled to know the government never admitted for years its adverse health effects. Joe said it had been everywhere, in their food and in their water. They breathed it and lived in it. And knowing the deliberate denial only contributed to the decline in his patriotism, his mistrust in the government, and added fuel to his internal fire. And my own.

His mother called later that evening to see if we were coming over for a visit. It was my duty to answer the phone because of his hatred of dealing with people, even family, making it difficult for us to attend family gatherings. I've become his go-between, his protector. I deal with the outside world while he tends to the matter of war.

"Are you coming over?" his mother asked.

"No, Joe isn't here," I answered, my frequent reply.

"Where is he?"

"He went to the mountains," I replied, which is more often than not true. He spends a great deal of time in the woods, alone. It's the only place he can relax, somewhat. It helps him more than any drug, which gives credence to the fact that the mind controls the body, if we both weren't proof enough.

After I convinced her we'd visit later that week, I hung up the phone and undressed for bed. As I did so, I noticed my steady decrease in weight. My mother always voices her concern for my anorexic appearance. I always insist otherwise;

it certainly isn't intentional. I'd be quick to invite ten additional pounds if I could return my nerves to their previous state. Before this post-Vietnam life. But I never explained to her, or any family member, the cause of my weight loss. I want to spare them that worry. The worry of knowing I live with a time bomb ready to go off at any moment. It doesn't make it any easier for me, but that's my choice, be it good or bad.

Bad, I thought, as I looked in the mirror and noticed another gray hair had crept up on me. I held my jaw, it felt sore from clenching my teeth, an unconscious habit I do throughout the day and often during the night.

When I lay down in bed, I noticed my muscles ached from constant tension. He really didn't want this to happen to me. He's been noticing my forgetfulness, my over-reactions to the slightest things. I can't abandon him like his friends and his country. No one else will see this through. I may be the only reason he's still alive, though his doctors have often



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said it gets worse before it gets better. If it gets better. I closed my eyes in an attempt to fall asleep.

I let my mind drift, to someplace far away. To a jungle somewhere, dark and dense. Sitting with my back to a tree, not knowing what the next moment would bring. Perhaps a tiger would come sneaking over the wire, and drag me off into the night. Maybe I'd walk into a booby trap, and they'd find me the next morning, impaled by a poisoned pungy-stick through my chest. Or maybe one of our own men would freak out and lose it. I wonder what it would be like to have to shoot one of our own in the back because he couldn't be trusted....

The following day provided a disheartening experience. It was one of the many days Joe was scheduled to see a psychiatrist at the VA hospital. A first for me, the doctor wanted to see us both. I had been to the other VA facility where they deal mostly with physically impaired veterans, but never to the "nuthouse" as Joe so often calls it.

I sipped my morning coffee in an effort to come alive, as I watched Joe smoke cigarette after cigarette and take three tranquilizers and two anti-depressants, his usual morning ritual repeated several times a day. And people wonder why he doesn't work.

"This is going to be a real trip for you," he told me on the way to the hospital. "This place is always a trip."

A good one or a bad one I thought to myself, but I figured what the answer would be.

As we walked up to the hospital doors, I noticed a man sitting on a bench by himself. Joe mentioned he had tried to put a bullet through his head but didn't quite do the job, the result being a reconstructed face and the probable shame of not completing a task he had, in the past, been so well trained to do.

We stepped inside the building and walked down a long hallway. Just then a fire alarm went off by mistake, and a man behind us yelled "Incoming! Incoming" which confirmed he was a patient.

We reached the cafeteria and stood in line for coffee. As

Joe poured I looked around. I watched a man walk past with part of his face missing. A battle wound or another attempted suicide? Joe saw me looking and confirmed the latter, contributing to the statistic that more men have died from suicide than were actually killed in Vietnam. That thought sent chills up my spine.

We wandered into the seating area and sat down next to some men Joe knew from group therapy. As he talked with them, I watched the people around us, mostly patients. I could tell by their appearance. Almost all had long hair and beards, and constantly smoked cigarettes. The ones most readily recognizable are those who walk very slowly with blank faces, the result of their heavy medication. The "Thorazine Shuffle" as it's called.

One man walked up to our table, spoke to Joe briefly, then walked away.

"That guy there, he killed his parents," Joe said.

"Is he an in-patient?" I asked.

"No," Joe replied, "He's just here to pick up his medica-

I wasn't frightened, just saddened. I suppose they're all murderers in a way, though not by choice. The longer I sat there, the more I realized I wasn't all that uncomfortable being in their presence. I guess I knew where they were coming from and what they were all about. And they knew the same of me.

I suggested we make our way up to the shrink's office and as we did, Joe mentioned some of the men there never made it home, physically. "They came straight from 'Nam to this place," he said; "Most of their families have forgotten them."

We reached the waiting area and, as I took a seat, Joe checked in. I lit a cigarette which I desperately needed by this time, and watched people filter in and out of the waiting room. I noticed an older man in a wheelchair waiting by the elevator. World War II? He didn't appear as if he knew where he was. I watched as he raised his arms as if he were pointing a rifle at an invisible enemy. Then he yelled "BANG"

TURN TO NEXT PAGE

CONTINUED

WIFE

and his arms jerked back as a rifle would kick after being fired.

At that point I just wanted to get up and walk out, but I stayed--if not for Joe then for the sake of the man sitting next to me who was proceeding to tell me his war stories. He was a large man with light brown hair and sunglasses, smoking cigarette after cigarette. Most of what he told me I already knew but I didn't say anything. He seemed comfortable talking to a complete stranger; maybe he needed someone to talk to. And maybe by listening I was helping him to stay alive just one more day.

Someone from the desk called him over and as he walked away, I felt numb with depression. Now I had to talk with this doctor. I knew there wasn't much he could tell me either.

Joe came over and told me I could go in and see the doctor. He didn't want to go in with me, he'd go in by himself when I was through. It didn't matter to me; I just wanted to get out of that place. We met the doctor as we walked down the hall to his room. As Joe wished, I went in by myself.

Dr Peterson was a tall, heavy-set man with a balding head and a completely paralyzed left arm.

"Joe has what we call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," he told me. I nodded. He continued, "I think he should come into the hospital for awhile, he hasn't been talking these past few sessions. This is a bad time of year for him."

This time of year is bad for him, I repeated to myself. Eighteen years ago this time, Joe was due to come home. He had only a month of duty left, and since he was still in one piece, they wanted to send him home that way. So they put someone new--just over from the states--into his job of driving his truck. "A young kid," Joe always says. Young? They were all young, just out of high school. Maybe Joe felt older after 13 months of duty.

They aged quickly over there.

The day the switch of duty took place all the vehicles were blown away, all the men killed. Joe has felt extremely guilty about that. He always felt it should have been him. And along with the guilt comes the vivid memory of having had to clean the truck of all the blood and pieces of friends and comrades he had just spoken to that morning. When he had told me this I realized why it was difficult for him to get close to anyone, and why it took me a long time to break through that barrier.

I agreed with the doctor that he should go in the hospital and told him I could talk Joe into going in better than he. I thanked Dr Peterson and promised to remove all the guns from the house, more for Joe's sake than mine.

Within the next week, Joe was in-patient. I wasn't sure how long he'd be in. I needed the break as much as he did, but I didn't know if his stay would help him or make him worse. It certainly isn't a good environment for someone suffering from anxiety and depression. I did feel safe in that he couldn't hurt himself or anyone else. They're very strict about the personal belongings brought in, and should someone get out of hand, they pin them to the floor, put them in restraints, and throw them in a room by themselves. I knew Joe couldn't handle that. I knew he'd do his best not to lose it.

No sooner was Joe out of the hospital, he was gone again. To the woods. The only place he could find a little peace and comfort, away from people. The next day was opening day of deer season. But he wasn't going for the hunt. The absence of his firearms prevented that. He just wanted to be alone. "I don't think I could stand the sight of blood," he told me.

I missed him that first night. I had been looking forward to his return from the hospital, although sometimes when he's with me, I feel alone. I missed his presence, anyway.

As I lay in bed, I wondered where he was at, what he was thinking. I tried to remember the last time he lay in bed beside me. He always sleeps on the couch for fear of hurting me in his sleep. As much as it keeps me close to him, it keeps me away from him. I wondered how much longer I could live this way.

The woods were just coming alive as I made my way through the fallen leaves and over the trees that lay in my path. The birds' songs echoed through the trees and some squirrels above me chattered loudly, letting everything in hearing range know I was approaching. I was making enough noise, between my footsteps and the pick and shovel I dragged behind me, to sound like a small army. I held the urn close to my body and looked around, getting my bearings and realizing why Joe loved the woods so much. It was here he was truly at peace, it was here he would stay. I looked up at one tree and noticed a hunter's tree stand that had been left behind. I kept repeating in my mind: was it truly an accident? That someone would have mistaken Joe's movement through the woods for a deer is not hard to believe; on opening day especially, they'll shoot at anything that moves. I couldn't understand why Joe had not been wearing any fluorescent orange which all hunters are required to wear, even if he weren't hunting. He knew how trigger-happy any hunter can be.

I came to a small clearing, with a stand of pines in the center. Among them was a blue spruce, and I picked a spot beneath it. As I dug the hole, I thought to myself: was it really too much for you, Joe? Have you finally found the peace and freedom you so desperately wanted? Or was it for me? Is this your way of releasing us both? The war that had had a hold on the both of us, that robbed us of so many things, had ended with his life. I filled the hole and looked down upon it. I wondered if he heard the shot, the one that got him. I wiped my tears and walked away. Yes, Joe, for me, too, the war is finally over.

RAP-
POEM

[The following rap/poem was given by Billy Curmano, performer and VVAW member from Minnesota at the 20th anniversary celebration.]

"President Reagan says... 'Say Son Oh! Say can you see?

How the third world is bothering me!"

I got millions for Nicaragua
I got millions for Nicaragua,
if you wanna.

I got millions for Nicaragua,
if you don't wanna.

And I got millions more,
for El Sal-Va-Dor.

And there's always more,
More money for weapons and war!

No money for poor, sick and sore!

...A voice is heard
like the song of a bird,
lamentation and sorrow
come pray for tomorrow.

Mothers weep for their tots,
But they're comforted now;
though bravely they fought
and Freedom they sought
with their lives it is bought
and the basses have naught
been shot at or caught.

...ZOUNDS...the sounds...rebound
around

Portable Memorials
and Home Made Parades,
Sealing our fate;

20 years late
repeating mistakes

...Let them eat cake.

Tranquilize my mind;
repossess my soul.

Alkaline salts where acids once
flowed.

Saviors come; Saviors go.
Saviors hope; Saviors dies!
Saviors love; and are

crucified.

So Savior save yourself!
You ain't savin' the world,

with your little war.

Who you got to pay,
for your little war?

Not me! I ain't payin',
for your little war?

But don't call me: Contra
But don't call me: Sandinista
But don't call me: Capitalist
But don't call me: Socialist
But don't call me: Communist
But don't call me: Dadaist
But don't call me: Marxist
But don't call me: Fascist
But don't call me: Sexist
But don't call me: Racist
But don't call me: Sunkist

'Cause I won't pay
for your little war.

President Reagan says..."Say son
Okay! Can it be?

That the poor won't be
exploited,

Not even for me."

Good News from Nicaragua!

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

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR began in 1967 when veterans of the Vietnam war took up the cause of ending that war. Since then VVAW has continued to fight against unjust wars and military adventures, and for the rights and needs of veterans. Today VVAW stands firmly for peace and for social justice at home and around the world.

As the oldest organization based primarily among Vietnam vets, VVAW confronted the problems of post-traumatic stress among veterans early in our history; we took up the cause of testing, treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange poisoning, and still are fighting that battle which has grown to include use of dioxins around the country. We continue to believe in the rights of veterans of all eras to be treated with respect and dignity, especially by the government and Veterans Administration.

Although based on Vietnam veterans, membership in VVAW has expanded to include veterans and friends of veterans from all eras, all of whom bring their own ideas and perspectives to the organization. As the time of the Vietnam war recedes into history, VVAW members try to keep alive the lessons from that war. We share with others the hope that our children--and any of America's young--will never again have to fight a war such as the one we fought, and that the lives of our friends who died in Vietnam will serve to make another such venture more difficult. To that cause VVAW stands dedicated.

VVAW IS A NATIONAL VETERANS ORGANIZATION; DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

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(312)327-5756

Peter Zastrow
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VVAW welcomes all people who want to join to build a veterans' organization to fight for peace and justice. Although most 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 help prevent more Vietnams. Memberships 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 programs and projects under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to annual national meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day organizational leadership and publishing of THE VETERAN.

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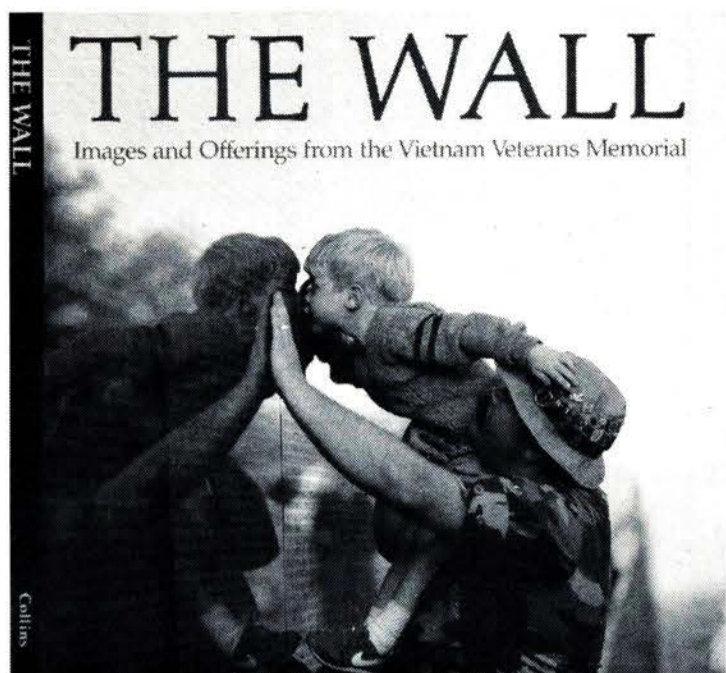
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--Pete Zastrow
VVAW National Office

Any war--good, bad or indifferent, righteous or immoral--is starkly tragic simply because wars are fought, mostly, by the young and it is the young who die. Who can say which life, stolen before its time, might have belonged to the artist who would give us a new way to see the world, a doctor who would cure disease, a thinker who could propose a path to a peaceful world.

The Wall: Images and Offerings from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Collins Publishers, 1987) fiercely testifies to the tragedy of Vietnam. An eloquent series of photographs with a sparing collection of words, the book captures the spirit of The Wall and a little of the agony of those who touch The Wall. Any Vietnam vet who can look through the 125 pages of the book without his or her eyes misting over several times is one hard individual.

By now most of us know the power of The Wall: in the words of a sign carried by one vet whose picture is in the book, "I am a Vietnam veteran. I like the memorial and if it makes it difficult to send people into battle again---I'll like it even more." The names of how many sons and fathers and brothers and husbands must decorate such a wall before people say enough? Slow as always, the politicians finally noticed the power of The Wall and began to try to dilute the impact--statues, flags, anything to lessen the strength of black marble covered with names.

The book is beautiful; the photographs are matchless in snatching small moments of drama--a vet touching the metal hand of one of the statues, a school girl passing by, an older couple whose grief pours from the page. The Wall speaks for itself as do those who come to it; the book truly lets both speak for themselves.

The Vietnamese have no such wall (the size of such a wall to represent the millions of deaths of Vietnamese is unimaginable) perhaps because their unified country is monument enough to the sacrifices of their

soldiers. The United States has nothing even vaguely similar for the victims of any of our other wars; winning those wars was, apparently, enough. The winners always end up writing the histories of wars and can justify the sacrifice--monuments are unnecessary.

Just as the political powers are now working to clutter up The Wall with all manner of extraneous garbage--to dilute the message--so recollections of Vietnam are rapidly beginning to drown in a lot of sentimental nonsense. POW/MIA's are but a part of this effort to rewrite the clear lessons of Vietnam. The potent efforts of television glamorize Vietnam service. All such attempts must finally face The Wall which tells the ultimate truth: men and women--mostly young--die, and in the case of Vietnam, die only for the greed of their leaders.

I cannot imagine how angry I would be were it my child or my father whose name was inscribed on The Wall. As it is, the fact that the names of a few friends are there makes me angry enough but without the heart-wrenching pain that must come from the death of one dearly loved. The words in *The Wall* make that pain throb as parents and children and lovers and friends of the dead search for the names and for the meaning of what has happened.

Neither the book nor The Wall itself is explicitly anti-war; had anyone even guessed what a powerful antiwar statement The Wall would make it would probably never have been built. The book reflects the same message. One cannot look at a picture of The Wall in the snow, a memorial in a city of memorials, The Wall stretching on and on and on. In a war there is no end to the dead, and the dying and the pain go on and on. They continue today.

I'm not sure why the compilers of this extraordinary book decided on the subtitle, "Images and Offerings..." What religion is it that requires the offering of young people on a regular basis? What horrible war god is consuming these offerings? And what will bring it all to an end? *The Wall* gives only some of the reasons why it must end, but it does that splendidly.



Milwaukee VVAW member Dan Mueller "salutes" following his laying of a wreath during Memorial ceremonies at the Zablocki VA cemetery in Milwaukee; VVAW participates along with more traditional veterans organizations. Nationally, VVAW Chapters held Memorial observances to proclaim: **Honor the Dead, Fight for the Living.**

TET ANNIVERSARY



Militant/Dave Warren
Susan Schnall, who addressed recent veterans' speak-out, leads contingent of hundreds of GI's in 1968 march against Vietnam War. Schnall was later court-martialed for dropping antiwar leaflets on naval installations from an airplane.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1968 Tet Offensive, and the 15th anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements, VVAW in New York sponsored a rally and forum which brought together some of the people who were active against U.S. involvement in Vietnam 20 years ago.

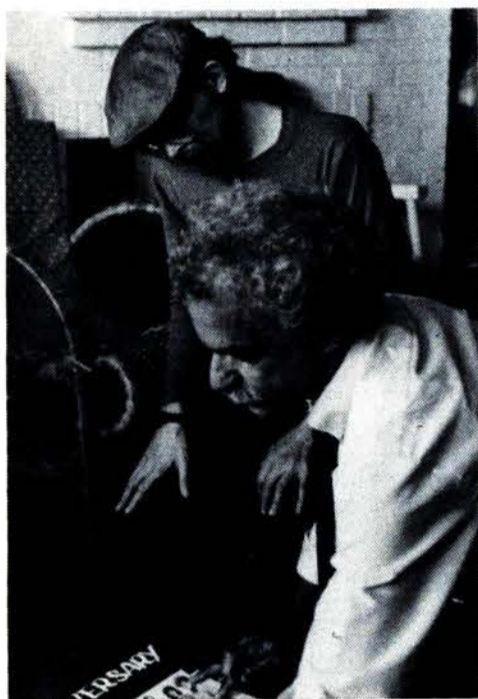
Speakers included Brian Willson, Charles Liteky, Barry Romo, Norma Becker, and Dave Dellinger. Especially exciting was a speech by former anti-war WAVE Susan Schnall who talked about her court-martial as a Navy nurse/Lieutenant for dropping anti-war leaflets on the aircraft carrier USS Ranger and wearing her uniform to anti-war rallies.

For VVAW this was an important opportunity to celebrate victories in the past and tie lessons from years gone by into the vital work now going on in Central America. Remembering the victories of the people of Vietnam gives broader meaning to the victories in progress for the peoples of Central America.

It was also important to bring together activists around independence for people of the countries of Central America--without interference from the U.S. government--and those working for U.S. recognition of the government of Vietnam and restitution and economic aid to that country.

Special thanks must go to Laurie Sandow whose tireless efforts made the event happen.

COLUMBIA : MORE THAN DRUGS & OUTLAWS



Senator Alcantara receives a VVAW anniversary poster from the artist Bob Spicher at a veterans' meeting. The Senator is an artist with a worldwide reputation.

--Evan Douthit
VVAW Chicago

On Sunday, April 3, Chicago VVAW held a reception for visiting Colombian Senator Pedro Alcantara, a noted painter and one of the leaders of the new Union Patriótica party of Colombia. Senator Alcantara has been visiting the U.S. to talk about the dramatic situation in Colombia where 500 members of his party, including 2 senators and 2 representatives, have been murdered by death squads in the 2 and a half years of the party's existence. The Senator himself has been the subject of 2 attempts on his life and is on a published death list.

The Senator noted in his talk to VVAW that the U.S. me-

dia presents Colombia as though it was only a country of drug dealers and terrorists, but in fact it is a country where people suffer and struggle to survive. In Colombia the most important human right, the right to life, is being undermined as the extreme right, unable to outlaw the new Union Patriótica legally has set up 170 paramilitary groups. Their targets have included UP members, trade unionists, peasant and community activists, students, cultural workers, and even politicians of the establishment Liberal and Conservative Parties who opposed the killings. The head of the UP was himself murdered in October 1987.

The Senator explained how the UP came into being in 1985 out of the truce agreements between the government of then-President Belisario Betancur and the main Colombian guerrilla groups. This opened up political space for Colombians who did not feel represented by the archaic Colombian two-party system to express themselves legally. But though Betancur was an honest and courageous man who sincerely wanted peace, according to Senator Alcantara, the extreme right and parts of the military have worked hard to sabotage the agreements.

In spite of the terror, the UP elected 14 congressmen in 1986, and in the March 13 elections this year, UP supported-candidates were elected mayor in 109 of 1009 municipalities. And thanks to a new law, the new mayors can set up municipal police forces, which will make it harder for death squads to kill the newly elected officials.

But Senator Alcantara also emphasized that the UP cannot save Colombia by itself and is seeking to form broad coalitions with all forces in Colombia who support democracy and the rule of law.

Senator Alcantara also talked about the drug trade, and showed how the key to solving the problem from the point of view of Colombia was a deep-rooted agrarian reform. The base of the drug trade, he noted, is the marginalized peasant without title to land, without access to credit or roads or other services. To survive, these peasants must plant the coca plant. Those peasants who own their own land, and who have access to roads and credit and other services--such as those peasants involved in coffee growing--will not touch coca. But even solving the problem in Colombia would only lead to the Peruvian, Bolivian and Ecuadorian peasants taking up the slack.

Meanwhile the U.S. has been blaming these countries for being unable to control the coca trade, when the U.S. has been unable to control its own borders, as hundreds of planes enter the U.S. illegally each month to deliver cocaine to U.S. drug dealers. The real problem for the U.S., Alcantara suggested, may be that the U.S. is angry at the thought of all this money being controlled by Colombians instead of the U.S. mafia.

Meanwhile the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has been putting forward monstrous proposals that large parts of Colombia be poisoned with chemical herbicides, as the U.S. poisoned large areas of Vietnam with Agent Orange. And Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles has suggested a "friendly invasion" of Columbia!

Speaking about himself, Senator Alcantara talked about how his ancestors include a Colombian president and a general who fought at the side of Bolivar, how he spent much of his youth in the U.S. and even went to West Point for a year before going to Italy to study painting. The UP nominated him for the Senate in part to give artists and cultural workers in Colombia a voice in Congress. He also said he was extremely impressed by Rev. Jesse Jackson and his campaign, which he saw as very similar to the campaign being waged by the UP for peace with justice and democracy.

VVAW members who met the Senator at the reception and at other events during his visit to Chicago were very impressed and moved by his story.

REVIEW: TOUR OF DUTY

John Lindquist
VVAW Milwaukee

When I first heard of a TV show about the 'Nam, I was skeptical. Some of us in the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW previewed the pilot show with 5 other vets at the Zablocki VA Medical Center in Wood, Wisconsin. We completed a survey on our feelings on the show and it made the local paper.

After seeing the first show we all agreed that the producers needed a military advisor: no World War II grenades, no Hollywood mortars that never kill, and some real jungles. The first show was too much shot-'em-up and not enough depth to each character. Somehow, the weekly episodes had to deal with the war and also the problems of the GIs on both sides, and the people.

Since October I have seen almost every episode; we have a small get-together at the house--and the show has amazed us.

Here are some examples: I never thought they would even talk about the Vietnamese side of the war, but at least three weeks of the show have done so; an NVA doctor explained the war to a wounded Black GI/POW; an about war in the tunnels showed how the Vietnamese were victorious; and an episode focused on the one million women who fought in the NVA and NLF.

One show centered on racism and the division in the ranks of the GIs. There was the USO, R&R, ambush, overrun, one hard-hitting week after another. Not all the shows have been good. There was one goofy one on the USO show shot down in a helicopter, fighting its way out with the platoon, but most of the episodes are good.

Weekly, I'm glued to the show. I cry, I get scared, I yell out warnings and I am amazed at some of the lines that come out in this show. Watch it--let me know if you think I'm off the wall.

"I found (CANU) most useful." Noam Chomsky. "I read it and I like it." Alexander Cockburn. Also recommended by the National Pledge of Resistance, Mobilization for Survival & Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

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CONTINUED

LAOS

Around this time I took an R&R leave to a missionary settlement in Chaing Mai, Thailand in the golden triangle area of Burma, Laos and Thailand. We toured a valley where opium flourished.

The missionaries were trying to help the farmers convert to some other crop. A long struggle had been going on among three local warlords for control of the region. At the time I didn't connect opium with what I was doing, but later back in Laos I found myself sitting on an unmarked C-47 between some big bundles of poppy plants.

But in reports on the Iran-Contra hearings I found out that the CIA was involved in helping warlord Vang Pao eliminate his competitors to gain control of the opium trade. In return Vang Pao used the profits to pay Meo tribesmen like those I had trained in southern Laos. Air America was actually helping to transport the opium around Indochina and into the U.S. market for sale. There are echoes of this in Central America today, according to incidents brought to light in the Christie Institute lawsuit. The suit charges that the Contras have been operating a cocaine transportation network through the northern jungles of Costa Rica. In addition, the suit claims that members of the drug conspiracy attempted to assassinate renegade Contra leader Eden Pastora. Instead, they killed eight bystanders. Reporter Tony Avirgan, one of the plaintiffs in the suit, was injured.

At the time I didn't think too much of it. I was just doing my job. Laos was the training ground for using official military networks as a cover to run an illegal shadow government. It was easy in the 1980's to take up supplying the Contras when Congress tried to contain the war with the Boland amendment. They had all the pieces in place. And I had been a part of it, unknowingly.



The Chicago Chapter of VVAW is joined by members of the Pledge of Resistance in protesting the U.S. incursion into Honduras. VVAW chapters held similar actions in other places around the country.

Major General Richard Secord is a West Point graduate and a veteran of 285 combat missions. During the war, men like him were my great heroes, and I followed them without question, often flying to unknown risk at great peril.

Like General Secord I went to college on the GI Bill when I came home from the war. While I was writing papers for my BA in American Studies and English Literature, Secord wrote a thesis for the War College entitled "Unconventional Warfare/Covert Operations as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy" in which he said, "...bureaucratic obstacles (like Congressional oversight) should be dismissed out of hand" (New York Times, May 5, 1987). General Secord to my knowledge has never repudiated his War College

Lyndon Johnson was another hero I followed without question at the time. I was on duty at Ubon AFB, Thailand, the night President Johnson secretly flew from Cam Ranh Bay, Viet-

nam to pep talk the F-4 fighter pilots under Col Cappie James, the first black to later make general in the U.S. Ubon's pilots tangled with MIG's bombarding the Red River Valley bridge around Hanoi. Their target, despite official announcements to the contrary, was the river dikes. When broken these would flood the rice-growing plains causing mass starvation.

Covert policy means assassination, invasions and war. Covert warfare as in Laos or Central America today cannot function without presidential approval; it is simply too massive and complex. The Vietnamese and Russians in Laos were targets, so they knew almost everything going on in the secret war. It has become apparent to me that the target of covert war is the American Congress and public's right to know and to be educated--and to make decisions.

The debate is not about who is to conduct foreign policy, but rather who is going to run this country: a set of checks and balances or a covert

government. What we are seeing now is U.S. foreign policy being formulated and conducted covertly, as opposed to using covert methods to implement democratically debated foreign policy.

The Congressional Committee investigating the Iran-Contra deal cannot assign responsibility by focusing on Secord or North alone. This is not Watergate--it is much more serious. It's about whether or not we as a nation continue the democratic process started 200 years ago. The issue is who can make war in the name of the American people. Will it be left to renegades, war profiteers and self-righteous patriots? Let's hope Congress wakes up before it is too late. Otherwise history may record the key battle to defend 200 years of Constitutional checks and balances will be lost to ideological bandits claiming their brand of patriotism is more important than the democratic process. Oliver North may as well have shredded the Constitution if Congress lets these crimes pass.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE DECLINE IN CARE AND SERVICES

vice was shifted out of the Central Office and sent packing a few miles away to Washington D.C.'s Regional Office. Crammed into the space were the service's files, computers and supplies."

"All the staff of a critical VA Central Office service were summarily exiled--except for the services director, Gerald P. Moore, who alone continued to reside at the Central Office.

"An important VA service--where administrative reviews of claims at the highest level are conducted and where fundamental laws and regulations of the claims process are interpreted--

has been fragmented and disrupted ... all for a view of the President's home."

Spending \$2 million or even \$400,000 to dislocate a critical VA service and remodel and refurbish a political appointee's office--for the sake of a view--is wrong. And it makes a mockery of the sacrifices that disabled vets have made in the past.

The Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW decided it was time to get off our butts and do something about it. A spring offensive was in order. We sent a letter to other vets' groups telling them about the DC nightmare. Included with the

letter is a copy of a complaint form to be used to organize veterans who have gotten poor or no treatment at the VA because of the cutbacks. We hope to approach the local VVAC Committee at the VA of which we are all members, and handle it from the inside. An action like this could get other veterans groups active on issues that are critical to veterans of all eras.

1988 is an election year. Even though VVAW does not endorse political candidates, we do urge every member to be active and vote. Veterans are not yet an issue in this election. But are we not part of the cost of America's wars? Whether it is freeing a concentration camp in Germany in 1945, or Tet 1968 in Hue City, a disability is with you for life--if you can get

back home. A lot of the veterans' programs in our country have been cut to the bone; one half of all street people are veterans, sometimes as many as 1/3rd of them Vietnam-era vets. Nationwide, 36,000 veterans a month get turned away at VA hospitals around the country. Whoever becomes President will have to deal with this--or ignore it. Unless we all get active at some level, things will get worse.

Well, that's an update from Milwaukee; we'll keep you posted. We have a saying here: Don't forget your brothers and sisters in our VA hospitals. They need visitors and volunteers. And don't forget to pass the word about the chump in the VA central office: he deserves the grenade of the month award.

As I unpacked luggage in Washington DC, memories of Dewey Canyon III and Dewey Canyon IV came to mind. Now, on July 4, 1987, I was about to participate in my biggest gig yet. It was to be a tribute to Vietnam veterans and their families. The event was set up by HBO and would feature Stevie Wonder, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Lynda Ronstadt, Richie Havens, the Four Tops--the list went on to include many stars of the stage and screen.

We had come a long ways since these early demonstrations. I became active around the Agent Orange issue. Now I would sing my story of how it changed my life to millions watching the concert on this 4th of July. The song "Hurting More" would be my only song to sing. One shot. So I had to make it count. My thoughts prior to going on were on you, the men and women who've encouraged me.

I'm happy to say the feelings that went into the song were felt by many listeners. Our struggle was experienced; the pain and loss we all carry was understood and acted on. Several million dollars was raised throughout that evening, and the enthusiastic response by the 21,000 in the audience made my heart pound with delight. Special thanks to John Ritter. He's a gentle soul who thinks the world of us and our struggle. I met two buddies in DC the day of the show: Rick and Chip DuVall. They warmed up the audience prior to taping. What a trip we all had, one that will never be forgotten by any of those who helped to make it happen.

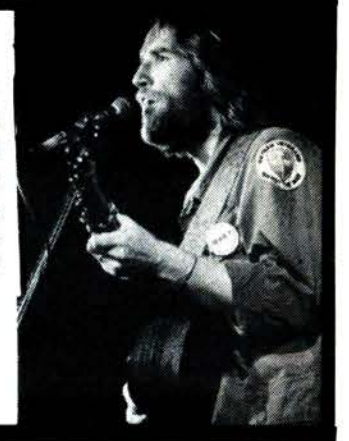
"Boonie Toons" has re-

THE VETERAN



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ceived mail. Among the letters was a '45 record from "Alias Austin Adams." He served with the 26th Marines in Vietnam from 1968-70 as a forward air controller. He started a VVAW chapter at the University of New Mexico in the early '70's. "I retired like so many others to a typical yuppie life in hopes that my vote would do more than sore feet.... Time has proven that assumption wrong," says Adams. After a short trip to Nicaragua and other Central American countries, he made a decision to become actively

involved again, "lest we someday find ourselves reliving our own individual nightmares."

Both sides of Austin's 45 have powerful messages. The lyrics speak for themselves. Says Adams: "I suppose that in a way 'Freedom's Bullet' and 'Southern Liberty' were simply my way of making my feelings known about what I had seen in Nicaragua and other Central American countries."

The record with "Southern Liberty" and "Freedom's Bullet" sells for \$5.00. Proceeds from the record go to help Casa Marinelli, which aids and shelters Central American refugees. Austin dedicates his record "To the wonderful people

I have worked with in the past and continue this day to extend that hand of liberty to all who continue to flee political persecution and death in Central America."

Austin Adams is a good listen. If you enjoy great lyrics wound around a polished country band, you'll like this record. To order, write:

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* * * * *



I sang at Kokomo's 5th annual Indiana Vietnam Veterans reunion on Sept 18-20. They flew Rick DuVall in from the West Coast, and Britt Small and Festival did a concert on Saturday night. In the vender's tent I met Bill McKenna, a Vietnam vet from New Smyrna Beach, FL. He is a singer/song-writer whose cassette "Vietnam Still a Part of Who I Am" I enjoyed

listening to. Bill was with the 7th Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division in I Corps in '68-'69, and the 3rd Amtrac Battalion, 3rd Marines in I Corps in 1969. Twenty-two months in country "changed forever the person I was," says Billy. "Like many veterans, I tried at first to block out the entire experience. However, the memory of those times holds more than just war and hardship--they had thoughts of good friends who were at their best when times were worst."

Bill offers some of those memories on his cassette. You'll hear "Billy's Friend," "Kentucky Boy," "The Veteran," "R & R Woman," "Vietnam Memories," "Flashback," "Jake's Song," and "Khôông biet America." Bill says it best: "If Vietnam touched your life, the album will touch your heart." It's available on album or cassette at \$9.95 and \$1.50 for handling. Send to:
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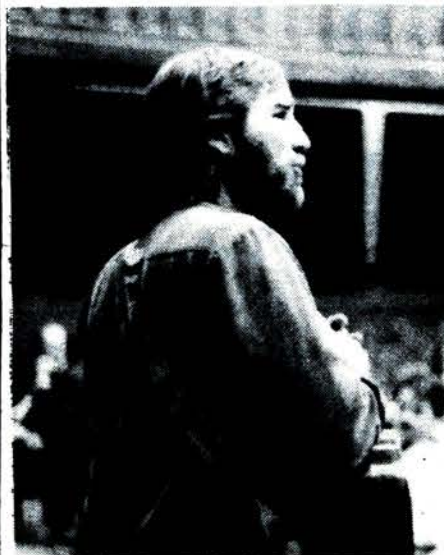
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BEFORE CONTRAGATE THERE WAS LAOS

--Bob Anderson
VVAW Pittsburgh

When I flew out of Saigon in 1968 I thought I had left the Vietnam War behind me. But the war has had a way of reappearing in my life. Many vets experience the same thing.

Although I didn't know it at the time, the missions I was flying were test programs for what was to become a massive CIA operation in Southeast Asia, code-named the Phoenix program. Phoenix was later expanded to South Vietnam where an estimated 60,000 non-combatants were killed. It is disgusting to know I was used for that.

Following the Iran-Contra hearings brought some of the bitterness of the experience back. I learned that retired Air Force Major General Richard Secord was the head of the covert operations group to which I was assigned in Laos. He was later joined there by a young associate, a second lieutenant named Oliver North. U.S. military involvement in Laos at that time was forbidden by Congress, so everything we did was secret--and illegal.

Since Tahket is closer to Hanoi than Saigon it was a jumping-off point for the Plain of Jars battlefield and interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh trail. Tahket was a laid-back town, sparsely populated with the typical open-air farmers' market full of fruit and hanging meat selections. I can still smell the odor and feel the flies. Fisherman sold fish caught in the muddy Mekong and merchants displayed clothes, watches and soap powders. A few kilometers out of town, preparations for the surprise Tet Offensive were in full swing, and we knew nothing about it.

I was part of a demolition team of two that flew from Thailand to Laos in an unmarked gray turbo-prop Porter PC-6 short landing and take-off brush plane. A nameless pilot picked us up at Nakhom Phanom AFB, Thailand.

I knew the big brass was around that day from the way other GIs were acting. The high-ranking officers used code names and wore special aviator sunglasses. Lower-ranking men knew when the big chiefs were around. They came and went in a twin-engine Cessna 401. It was a beautiful plane, painted blue and white just like Air Force 1. In red paint it was

marked Air America, the CIA airline. The Cessna flew out of the big U.S. Air Force base at Udorn, Thailand--CIA headquarters for their covert war.

We parked the awkward looking Porter next to the Cessna. We had GI crew cuts co-

Porter PC-6 arrived at the air field. It was the milk run plane for daily supply flights and mail service, an in-country CIA taxi service. The ICC and media had come and gone and the base was back to normal. We hung around while the plane fueled up

of my fellow demo teammates were awarded Bronze Stars for recovering bodies. Not being armed yet (we were to pick up weapons after we landed) and low on fuel, we flew to Pakse, Laos, near the Cambodian-Vietnamese border.

The runway at Pakse was a field of bushes and part of a road. We taxied up to a group of Laotian men at the edge of a clearing. A meeting was in progress. As we unloaded our demolition equipment, a couple of Americans were talking to a translator. About a dozen Meo tribesmen--young men and boys not more than 10 or 12 years old--were lounging about. There were backpacks, rifles, and boxes of ammunition scattered on the ground.

One of the advisors was demonstrating an Instamatic-type camera, telling the group leader that if they wanted credit for their kills they must take photos. After practicing with the camera awhile, the group got up, pulled on their backpacks and headed off into the jungle. We picked up our gear, and went off with the advisors (who turned out to be Green Berets) to a new camp built under the jungle canopy.

For the next week we worked with some of the Meo tribesmen at this forward base camp, instructing them in demolition techniques and general explosives safety. We recovered more bombs and rockets from another plane that had been shot down. I thought the Meo were supposed to be interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail. Later some Green Berets told me that the assassination of village leaders, record keepers and opponents was their main job. This was a new area being pacified and those opposed or thought to be Communist were being eliminated. I thought we were training warriors; instead we were training assassins. This was pacification--CIA style: search out and destroy.

I never expected the embassy ID to protect us. I didn't think this line of reasoning would convince the North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao not to kill us. We knew if we were killed and our bodies not recovered, our families would be told we were missing in action. If our bodies were recovered, like some we did recover, it would be said we were killed in a construction accident in Thailand where we were officially assigned.

Please Turn To page 14



vered with various floppy hats, and wore blue jeans, tee-shirts and boots in an attempt to look non-military. Since most Americans are taller than the average Lao, we naturally stood out. Another American and several Laoitans were refueling the Cessna with a hand pump from 55-gallon drums stacked nearby.

We went into the tin-roofed building which served as Tahket headquarters. Maps hung on the walls. Radio operators were busy talking. I counted the pins on the map. Tahket was one of 73 such sites in Laos.

The International Control Commission, a United Nations peace-keeping patrol, and a U.S. TV crew were due in town, so all Americans had to leave the air field while the Laotians remained in charge. The brass took off in the Cessna and were out of sight. The rest of us went to the CIA safe house, a new bungalow built high off the ground on a back street of town. That night we partied in the cooler air at a cafe with other pilots and ground crew members. This was to be my routine for a year. Fly in, get briefed and go out on assignment.

The next morning another

and we were off to the crash site down country.

The operation in Laos was run by active duty pilots and cooks and people like me "on loan" to the CIA. There were no orders or files to record any of this. A top secret security clearance had us sworn to secrecy. We could be punished for speaking out. I thought it was an adventure, right out of some movie. The criminal nature of it didn't even occur to me. The operation was so extensive I figured it was authorized by the commander-in-chief.

The radio code name for Laos was "Texas," taken from a popular western frontier movie of the period called "Texas Across the River." And just like the movies, things change fast in secret wars. As our flight banked for the landing approach a caller on the radio warned us to pull up fast. They had just lost control of the field we were to land in. We circled around trying to see what was going on. The turbo engine was very noisy so we couldn't determine the direction of ground-fire. The radio had gone silent.

We stayed high out of rifle and rocket range. At another site overrun like this one, some