



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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## Recognition, Finally!!

On July 11, 1995, the U. S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. This is something that we in VVAW have called for since the end of the shooting war in 1975. While we celebrate this action, we must remember the price the people of Vietnam paid while waiting for successive U.S. political administrations to make this move. Though the shooting war ended in 1975, for the next twenty years the U.S. waged political and economic warfare against the

people of Vietnam, even to the point of supporting Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge against them! Finally, when Vietnam was knocked down to its lowest economic level, with the denial of international funds for reconstruction, not to mention the continued effects of the war (Agent Orange poisoning, unexploded ordnance, etc.), moves were made by political and economic elites in this country to open formal relations with the former "enemy." We must recog-

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## VVAW Celebrates Anniversary

By JOE MILLER, VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE

The U.S. government has finally decided to establish normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam, and this is certainly an occasion to celebrate. It's about time! It must be remembered, however, that our government kept up an economic and political war against the Vietnamese people ever since that day in 1975, April 30, when they took their country back, after nearly thirty years of the intense struggle.

To celebrate the anniversary of that earlier event, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) and our friends gathered at the Hothouse in Chicago

on Saturday, April 29, 1995. This event was first planned at the annual VVAW National Meeting in October 1994. We wanted to have a party to remind people that Vietnam's struggle against U.S. aggression was a just struggle. Further, we wished to remember and to celebrate our role in helping to end the U.S. war against the people of Vietnam.

Nearly one hundred and twenty people attended this gathering for a small donation, half of which would be sent to Vietnam to assist in people-to-people aid projects. There were also VVAW

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VVAW has been volunteering services over the years to help homeless veterans. Chicago VVAW feeds homeless vets in conjunction with the V.A. and other Vet's groups. (above) The Vet's Stand Down, which feeds up to 1,000 (homeless plus volunteers) and provides medical, clothing, showers, shelter and more, could not happen without the dedicated work of Phil Meyers and Jeanne Douglas. (below, shown with unknown Vet).



## Vietnam Era Ends at the City University of N Y

By JUNE SVETLOVSKY AND BEN CHITTY

Twenty-two years ago, the last of over two and a half million American men and women sent to war in Vietnam came back to the world. Used by an imperial government, abused by a vindictive Pentagon, neglected by a corrupt and demoralized Veterans Administration, shunned by self-styled patriots among our fellow countrymen, we picked up our lives and carried on. Or at least tried.

For a lot of us, that meant school. For most of us, trying to make do on the G.I. Bill, the schools were public. The largest single undergraduate institution in the country — then and now — was the City University of New York, with its 18 colleges scattered across the five boroughs. Like everywhere else, veterans'

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## Fallen Comrades

- Jack McCloskey - obit on page 9
- Shelly Ramsdell - obit on page 10
- Walter Collins - obit on page 10



PO Box 408594  
Chicago, IL 60640



# From the National Office

BY JOE MILLER

To all members and friends of VVAW, Inc.:

You have been waiting rather patiently for the next issue of THE VETERAN, VVAW's national newspaper -- and, here it is! We'd like to thank Jeff Machota and Lisa Boucher, two young supporters of VVAW, for their superb volunteer work in editing and publishing this issue. You should note that the paper has a different "look," as it was produced on computer.

The paper was delayed much longer than we expected. One of the central problems was the fact that VVAW didn't have the funds necessary to get the paper printed and mailed out. Due to the generosity of many of you, we managed to pull together enough money to complete this issue.

VVAW has tried to get grants from progressive foundations, but to no avail, as they argue we will still be around whether they give us funding or not.

If this is true, we need more regular support from members and friends like yourselves. THE VETERAN is and has been an informational and organizational tool of VVAW since our earliest days. We take the paper with us into schools, colleges, universities, and community organizations where

our members are invited to speak. We mail issues to members and friends who live far from VVAW chapters, so they can keep up with what we are doing.

Now, with the resurgence of interest in VVAW, due to the books published or soon-to-be-published about us and with a video documentary in the works, it is even more important for us to be visible. So, please send us what you can to help in this effort. Think about making a monthly contribution in order to help us maintain this visibility. All contributions are tax-deductible!

Make checks out to: Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc., or to VVAW, Inc. Send these contributions to: Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.,

P.O. Box 408594,  
Chicago, Illinois 60640.

An additional aspect of VVAW's "leap" into the modern age is the establishment of VVAW-Net, which got off the ground during the Autumn of 1995.

VVAW-Net is an informal communications network of folks involved and interested in the activities of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. To participate in the network, we require that an individual supply a snail

mail address (A standard U.S. Postal Service street address, as opposed to an email address — Editor) and a very brief statement of his or her interest in, or connection to, the organization.

Postings to the net are addressed to one of the core members. The current distributors are Joe Miller from the National Office (jtmiller@uiuc.edu) and Ben Chitty from the New York chapter (abcqc@cunyvm.cuny.edu).

Some things to note in your calendars:

- Annual National Steering Committee meeting, combined with VVAW's Fundraiser Halloween Party, in Chicago, Saturday, October 26, 1996. Contact the National Office at (312) 327-5756 for further details.

- VVAW's 30th Anniversary is now being planned. This will also happen in Chicago, probably the weekend before Memorial Day in 1997. We will be providing more details as these plans develop. Keep this spot open in your datebooks.

We hope you enjoy this latest issue of THE VETERAN. VVAW still has a lot of work to do, since many of the fundamental problems that pushed us to organizing in the first place are still here. Stay in touch!

## Where We Came From, Who We Are, Who Can Join

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still-raging war in Indochina, and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States as well as active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW quickly took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we started the first rap groups to deal with

traumatic after-effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counselling at Vet Centers now. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

Today our government is still financing and arming undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world. Recently, American troops have been sent into combat in the Middle East and Central America, for many of the same misguided reasons that

were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans are still denied justice -- facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are being cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent another generation from being put through a similar tragedy and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. JOIN US!

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see page 19 for membership info

# FRAGGIN'

BILL SHUNAS, CHICAGO VVAW

The presidential election season is upon us. For all those interested in politics, these are the good times. That's because the usually deceiving politicians will finally be telling the truth. Happens every four years. Consider what we will hear:

Mr. Dole saying, "That Bill Clinton. He's up to his belly button in Whitewater sleaze." By golly, old Bob is finally telling the truth.

Mr. Clinton says, "That Bob Dole is owned lock, stock and a barrel of corn oil by the Archer Daniels Midland company of price-fixing fame." And that's the truth. Keep telling it like it is, Bill, and people will forget those little old fibs about Gennifer Flowers.

And maybe Clinton will reveal the whole truth about the illegal fundraising Dole has done over the years. And good old Bob will read off the list of campaign promises Bill made in '92 and has since broken. And who can say

there's no truth in politics? Why, even the spouses can get into the act.

Hillary Clinton: "Mrs. Dole took over the Red Cross and manipulated it to suit the Dole campaign. And she gave prestigious jobs to political contributors of her hubby."

And Elizabeth Dole can counter: "I'm just a fine Christian woman trying to do good. I'm not in this for personal gain, unlike Mrs. Clinton. She got away with that little bit of insider trading where she made that easy hundred thousand. I mean! Such a desperate maneuver for so little cash."

And what about drugs? I don't know if the voters care, but the politicians are concerned about which party smoked, toked, snorted and shot up the most. The Speaker of the House. White House staff. The Republican keynote speaker. They seem to think they might get more votes if they confess to drug use, usually after somebody out of their past blows

the whistle. Then they blame it on college silliness. Is that what higher education means?

In the meantime, less influential people are doing five years hard time for doing less drugs than these folks.

And this will give Clinton a chance to attack Dole on his favorite drug which has probably killed off more people than all the others combined. Dole won't admit that tobacco is harmful. Actually, tobacco has probably been healthy for his campaign and the making of political allies.

However, Dole has the advantage on the drug issue. Imagine a televised debate. He'll look directly into the camera, muster up all the sincerity of a Richard Nixon, and declare, "You did inhale. I believe with all my heart that no one would put a joint to his lips, take a puff and not inhale."

So, the election will go on. Meanwhile, the average wage of working Americans goes down, the hard-off get cast aside, more

promises to veterans are broken, more promises to non-veterans are broken, and the wealthy get more wealthy. This stuff will be ignored. We'll have debates on drugs and budget-balancing and crime in the streets (not in the office).

It's a wonder you'd want to get out of bed on Election Day. In fact, fewer of us may vote than ever before. Ain't much to choose from that will improve your life. They call it democracy, but what is democracy without choices to make? Do we get to vote on a better future? Any future? Is there a political party that looks after our interests? Not at the moment. So the big question: what do you think? Will we be worse off with a Democratic President and a Republican Congress? A Republican President and a Democratic Congress? A Demcat and Demcats? A Repcan and Repcans? None of the above? All of the above? Let the games begin.

## Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Dewey Canyon III

BY BILL DAVIS, CHICAGO VVAW

Twenty-five years ago as the war raged on in Southeast Asia, Richard Nixon had unveiled his "secret plan" to end the war—both the unmerciful bombing of Vietnam and the expansion of the war to Cambodia and Laos. The expansion, a massive bombing and subversion campaign, was indeed so secret that it was carried forth without the knowledge or support of the American people, except perhaps of the CIA.

As the anti-war movement planned its own spring "peace offensive," the veterans of that same war in Vietnam would that spring on April 18-25 initiate a campaign of their own named Operation Dewey Canyon III—A Limited Incursion into Washington D.C. and the Halls of Congress. DCIII, as it came to be known, was named after Dewey Canyon I and II, which were two separate invasions of Laos. The first was in January and February of 1969 by elements of the 3rd Marine Division and the subsequent invasion during the first seven days of the 1970 South Viet-

namese invasion of Laos.

Organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the actions of over 1,000 Vietnam vets from across the country would capture the imagination of the American people as the VVAW emblem became a mighty fixture on national network news.

Headlines of the nation's papers reported the marches of the vets on Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House, and the occupation of the Supreme Court steps. The nation cried with the vets locked out of Arlington National Cemetery and held its breath as over 1,500 Vietnam veterans returned their medals from that war, an event unparalleled in history. These powerful events, led by VVAW, served as a catalyst that propelled the events of that spring of 1971 into the most massive protests yet seen against the war in Southeast Asia.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War grew to an organization of 50,000+ members with chapters in every state, most cities and many overseas locations. Twenty-

five years later, we look back proudly with the certain knowledge that our efforts helped galvanize a nation to come forward and put an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Twenty-five years later the power and depth of that broad peace movement still send shudders down the corridors of the segment of the veterans' community that refuses to bow to a seemingly endless parade of war and military intervention. The White House has brought us to and over the brink of war, as if war is our only foreign policy, aimed directly at the hearts of all third world countries.

Twenty-five years ago VVAW awoke the American public to the reality of Vietnam. Today, we must speak about a decent life for all veterans. And a world without war for our children. Yellow ribbons won't pay the rent. Medals won't ease the pain of psychological problems.

Money for Human Need, Not War!

Justice for Veterans!



# The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era by Richard Moser

REVIEWED BY KIM SCIPES, CHICAGO VVAW

"And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for?" were the words to the most popular song among American soldiers in late 1969 and the early 1970s—in Vietnam. The US Army and Marine Corps were torn apart by internal struggles against the war and against the authoritarianism and racism as young GIs struggled to survive the war and their time in the military. Entire units refused to fight -- a death penalty offense under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (sic); when operations did take place, they were oftentimes likely to be "search and avoid" rather than the official "search and destroy" missions; officers and NCOs were killed by their own men as "fragging" entered the language and fragmentation grenades entered their "hootches"; sabotage was rampant; troops were being disarmed when they came out of the bush to prevent firefights from taking place between blacks and racist whites; and drug usage--both marijuana and heroin (the latter flown in from Thailand by the CIA)--was rampant. This resistance, which started before the 1968 Tet Offensive by the Vietnamese, mushroomed afterward.

But these struggles were not confined to Vietnam itself--they took place, with varying degrees of intensity, wherever the US military was located (including in the Navy and Air Force, overseas and in the States)--and vets kept struggling against the war and the military even after they got out. The antiwar demonstration led by Viet-

nam Veterans Against the War in Washington, DC during April 1971--"Dewey Canyon III," where antiwar vets threw their medals for valor and service in disgust back at Congress--showed in no certain terms that young soldiers were rejecting the war and everything associated with it.

This war inside the military

**This war inside the military  
... threatened to cause the  
US military to disintegrate.**

--inspired by the mass movements in the states by Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, gays and lesbians, women, and students--threatened to cause the US military to disintegrate. Ties were consciously made by activists within the military.

The intellectual leap that connected war to other forms of oppression was an essential part of the [GI] antiwar movement. Indeed, the antiwar movement treated war not simply as some extraordinary event but rather as a well-established cultural system with its own structure of human meanings and identities. War and empire became understood as activities that both created and were dependent upon oppressive sexual and gender identities, racism, and economic exploitation. From this perspective, the war in Vietnam was not only a question of poor

policy choices, diplomatic errors, and even national aggression, but also the most extreme expression of America's democratic shortcomings.

It was these struggles, in light of the Vietnamese fighting abilities and willingness to bear any costs, that forced the US to withdraw its forces from Vietnam.

When we consider the harm done to the people and the damage to the country itself--as one limited example, more bombs were dropped on Vietnam than were dropped on Italy, Germany and Japan combined during World War II--there can be no question that this was a major victory.

While there have been some good books written about the war, and even about parts of the resistance, Moser's book is the first to pull together the story about the resistance in one place. He includes the war against the war in Vietnam, as well as the resistance movement inside the US, and the struggles by veterans once they got out. Probably nothing turned the American public, Nixon's "silent majority," against the war as did protests by US veterans and servicepeople.

However, Moser's book is

more important than just telling the story, as important as that is. After all, these struggles by mostly working class men and women constituted the greatest working class mobilization in this country since the 1930s--they just took place inside the military instead of workplaces.

Moser places these struggles squarely in the context of American tradition, history and culture. He suggests that there are two different military traditions in this country. One, which he calls the "winter soldier" tradition, is where people answer their country's call to fight for justice, freedom and liberty. He uses the Revolutionary War and the efforts by northern soldiers in the Civil War as his examples. He contrasts this to the "fighter" tradition, exemplified by the Indian fighter, the Bourbon officer of the Confederacy, and the Rough Rider, fighting to defend an established position of superiority and "rooted in an exceptional national character that bears the infallible wisdom of Western civilization. This superiority assumes patriarchy, white supremacy, and survival of the fittest." And while these two traditions were merged into the single "fighter" of World War II, Moser argues that the struggles by the servicepeople during Vietnam reaffirmed the tradition of the Winter Soldier in opposition to the fighter--and, in the case of Vietnam, won.

This is a very strong argu-

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**"An eye opening Vietnam War book."**

—Cynthia Enloe, Clark University, author of *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*

## THE NEW WINTER SOLDIERS

*GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era*  
**Richard Moser**

"Moser has written an important story of transformation. He provides a detailed description of ways in which pain became a source of insight and action, 'how thousands of American soldiers and veterans created something good from what was one of the worst experiences of their lives.' The book will contribute to our knowledge not only of the Vietnam War but of broader human struggles to cope with, and ultimately contest, war-making."

—Robert J. Lifton, author of *Home from the War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans*

"Not only does Moser show the hidden depths and the extent of the anti-war movement among American G.I.s during the Vietnam War, but he also offers us a new way to read that movement. This is a finely tuned blend of anecdote and interpretation."

—Ronald J. Grele, Director, Oral History Research Office,  
Columbia University

"A vigorous analysis of the protest movement among veterans as well as within the military establishment. . . . Highly recommended."

—*Library Journal*

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# After Action Report: Shut Down School of the Americas

BY BEN CHITTY, VVAW EAST COAST REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Early in the morning of Tuesday, November 15th, Army veteran Louis De Benedette walked onto the base at Fort Benning, Georgia, and -- along with Jesuit priest Bill Bichsel of Tacoma, Washington -- chained shut the doors to the U.S. Army's School of the Americas. Both men were quickly arrested, along with three other people passing out leaflets: Will Prior, Vietnam veteran from Las Cruces, New Mexico, John Lennehan, peace activist from King's Bay, Georgia, and Fred Mercy from Spokane, Washington, also a Jesuit.

The act capped three days of fasting and vigil at the main gate of the base. The protest continued the next day. Bichsel and Mercy knelt before a sign outside the School, while Bichsel threw some of his own blood on the sign. The pair were arrested again. Later in

the day, the protesters held a memorial service for the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her teenage daughter, murdered in 1989 by Salvadoran soldiers including nineteen SOA graduates, and four American women, three nuns and a lay sister, abducted, raped and murdered in 1980 by Salvadoran soldiers including three SOA graduates. After the service the protesters approached and embraced three counter-protesters across the street.

"A good action," reported DeBenedette. "We closed the place down for about twenty minutes--the MPs had to find some bolt cutters. The Army was embarrassed, as it should be, and the School is very upset with us." He noted that the School did not seem very popular among the military police who detained him. De Benedette traveled to Fort

Benning from New Haven, Connecticut, partly, he said, in honor of his friend Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano, a human rights activist disappeared by the Peruvian army in 1990. He is godfather to her four children.

De Benedette and the others were charged with criminal trespass and interference with government property, and given "ban and bar" letters. The pair, re-arrested Wednesday, were again charged with criminal trespass. Bichsel was also charged with conspiracy to commit malicious mischief: apparently defacing the sign (mischief), using his own blood (malice) from a vial he had prepared beforehand (conspiracy).

The action was planned to mark the fifth anniversary of the Jesuits' murder in El Salvador. It may also set the tone for the campaign to close down the School.

The last Congress twice defeated amendments offered by Congressman Joe Kennedy of Massachusetts to defund the School, and the next Congress will probably do no better. But Army veteran Patrick Liteky--convicted of throwing blood in the School in 1990--described the act as "an interim victory." "It was a symbolic act," he observed. "It disrupted business as usual. That was our intent." Roy Bourgeois, Vietnam veteran and Maryknoll priest, also convicted in the 1990 protest, added: "We will never give up, until the doors are closed, finally and for good."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
SOA WATCH, P.O. Box 3330,  
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, 31903  
(TELEPHONE 706-682-5369).

## Letter from Louie

*Brother Louis De Benedette, member of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, has started his 4-month sentence for actions at the School of the Americas on Veterans Day 1995. Louie is incarcerated in the federal correctional facility at Otisville, New York, an old Army camp converted to a prison -- Louie probably does not feel right at home...*

— Ben Chitty USN 65-9 VN  
66-7 68 NY/VVAW

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June 27, 1996

Dear Ben,

I am in Otisville Camp, NY. Been here for 1 week and get out Oct. 20. It is sometimes boring since there is not much diversion, and being 53 I cannot lift weights 12 hours a day or play sports. The camp is adjacent to the penitentiary in Otisville. We are 100 men, and we work the grounds outside the main prison. There are also 20 or so deer. The men are serving 6-10 year sentences, mostly drug-related. These sentences are too long for non-violent crimes.

I hope you got my video. Alvaro and I wanted to do this so that you all would know him. The next time he returns I'll start with us vets. Too much had to be done,

and I had to work to raise money. Alvaro is back in Peru and I'll be hearing about him by letter and through a friend who will call him in Peru. I worry about those kids. It's really a horrible government and military. Someday I may have to get them all out of there because I do not see any movement that can change the military. I believe it is important to do what I do, but even if we close the school, I do not know what that would mean to Peru. I suspect the military would continue. Maybe a nonviolent movement will arise like the one Alvaro's mother belonged to.

In the end, I believe we need to disarm our own government and this is far more difficult than almost anything else in the world. Our name is truly prophetic -- the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Let's never forget why we exist and the fraternity and the community we have. We are necessary, and we are brothers and sisters.

Peace,

Louie

*Louie's address:*

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## Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano: Peruvian Human Rights Activist

BY LOUIS DE BENEDETTE, NY/NJ VVAW

On June 10, 1990 my friend and Peruvian Human Rights activist Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano was kidnapped and disappeared by Peruvian soldiers as she lay sleeping with her youngest daughter in her arms. She was in her Andean home in the city of Ayacucho. Seventeen armed and hooded men entered the house, terrorized the family, and dragged her out into the night at gun point. She has never been seen again. She was 31 years old.

I first met Guadalupe in Lima in 1984. I was in Peru helping at an orphanage with Vietnam veteran Father Joe Ryan. She had just completed a march with a group of relatives of the disappeared and a priest, Neptali Liceta. Guadalupe's husband Elario had been disappeared in 1983. Guadalupe, 24, a mother of four small children, helped found a committee of relatives of the disappeared and joined SERPAJ ("Service for Peace and Justice"), a non-violent activist group.

I had kept in constant contact with this dear friend, and campaigned for her release from prison



in 1986, when she was declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. It had always been an honor to serve her, and she named me the godfather of her children when they were baptized. In 1990, I went to Peru to search for her and helped the children who were still young. I returned again in 1992 to see the children. I was joined by Dave

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## VVAW Celebrates Anniversary

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souvenirs for sale and extensive photo displays about the war and our role in the antiwar movement. In addition to scheduled speakers, there was an open speakers' list, which encouraged anyone to come to the mike and express what the struggle in Vietnam meant to them.

The event opened with Barry Romo, one of VVAW's National Coordinators, welcoming everyone in the spirit of celebration. He pointed out that we in VVAW believe that it was a "good thing" when the Vietnamese people finally got their whole country back in 1975. He reminded everyone that even one of the "main architects" of that war against Vietnam now says the war was wrong. It is unimportant whether or not Robert McNamara feels bad about this; it is important that he has confirmed what we have been saying about the war all along, just as with the Pentagon Papers in 1971.

Barry then provided the most recent statistics on Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong soldiers, and nearly 600,000 ARVN soldiers. In addition, there are some 300,000 Vietnamese MIAs, civilian and military. Since the end of the war, 50,000 Vietnamese babies have been born with serious birth defects due to exposure to Agent Orange and other defoliants used by the United States in that region. The effects of such exposure are estimated to continue for another 40 years, that is, sixty years after the war's end! So, while we gathered in celebration of the anniversary of the end of the war, we must also remember the continuing price being paid on a daily basis for the many thousands of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians.

One friend who joined the speakers at this party was Dick Riley, longtime peace and social justice activist, and an important figure in the Palestine Solidarity Committee in Chicago for many years. Dick talked about the movement that developed around opposition to the war in Vietnam among young people. He pointed out that, in 1968, when he was only sixteen years old, he was organizing high school students against the war. "We were really young," he said, and there were "so many courageous people." This spirit still lives in young people today, he said, referring to the many young faces in the group that afternoon. In a nod to VVAW,

Dick reminded everyone that this organization, is still perceived by activists as being "in the forefront of struggle for social justice." He urged young people to "talk to them, learn from them." He then raised his glass in a toast to the victory of the people of Vietnam.

The group was then entertained by VVAW member Jim Walktendonk, a singer from Madison, Wisconsin. Jim first explained how he drafted in 1968 and then became a dog handler in Vietnam, where he and the dogs were exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides every day. After his daughter was born with birth defects in 1976, he and his wife, Sukie, began the search for answers, which led them to work with VVAW on this issue. Jim sang two of his most well-known songs, "That's All He Knows," about a foreman he had to work with in Madison, and "The Claymore Polka," about the fantasies Jim has had when considering payback against Dow and the other chemical companies that have had such a deadly impact on so many Vietnam vets and their families.

Following Jim's set, Barry was about to introduce the owner of the Hothouse to the crowd, when a long distance phone call came in from Australia. It was Graham Bell, an Australian Vietnam veteran and a longtime friend of VVAW. He wanted to send his regards and his support for the celebration to all in attendance. A great cheer went up from the crowd at this announcement.

Barry then introduced Marguerite, owner of the Hothouse, to the crowd. We wanted to publicly thank her for making the venue available to us. Marguerite thanked the crowd for their patronage and pointed out that she saw her role as one who helped to reaffirm principles of social justice and "make connections" between activists. She also said it was "great to see so many young people, because that's how we're

gonna beat this thing," referring to the rightward shift in this country reflected in the 1994 elections.

Two graduating seniors from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign also spoke to the gathering. First of all, Joe Rubas told everyone how he moved from being the National Public Affairs Officer for Air Force ROTC to finally deciding to quit the program as a result of discussions with Barry Romo and others in my course on the Vietnam war. He also talked about how he managed to make connections with his uncle, a Vietnam veteran who had never discussed the war with anyone in the family prior to Joe's decision to split with ROTC. His

students just as Barry, Le Ly Hayslip, and others had done for him.

As Bill Davis, a former National Coordinator of VVAW, took over the M.C. duties, he introduced two very important figures in VVAW and the struggle for social justice. First, Annie Luginbill, who worked with the Chicago Area Military Project (CAMP) in the 1960s and later connected with VVAW. Annie talked about her move from draft counseling to G.I. counseling to work with veterans. She also told how exciting it was to finally be able to visit Vietnam in 1991 on a VVAW-sponsored trip, after working for so many years in the

Best Wishes to all the Members, Former Members, Friends and Supporters of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

You good people are carrying on the great traditions that build the American Nation:

- \* Dissent and the exercise of the rights to freedom of thought and speech
- \* Hard work and tenacity — the resolve to carry on in the face of difficulties
- \* A strong sense of justice and the commitment to fight for the rights of others, even if you dislike them and disagree with their views
- \* Tolerance of difference

There have been times when I have disliked what you have done or the way you have called you people noisy — but that's what democracy is all about. You people deserve the highest respect! KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. BE NOISY! BE ANNOYING.

All the best on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Vietnam War.

From Graham Bell

Ex-Australian Army's 3rd special air service squadron (S.V.N. 1966 - 1967)

June Bell

Ex-Royal Australian Army nurse corps (V.N. Era veteran)

Go on! Be a real sport!

Give Robert McNamara Honorary V.V.A.W. Membership.

uncle was "thrilled to death" with that decision and supported him all the way. Joe ended his remarks by pointing out the positive effects Vietnam veterans have had on his life decisions.

The second student, Jason Garcia, was introduced as the first exchange student from the University of Hanoi, beginning January 1996. In his remarks, Jason told of the influence Le Ly Hayslip and her story had on his educational and life choices. Jason had been one of my students when Hayslip's book was used in the Vietnam course, and he worked very hard to bring her to campus in late 1993. His decision to go into the field of diplomatic history, specializing on U.S.-Vietnam relations, was a direct result of these experiences. As Jason told the gathering, he hopes to bring the lesson of the war in Vietnam to future generations of

antiwar movement.

Following Annie, we heard from Maude De Victor, Navy vet and former VA worker who helped expose the Agent Orange cover-up in the late 1970s. For her efforts, Maude was fired from the VA, and has been kept from any sort of federal employment since then. She never lost her spirit or her humanity, and her remarks at this celebration certainly reflected this. "I'm so glad that we survived," she said. She pointed out that our work on the herbicide issue has made it a little easier for people to understand and take seriously the health problems of Gulf War Veterans. This is a contribution that we must not forget, and, while "we've all aged together," according to Maude, we must continue. She ended her remarks by reminding us that her "heart is

*continued on page 12*

## Vietnam Era Ends at the City University of New York

*continued from page 1*

services were in a shambles. Vets at each college began organizing to demand improvement and uniformity in their services—Brooklyn College vets organized in 1970.

Over the next two years, a university-wide Veterans Action Coalition developed: its main demand was the establishment of a central office, to elevate veterans' affairs to a central policy level, and to promote fairness and equality in treatment and access to services. CUNY Chancellor Robert Kibbe—himself a WW2 vet with a metal plate in his skull—finally saw the wisdom of the proposal, and authorized a central Office of Veterans Affairs, to coordinate the delivery of federal, state and city services to veterans enrolled as students, to recruit more veterans into the University, and to provide a CUNY presence in veterans' activities and campaigns.

The Office opened in 1973. Over 17,000 veterans enrolled at CUNY that year. OVA's first director soon moved on; its second was Mike Gold, acting as director from the summer of 1974, and permanently appointed in February 1975. Drafted out of Brooklyn College in December 1965, Gold had served in the Army as an artillery officer until his discharge in March 1969. He had returned to Brooklyn College, where he became active in the college's veterans' group and in Vietnam Veterans Against the War (then the only national organization of Vietnam veterans).

Taking over OVA, training campus counselors, coordinating with veterans' service agencies and organizations, Gold brought CUNY into the struggles to improve and extend the G.I. Bill; win amnesty and discharge upgrades; test, treat and compensate Agent Orange vets and their survivors; enforce and expand veterans' preference in job training programs and employment; treat post-traumatic stress disorder; and rehabilitate incarcerated vets. Meanwhile he recruited vets to enroll at CUNY, and counseled thousands over the years, helping them negotiate the labyrinthine application and certification procedures constructed by federal, state and city bureaucracies.

Gold's years of service and hard-won expertise earned him the respect of veterans' organiza-

tions across the entire political spectrum, and the cooperation of veterans' service agencies at every level of government. He needed both: the University ran the Office on a shoestring—its total budget last fiscal year was less than \$70,000, and the Office had no full-time permanent support staff, no online connection to the VA (or anywhere else), not even a word processor or micro-computer. Though the number of veteran students had declined over the years, in the last school year alone well over 3,000 vets enrolled at the University, drawing an estimated \$9.9 million in benefits, and providing the CUNY colleges with about \$40,000 in VA processing fees. Aside from his counseling and outreach work, Gold was busy planning how to cope with the 20,000 new veterans projected to be discharged to New York City by the end of 1997. Already a third of the men homeless on the City's streets were vets.

In November 1994, promising to cut taxes and execute criminals, Republican George Pataki won the governor's race in New York. In late January 1995, he issued the "Executive Budget," his proposals for state taxing and spending in the next fiscal year. It included a 25% cut in funding for the City University (along with a tuition increase). Through a quirk in New York's civil service regulations, Gold was one of some forty people who could be dismissed from the University's central administration without cause, and at the end of February he was notified that after nineteen years in his position and more than twenty years service overall, he would not be reappointed July 1st.

Scores of veterans' organizations and service agencies sent

letters to University Chancellor Anne Reynolds, protesting Gold's dismissal and the consequent closure of the Office of Veterans Affairs, where he was the only permanent full-time staff person. The Chancellor handed off the issue to Elsa Nunez-Wormack, Vice-Chancellor for Student Services, who administered the division which included OVA. Vice-Chancellor Nunez replied to all queries with a form letter which promised that veterans would continue to be counseled at CUNY. Her reply betrayed an almost complete ignorance of the scope of work of the Office of Veterans Affairs.

(Behind the lines: It is not clear just when Vice-Chancellor Nunez realized that firing Gold meant closing the Office. It is clear that she believed that counseling veterans consisted only of certifying enrollment to the Veterans Administration. Most of OVA's counseling activity consisted of establishing and appealing eligibility, and referrals to emergency housing, employment, and financial aid assistance. The closure of the Office has never been officially announced by the University, nor has there ever been a review of the Office's mission or of Gold's performance.)

So an ad hoc group of veterans from Vietnam Veterans of America, Black Veterans for Social Justice, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War approached the University's Board of Trustees. Four vets—three from VVAW—waited one June afternoon and evening until after midnight to testify at an open hearing. Some trustees were sympathetic, and agreed to raise the issue at the next Board meeting. By then the state legislature had restored more than half the governor's cuts to the City University. When the Board of Trustees met June 26th to ratify a list of proposals to cut

programs and reduce expenditures, the Chancellor graciously conceded that the University should and would maintain a central veterans' counseling service. Veterans' counseling, in fact, was pretty much her only concession to widespread and militant student and faculty protest, and she cited it to prove that the University administration had indeed listened to the criticism.

(Behind the lines: Privately, several people suggested that the issue was not veterans' counseling or even cutting costs—but Mike Gold himself. Some CUNY administrators seemed to think he spent too much time on homeless veterans' issues. The charge had some truth to it. Gold had been elected chair of the Joint Veterans Civic Council's Stand Down committee, formed to stage the City's first Stand Down on Veterans Day 1994. He saw his election as recognition of his role in the veterans' community. Moreover, he saw education and training as key components in helping homeless vets help themselves. He cleared his participation with his own supervisor, and went to work: over 800 homeless vets were processed during the Stand Down. Gold was proud of the event: he even showed Vice-Chancellor Nunez around the Stand Down on Veterans Day.)

Four days later, Vice-Chancellor Nunez closed the Office. Exactly one month later, she met with a committee of veterans representing the three veterans' organizations plus the Veterans Administration and the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs. She sketched a proposal that would reassign veterans' counseling to a regular admissions counselor, appoint an untrained graduate student as a part-time temporary veterans' benefits

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# Heroes

BY ELTON F. MANZIONE, JR., VVAW SOUTHERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

The first time he saw the thing, a heavy piece of canvas covered it like a blanket. He tried to peek under the cover, but it was tied too tight and the boards holding down the ends had been nailed into the ground.

He was surprised at the sight of it, even though he had expected something. He saw the men, the mud, the shovels and the tools. He smelled the wet-dirt smell of fresh cement. They never left behind anything like this. It wasn't a building; they never covered them up. This just rose, up into the air, flat and so wide he couldn't reach both edges with his arms stretched out. It was thick, but not real thick. It reminded him of a fat slice of pound cake standing on end.

He had tried to climb it, but there was really no way; no nook or cranny for feet or fingers. It just sat there, canvas-covered, in the corner of St. Casimir's churchyard.

He didn't tell his mother or father about the thing. It was probably dangerous — that's why it was covered up — and he didn't want them to tell him to stay away from it. Eight-year-olds weren't supposed to do anything. It was in a churchyard. Churches shouldn't have anything dangerous. But even the priest had chased him away the one time he tried to climb it.

He walked around it, poking and pulling at the cover but it was tight and stiff. He tried the ropes, but they were so tight he couldn't even get his fingers under them. Near the middle, just above his head, he saw it — a hole. He wriggled a finger though the hole and touched the thing. It was smooth, like glass, but it also had big scratches in it. He could feel them. A line of scratches, then a finger down and another line of scratches for as far up and down as he could feel. He pulled at the hole, trying to make it bigger.

"Hey, get the hell out of there!"

He whirled around and saw a man sitting in a chair with wheels. The chair and the man were between him and the gate. He'd have to run behind the church, over the fence. He turned, but saw the two sisters and the priest looking at him from the other end of the yard. He turned back to the

man, wanting to run but crying instead.

"I'm sorry mister, honest. I didn't do nothing. I'm sorry," he wailed.

"Shit," he thought to himself. He didn't want to scare the kid, but he felt almost as if the thing was his. As if he was part of it. Sadlowski, Domerski, Yanush — all those guys. They were certainly on it.

"Whoa, dude. I won't hurt you. I'm sorry I hollered." The boy looked at him half-frightened, half curious.

"I didn't mean nothing, mister. I was just trying to see it."

"They're unveiling it next week."

"What?"

"The memorial, that," he pointed. "They're unveiling it next week."

"What unveiling?"

"They're going to take the cover off it. You can come if you'd like."

"Maybe. What is it mister?"

"A war memorial."

"Oh!"

That was it! It was something from the war and of course it was dangerous — like a gun or a bomb. That's why the man had yelled at him. That's why the man was being nice now. He was giving him a little card with numbers on it.

"Now here's today," he said, pointing to one of the black numbers, "and here's the day of the unveiling." It was a red number.

"It's on Sunday. Sundays are red."

"Nope, this is a special day but it's not Sunday."

He took the little card home and each morning, as soon as he woke up, he carefully crossed off one of the numbers. Today was the red day and he took his trike out onto the sidewalk. He sat backwards on the seat and reached down to spin the small wheels with his hands. What a surprise it would be for the man in the chair with wheels. Maybe they could race. The trike moved in a tight circle and he straightened the handlebars and tried again. He could see the people across the street walking toward the church. It must be time. He gave up. He'd just have to walk to see the man.

He sat in the chair waiting for the ceremony to begin. He felt better today. Al Janowski had wheeled him over from Ann Street. Janowski had lost a son over there. Danny's name would be on the monument. Danny had come after him. He was one of the first. He remembered how the others had sought him out when he came back. How they asked him the questions he couldn't answer and wanted to hear the stories he couldn't tell. How awkward they were in his presence — never knowing when to offer and never knowing when it would be refused. Never understanding that he couldn't explain any of it.

He remembered how they came back — one by one. How he'd read about them in the paper or seen their funerals announced in the church bulletin. He had come back a hero and the war was so far removed from the high school, the factory jobs and the Saturday night cruising that they never understood what the word meant. Now they had a monument, and he had this goddamned chair.

But the chair looked nice today. A deep blue velour covered the tray and the Distinguished Service Cross glittered against the dark background directly in the center. He had twenty or so enameled American flag pins and his Purple Heart, Silver Star, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and Vietnam Campaign Medal accented the corners of the tray. The damned thing looked almost festive. He had Al position the chair on the edge of the crowd. He hated being closed in — crowded. As he looked at the brakes he saw the boy from last week coming around the corner. He was glad he hadn't scared the kid too badly. It just seemed like it was easier to holler than to smile.

When he walked around the corner he wasn't ready for what he found there. Flowers filled the churchyard and large crowd of people had gathered. A band was playing and there were flags everywhere. There were priests, and men in Army uniforms and men in Navy uniforms.

He saw the man in the chair with wheels, but both man and chair looked different today. The man wore an army uniform, but it

wasn't stiff and glittering like the others: it was dull and muddy and faded. He wondered why the man hadn't washed it. The chair, though, now that was something. Ribbon and flags and stars and crosses glittered on it in the sun. It looked almost like one of the booths they had down on Oliver Street during the Feast of Our Lady.

It always pissed him off when the World War Two guys would give him shit about his fatigues. He couldn't believe they'd kept their dress uniforms in some closet for twenty-odd years. They probably waited for days like today to pull the damned things out and wear them again. He had stuffed his dress greens into a shit can at the Newark bus station. They never really were his uniform — he wore them out of AIT and he wore them when he was discharged — all the time it had been the fatigues. The fatigues and the bandanna.

"Can't you wear a suit or something if you don't have a dress uniform?" the VFW Commander had asked him.

"I will," he said. The fatigues were his suit. 'Nam was the only career he'd ever known. He wondered if the VFW Commander thought all those guys died in suits over there.

"If fatigues are good enough to die in, fatigues are good enough to parade in," he thought. He saw the boy looking at him, and motioned him over.

The man wanted him to come over. He guessed the man wouldn't holler at him. He hadn't really done anything that other time. He just wanted to know what it was.

"Hey kid, how ya doing?" The man seemed friendly enough.

"Hi mister." He sidled closer to get a good look at the star on the table of the man's wheelchair. A priest stood in front of the thing and began talking. The boy heard words like "duty," "sacrifice," and "courage."

He knew it would be like this. It always was. They'd repeat words they couldn't possibly comprehend and use them to try to give meaning to it. He'd tried all the words and they didn't work.

They couldn't give meaning to what he felt was meaningless. Had those boys, the ones whose names he knew were there, tried to explain it to themselves in their last moments? He doubted it.

He wished there was something he could do, something he could say that would let them know that honor and glory existed only in their minds. For him, the notions were as dead as his legs: as dead as the men they were honoring today.

Now an Army man was coming up. Maybe even a general. The boy looked at the medals on the Army man's chest and the gold on his hat. Someday he'd be a general too. He could kill gooks and Japs and krauts as good as anybody. He did it in Independence Park all the time. He'd shoot and watch Teddy grab his chest and fall — another dead Jap.

The army man with the gold on his hat was talking about "good men," and "duty," and "the ultimate price," and "freedom." It made him proud and the flags made him proud. A man with a horn played a sad song: the one they played at night in the cavalry forts on the TV programs. Then the general pulled a rope and the cover slid off the thing. Army men fired their rifles up in the air and the people clapped.

He wondered why he had come. The first bars of "Taps" had brought that choking feeling up into his throat, dragging up the rage, frustration and powerlessness. The sound of the salute sent chills up his spine and pictures seared though his brain: the sappers, the flashes in the dark, the bunker caving in; and the terrible dawn when, high above it in the evac chopper, he could see what was left of Nam Dong — scattered bodies and burned out buildings.

He thought of the doctor; the news that he was paralyzed from the waist down and that his legs, and everything else down there, wouldn't work.

He thought of the months in the VA rehab program learning to deal with the chair and all the little tasks of life that were now so much more difficult.

He had to stop thinking. He saw the boy — wide-eyed and fascinated.

"Let's go look at it," he said.

Up close the boy could see now that the scratches he had felt

were names all the way from the top to the bottom in more than ten rows. It was big and white and shining and had a crying angel at the top.

"Whose names are they, mister?"

"They're — uh — heroes from the war," he said, choking out the word "heroes."

"Where are they?"

"They're dead."

Now the boy understood. This thing was just like the one in the graveyard where his grandmother was buried, only bigger.

"Why did they bury them all together?"

The man shook his head and smiled. "They're not buried here. This is just a memorial to the men from this church who were in the war."

The boy wondered why the stone was there if the heroes weren't buried there. "Were you in the war mister?"

"Oh, yes. A lot of us were."

"Was everybody a hero?"

"Nope, not too many. A lot just worked and didn't really have to fight."

"Are all the heroes dead then?"

The man was quiet for an awfully long time. When he spoke it was different than before. The words were sharp and the man bit his teeth. "Most of them. But not all of them. Some of them lived more or less."

"Did you fight in the war?"

"Yeah, that's why I'm in this chair."

"Why?"

"The war."

"How come?"

"Because I can't walk."

He wished the kid would go away, stop poking and prodding. But someone always was, that was the hardest part. He picked up one of the little flag pins and held it out to the boy.

"Would you like a flag to pin on?"

"I don't have any money, mister."

"This one's free. It's a special one for you."

The boy pinned the flag onto his jacket and looked at it, then at the man's legs. They were both there. He wondered why the man couldn't walk.

"But you have legs."

"What?"

"You have legs. Why can't you walk?"

He wanted to tell the boy why he couldn't walk, but only

managed to choke out: "I can't feel them. They're dead."

The boy looked at the man's legs. He couldn't see anything wrong. The war couldn't be the reason. He and his brother played war. People died in war. Of course there were people like Gus. He had no leg on account of the war, but this was different. There were two good legs there.

"Are you a hero?"

"I guess some people think I am. There's my medal," the man said, pointing to the star. It was a big star on a flag ribbon and in the middle of the big star was a small silver star.

"Is that the Medal of Honor?"

"No, that's the Silver Star, son."

"Is that bigger than the Medal of Honor?"

"Well, no, it's almost as big."

The boy wondered if you had to die to get the Medal of Honor. His father told him Uncle John got the Medal of Honor, but Uncle John died. Maybe they gave you this medal if you didn't die. He wanted to be a hero, but he certainly didn't want to die.

It wasn't the medal that bothered him, but the man's legs. The legs were fine, but the man said he couldn't walk. He was sure the man was lying. He probably lied to get the medal. That must be it. The man was a faker and a cheat who wanted to be a hero. He'd get to the bottom of this. He wondered what the man would do when he showed him for the cheat he was.

He was glad that the people filing out of the churchyard had taken his attention from the boy. The questions didn't have real answers. Never had and never would. Several of the people were buying flags and pins and talking to him. The boy asked him something and he nodded. The boy picked up the Silver Star.

He held the medal in his hand, turned it over and opened the pin on the back. The man was talking to a lady now and not really paying attention. He moved a little closer to the side of the chair. The woman was talking about her son and buying a flag. He looked at the man's leg.

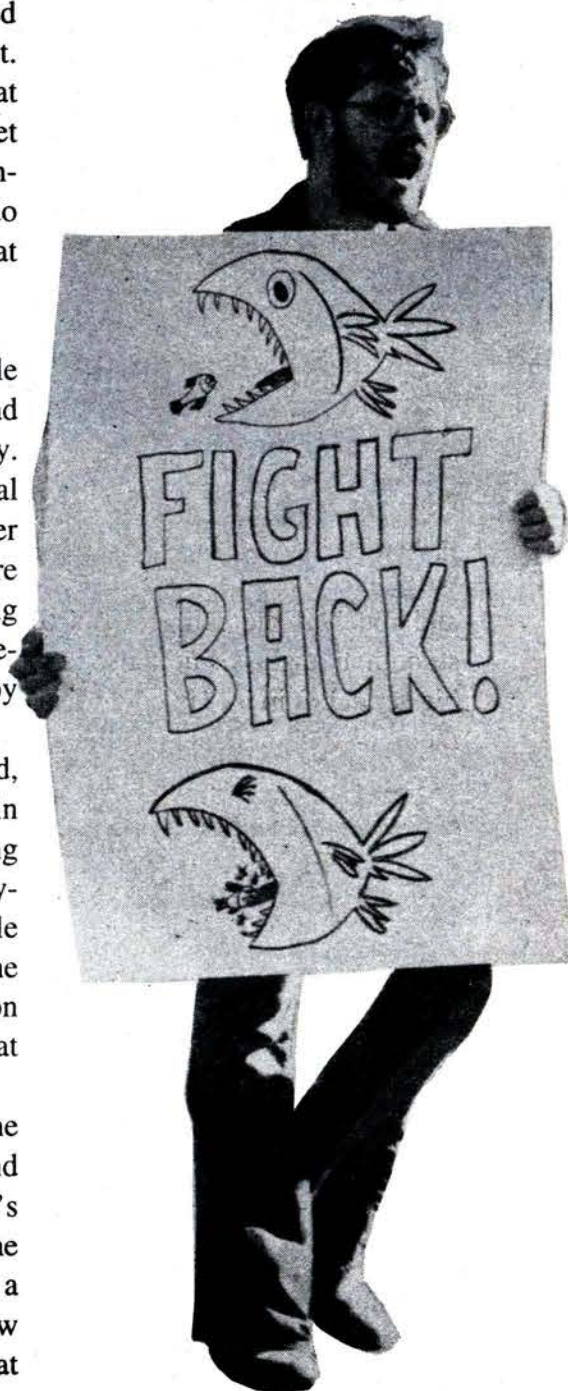
As the man reached for the lady's money, he took the pin and stuck it into the top of the man's leg. The man didn't move. The medal hung there on the leg and a small red spot began to grow around it. He looked at it, then at

the man who was still talking to the lady. He stared at the growing red spot and she must've noticed. She looked too.

"Oh, God. My God!"

The woman's scream startled him and he followed her gaze down to his left leg. The Silver Star hung like a limp flag and a circle of blood was forming on his fatigues. He looked at the boy who seemed poised to run, yet hadn't moved. He could see the fear in the boy's eyes and feel the frustration, rage, confusion, and sadness building in his throat. Not this. It was almost as if he felt what the boy was thinking, but there were no words, no gestures that could span the gulf between them. The boy would never understand. No one would ever understand. The tears flowed almost as violently as he fought to hold them back.

When the lady screamed, the man looked at his leg, the medal, the spot and then at him. He wanted to run, but he couldn't stop watching the man. It must hurt. He could see that in the man's eyes — the tears were starting. He turned and ran, and ran, and ran. Now he knew the man was a fake — heroes don't cry.



# FALLEN

## Jack McCloskey

### Veteran's Activist Dies at 53

(San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner, February 18, 1996)

By LARRY D. HATFIELD

Jack McCloskey, a wounded and much-decorated veteran of the Vietnam War who quietly spent the rest of his life trying to ease the pain from that war, has died. He was 53.

"Jack was one of the few people in the world that you run across that you know has made this world a better place," said Michael McCain, a former fellow activist in Vietnam Veterans Against the War and now a Chicago television producer. "His work saved thousands of lives here (in the United States) after the war ended."

"Jack was our beacon of what was needed to help disaffected and disadvantaged Vietnam veterans," said Ron Bitzer, a Southern California health care fundraiser who helped McCloskey create Swords to Plowshares, one of the nation's premiere veterans' groups.

Mr. McCloskey died of heart failure at his San Francisco home Thursday night. He had been in poor health since the war, suffering from various side effects of two sets of wounds, Agent Orange exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The product of a Philadelphia orphanage, Mr. McCloskey served in the Navy from 1962 to 1966, then was recalled in 1967 and sent to Vietnam as a corpsman with the Marine division.

While there, he was wounded twice, once in the Tet offensive at Hue, and was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Silver Star.

When he returned to the

United States, Mr. McCloskey found a nation tired of war and unwilling to accept its veterans back as it had those of previous wars. Like many of his colleagues, he had picked up a drug habit during the war and found little help for himself or other veterans coming home.

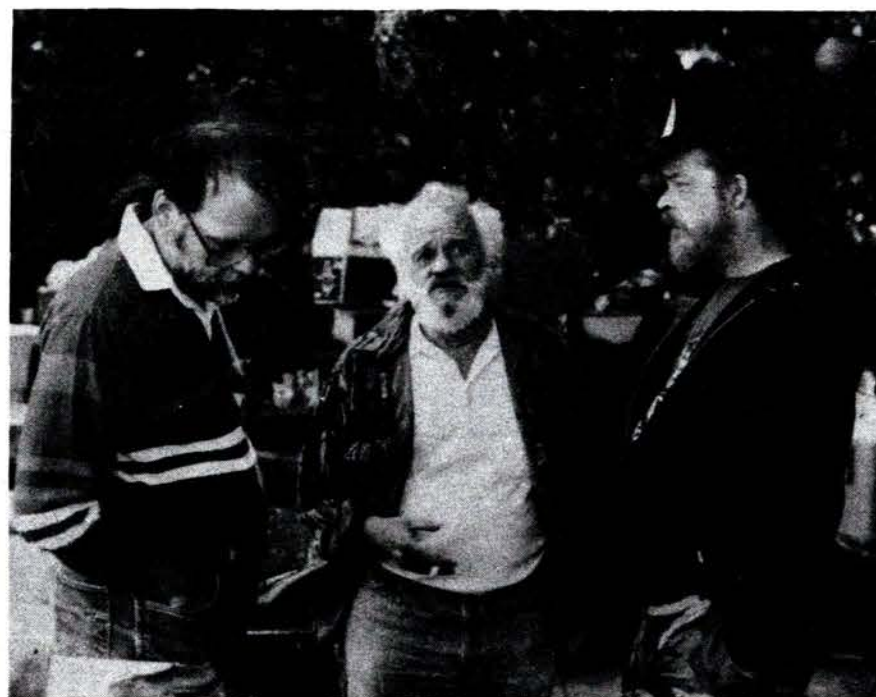
"We were invisible to most people," he told an Examiner reporter in 1973. "Those who did acknowledge us hated us because they knew the war was wrong and they had to blame somebody for it, so they blamed us."

He became an activist, both against the war he considered unjust and for the rights of veterans of the war. He also kicked a morphine habit, although neither his health nor habits ever fully recovered from his war experience.

Mr. McCloskey became active in the anti-war movement, particularly VVAW, but he also was a catalyst in the infant, 1970s movement that dealt with such issues as the then-unrecognized post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, suicide, joblessness and other problems Vietnam veterans were facing.

He formed an organization called Twice Born Men, the forerunner of Swords, Flower of the Dragon.

Author Jerry Nicosia, who is writing a book on the Vietnam veterans' movement, said Mr. McCloskey and a few others were responsible for forcing the medical establishment and the Veterans Administration to recognize



(l-r) Ray Parrish, Jack McCloskey, Jess Jessperson

post-traumatic stress.

"Jack was highly respected for a lot of reasons, but most of all, people talked about his purity," Nicosia said. "The cause of veterans' rights was his purpose. He never gained fame or made money from it, as some did. He lived a totally poor, destitute life, essentially hand to mouth. His whole life was dedicated to correcting the wrongs against veterans."

"He was never famous in a national way, but he was famous among his friends. He was always there, always there for Vietnam vets."

Country Joe McDonald, an icon of the anti-war movement, said he became involved in veterans' rights issues because of Mr. McCloskey. "Jack was solely instrumental in making me realize I was personally a veteran," McDonald said. "It really blew my mind and destroyed my cover as a rock star. He was part of a small handful of Vietnam vets who were activists in treating the problems of veterans that had not been acknowledged. Jack shouldn't have died."

McDonald planned to dedi-

cate his Saturday night concert to Mr. McCloskey. It was a dinner for homeless people at a veterans' center prepared by the chefs from USS Constellation.

Mr. McCloskey was a pioneer in the system of storefront veterans' counseling centers now operating throughout the nation, said Swords Executive Director Michael Blecker.

"He helped get the Veterans Administration out of its institutional walls and into the streets where the problems were," Blecker said, adding that Mr. McCloskey also pioneered self-help programs for minority and women veterans. "He was in the forefront of the whole idea of peer counseling, the idea of Vietnam veterans healing themselves."

Mr. McCloskey attended Antioch College and City College of San Francisco. He is survived by his former wife, Lydia, of Oakland, two daughters, Molly and Susan, and a brother, Vincent, of Philadelphia.

## Recollections - Annie Hirschman

From the time in Miami when that bastard decreed that I was in charge of medical so he could Plan 47 till now Jack has been a legend in his own time.

In Miami we discussed the therapeutic use of tear gas: it will clear facial blemishes and, according to Jack, it is a sure cure for hangover.

Then it was Jack who main-

tained my sanity on the caravan back to California when my PTSD hit in Mississippi and Alabama. I think that was when I realized his major talent at mind healing.

Of course it was only other people's minds which is why we call him wacky.

Jack stayed at my place while recovering from one of his accidents and my family adopted him

(Annie L. is his mother but we became siblings) My son still quotes his advice to me about taking things easy and how I should give the kid a break. He created a con artist.

At the 25th reunion it was Jack who took care of my mother and he was so sweet about it that I almost forgot who'd used all of my booze the year before.

Wherever he is there are bound to be thunderstorms since

that's why he came east at all. I will never be able to see lightning and not think of Jack.

In a song I love Fred Small has a line for Jack: "The only measure of your worth in the world is the love you leave behind when you're gone." In that spirit, Jack was a giant.

More recollections on page 17

# COMRADES

## Shelly Ramsdell

Sheldon (Shelly) Ramsdell

August 31, 1935 - March 25, 1996

(Bay Area Reporter, April 4, 1996)

BY MARY ANN SWISSLER

Photojournalist and political activist Sheldon Ramsdell died at his home on Monday, March 25th after a lengthy battle with AIDS. He was 60.

After being honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1958, Shelly Ramsdell dedicated much of the rest of his life to his twin loves, photography and politics. An inveterate letter writer who expressed his opinion on issues ranging from Gay/Lesbian rights to NAFTA, Shelly Ramsdell always backed up his rhetoric with active participation.

In 1967, he co-founded Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), the influential group that went on to galvanize our seriously flagging antiwar movement. In 1971, VVAW staged a highly publicized one week encampment on the Washington Mall. It was during this series of actions, dubbed Operation Dewey Canyon III, that the assembled vets tossed their medals over the fence onto the Capitol steps in one of the most visibly dramatic moments

of our domestic struggle to end the war in Vietnam. Shelly Ramsdell was there with his camera. He was VVAW's press aide until 1974.

During this period, he was also the chief press aide for U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign, an aide for New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug, and a photographer for Norman Mailer's unsuccessful 1969 bid to become Mayor of New York.

After moving to San Francisco in 1984, he was active in local political groups, particularly focusing on issues affecting people with AIDS. In 1990, he was a delegate to the Sixth International Conference on AIDS, and was part of the San Francisco ACT-UP contingent sent to both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions in 1992. While at the Republican Convention in Houston, he donned his sports coat and crashed several private Republican Party events to talk to his old media cronies and lobby Re-

publicans on behalf of PWAs.

Col. Cliff Anchor, Commander of the Alexander Hamilton Post of the American Legion, credits Shelly Ramsdell with having decorated J. Edgar Hoover's grave with pink triangles and lingerie during the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian/Gay Rights.

A self-taught photographer, his photographic interests ranged from the political arena to Broadway and beyond. He took Barbra Streisand's first publicity photos, photographed Helena Rubenstein, Joel Gray (in *Cabaret* makeup), Abbie Hoffman, Broadway producer Fred Ebb (*Cabaret* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*), Bette Midler and William S. Burroughs, among many others. His photographs have been exhibited at the New York Public Theater and on NBC TV's Today Show. They were published in the *New York Times*, *Esquire*, *Time*, *Playboy*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Interior Design*, *Key West Arts Review*, *AP*, and *UPI*. Friends will be arranging a posthumous show of his photos, including his photos of J. Edgar Hoover's "decorated" gravesite.

He is survived by his parents, Herman and Louise Ramsdell of Olgonquit, Maine; a sister, Shirley Suglia, of Shelton, Connecticut; brothers Donald Ramsdell of Naples, Florida and Glenn Ramsdell of Wells, Maine;



nieces, nephews, and legions of friends.

Tax-deductible contributions may be made in Shelly's name to The Restitution Project, 584 Castro Street #514, San Francisco CA 94114, a new organization dedicated to acknowledging the contribution of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender veterans and service members.

## Walter Collins

BY JEANNE FRIEDMAN

Dear Friends,

It is with great sadness that I write to let you know that our long-ago friend and comrade in the civil rights, anti-draft and amnesty movements, Walter Collins, died in New Orleans on September 3rd, 1995.

As you may know, I've been tenacious in the last few years about re-establishing ties with old movement friends. And I was especially looking forward to seeing Walter again when I was in New Orleans earlier this month. I'd spoken with him about five years ago, but the reconnection didn't "take," and we fell out of touch again. I was confident he could always be found through his mom and their family's long-

time home on Fig Street.

I had a heartbreaking talk with Virginia, who had to tell me of her youngest son's death — Walter had had sinus problems for many years, and was ill for a year with what was finally diagnosed as cancer of the pharynx. My friends tell me this is a dreadful form of cancer — hard to diagnose or treat.

Walter was barely 50 years old. He was brilliant, articulate and argumentative. I first met him in the basement of a house in Toronto, at a conference of American GI and draft resisters. The first night we were there, he talked literally all night about U.S. imperialism in Vietnam and in the Black Nation — the first time I under-

stood the connection.

Several years later, a carful of us went on a trip through the South. He took us from Little Rock down through the Delta and into Alabama — from the old South to the "new" in Atlanta.

We saw his Black Nation — the clinic at Mound Bayou, the towns of the Delta, the community organizations, the county that had recently elected a Black sheriff. I'd been asleep in the back seat, and woke up in the parking lot behind the county jail. I must have looked terrified. Walter just grinned — "nothing to worry about, you're in Lowndes County." You could feel his joy.

Several years later, Walter and I and then 5-year-old Nat drove from New Orleans to Miami. I can't remember now why we made that trip, probably just for the fun of talking for all those boring miles. When we got to

Miami, I marveled at how much unpleasant attention we'd managed to receive. Walter told me I'd never understand the South.

Walter thought he was great with kids — after all, he had so many nieces and nephews. But he told everyone (kids and adults) what to do about pretty much everything — which Nat didn't like. By the end of the trip though, he was won over, and quite seriously told me that Walter really *did* know everything.

I don't know so many people these days who know everything; I, for one, know less and less about more and more. Perhaps Walter was the same in recent years. I'd like to think that he would have retained his devastatingly simple way of making connections. I'll miss him.

## VVAW Celebrates Anniversary

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always with Vietnam vets.”

The remainder of the afternoon festivities included more songs from Jim Walktendonk, a surprise song from my daughter, Lisa Boucher, and an even more surprising song from Bill Davis.

Other speakers included Bud Sauk, a founding member of Business Executives Against the War in Vietnam; Ray Parrish, VVAW member and Director of the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling (MCMC); John Zutz,

a Midwest Regional Coordinator for VVAW (see a printed version of his remarks elsewhere in this issue); and Dong Tizon, of the Philippine Workers Solidarity Committee, among others.

This afternoon was filled with memories, good and bad, with images of struggle, past and present (see Oscar Lopez-Rivera’s

letter below), and with determination to continue the fight for peace and social justice for all peoples everywhere. We came together in celebration of the victory of the people of Vietnam and in celebration of the contributions we made in helping that victory along. The struggle goes on!

## Letter from a U.S. Gulag

By Oscar Lopez Rivera

My warm and heartfelt greetings to everyone:

From this gulag I join you in spirit to commemorate the end of the end of the Vietnam War — a glorious moment for every freedom and justice person.

While it is important to enjoy and celebrate this commemorative moment, it is also crucial for all of us to keep a vigilant and critical attitude towards the U.S. government and its Vietnam policies. The same powers responsible for the war are currently wishing to return to Vietnam with basically the same interest, motives, and goals they had before and during the war. They seek to protect their interests and for the Pentagon to have a presence in Vietnam. History has taught all of us how nefarious those entities could be.

We should be concerned, because in recent days we have witnessed the response from the powers-that-be, including powerful political figures and the media, to Robert McNamara’s condemnation of the U.S. war against Vietnam. The media have created a loop where only McNamara’s contrition and Bill Clinton’s vindication have had any play. Kept out of this loop are the millions of Vietnam’s ecosystem. Also ignored are the victims of the war from Laos and Cambodia, where at this very moment people continue to face perils created by the war the U.S. brought to Vietnam and its neighbors.

While this loop might serve McNamara’s interest and vindicate Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and Phil Gramm, who dodged the draft and remained politically viable, it is anathema to those of us who experienced first-hand the horrors of the war in Vietnam, but who had the courage to condemn it and to struggle against it at a

very dear price.

In this gulag with me are Tom Manning and Ray Luc Levasseur (both VVAW members), who had the valor to use their experience from Vietnam against the greatest enemy of humanity. Although we come from different backgrounds and political/ideological formations, we share a common denominator — the horrors of Vietnam and a commitment to struggle for life against the perpetrators of such horrors.

I leave you with an embrace, asking you to remember that for those who dare struggle, victory is their reward.

En Resistencia y Lucha,  
Oscar Lopez Rivera  
84651-024  
ADX-Florence  
P.O. Box 8500  
Florence, CO \*1226

*Oscar Lopez Rivera was born in Puerto Rico in 1943 and moved to the U.S. with his family in the early 1950s. He was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam during 1965 and 1966, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. In 1967, he returned to work in the Puerto Rican community of Chicago. His identification with the movement for Puerto Rican independence eventually resulted in his arrest in 1981 for seditious conspiracy. He was sentenced to 55 years, and was sent to Leavenworth until 1987. In 1988, he was given an additional 15 years for conspiracy to escape, which resulted in his being sent to the maximum security prison in Marion, Illinois. In December of 1994, Oscar was moved to the new “supermax” prison in Florence, Colorado. His release date is 2021.*

## My View

By John Zutz, VVAW Midwest Co-Coordinator

I was listening to the speeches at the VVAW’s Chicago celebration of the 20th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war, and I looked around and realized what an unusual gathering it was. At every other VVAW event there is some area set aside for “attitude adjustment.”

Then I realized that maybe the whole country needs some at-

add \$2.5 billion to the military budget for B2 bombers which now are of no use, and a Trident submarine that even the Pentagon doesn’t want;

\*When a president is tempted to over turn a bipartisan military base closing list for political reasons to save military related jobs in selected areas;

\*When our government has

### WE NEED SOME ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT!

titude adjustment:

\*When the tight budgets of George Bush’s “kinder, gentler America” mutate into a leaner, meaner America in three years;

\*When the VA shuts down beds at a time when the largest group of veterans is reaching retirement age and will need them most;

\*When a handful of MIA zealots dictate foreign policy, by denying normalized relations with Vietnam;

\*When sexual orientation is considered to be more important than ability in military service;

\*When training Latin American military members to terrorize, torture, and “disappear” legitimate political rivals is desirable, while our education system can’t teach kids to read at an eighth grade level;

\*When it’s decided that we can’t afford health care for everyone, while spending more on “defense” than the rest of the world combined;

\*When the Bill of Rights is interpreted to include warrantless searches, and an anti flag burning amendment is even considered;

\*When we allow congress to

so little credibility that right wingers feel forced to take violent action, forming militias, stockpiling weapons, and making and exploding bombs;

WE NEED SOME ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT!

Perhaps the most obvious sign of the need for attitude adjustment is when people sit around carping about our problems, but feel helpless to do anything about them. If we want to adjust other people’s attitudes, we need to adjust our own attitudes first.

It’s nice to sit back and congratulate ourselves about past triumphs. We were right about the Vietnam War, even McNamara says so. We were right about women’s rights, civil rights, and human rights, the Supreme Court has agreed with us (though they are backing off recently). But the pendulum is swinging away from individual rights, and is tending to favor corporate rights.

That pendulum will swing back again, but it will need our help, and the help of many others, to push it back. We need to stand up for causes. Pick one of those above. Pick one of your own. Go to work.

## Vietnam Era Ends at the City University of New York

*continued from page 7*

counselor, and expand in-service training for the staff assigned part-time responsibility for veterans' enrollment certification at the colleges. She asked the vets to endorse her plan.

They argued with her for more than two hours, urging that the effective coordination of the delivery of services to veterans required the assignment of primary full-time responsibility to a single individual — preferably a veteran — on a permanent (not temporary) basis. They added that much of this person's time would necessarily be spent in recruitment and outreach to agencies and organizations. The discussion was not consistently polite: in the end the Vice-Chancellor conceded all but the permanent assignment, offering a temporary full-time position, and asked the vets again to endorse her plan, the best — she said — her superiors would let her do. The vets unanimously declined. On her part, the Vice-Chancellor declined to set up a meeting with her superiors, to let them make the case she had been unable to make. She did promise to convene a follow-up meeting in three weeks.

(Behind the lines: Throughout this time, Vice-Chancellor Nunez has described herself as Gold's most ardent supporter. Other people in the administration have suggested that Gold's dismissal and the closing of the

Office have all along been her decisions. This may seem a little unlikely: her father retired from the Navy and her brother served in Vietnam. At the meeting she posed as an unhappy and sympathetic low-level administrator; in fact she reports only to the Deputy Chancellor and the Chancellor, and occupies the third highest level in CUNY's billion-dollar bureaucracy. She never did schedule that follow-up meeting.)

The fall semester starts at the City University just before Labor Day. There is no longer any counseling for veterans enrolled as students. There is no longer any coordination of enrollment certification, or any training; for some colleges no one has even been assigned the responsibility. There is no longer any central resource for veterans. The Office is closed, the copy machine removed, the telephones dead.

The University denies that the Office is "closed." Speaking for the University, Vice-Chancellor Jay Hershenson describes the closure as the "retrenchment of the Veterans Affairs budget," an "unfortunate" situation "imposed" on the University despite its "deep and abiding interest in veterans' affairs." He promises that "from adversity we want to seize opportunity" to provide veterans counseling in a "creative" way, using "alternative sources" of funding and volunteers, with "better coordination of veterans' support on the campuses." How soon? "Early fall." How can better coordination be accomplished without any coordinator? "No comment."

(Behind the lines: The City University may not see homeless veterans as potential students. Many of the budget cuts directed at the University and adopted by the Chancellor have been directed at "marginal" and "non-traditional" students — programs for people lacking some college-level skills, especially native-born fluency in English, programs for working students, programs for trade-unionists. Everyone knows the code words with which poor and working people, especially people of color, can be written out of the social contract. In New York City, a majority-minority metropolis, we have heard them all — welfare pathologies, the shiftless and criminal underclass, illegals, whatever. The CUNY cuts are just one aspect of a nation-wide game. But veterans are harder to write off, even when New York City's new veterans are mostly black and Latin. No one at CUNY wants to stand up and say that veterans are no longer welcome at the University, or that if a veteran needs help, he or she will just have to find it someplace else. Vice-Chancellors Nunez and Hershenson may know jackshit about counseling veterans, but they do know talk is cheap, and that pious promises can deflect criticism and confuse the issue, until the veterans and their supporters just go away.)

So it looks like it's finally the end of the Vietnam Era at the City University of New York. Or, you might say, "this is where we came in..."

(Behind the lines: Working out some karmic catastrophe, in March Mike Gold was diagnosed and hospitalized with a leaking valve in his heart. In May — still in the hospital — he was presented with the 1995 Angel Almadina Award for Service to Veterans, for "outstanding work in healing the wounds of war," by the 11th Annual PTSD "Conference on the Still Hidden Client" Committee. He finally underwent cardiac surgery in July, and is now recuperating at home.)

Letters of protest may be directed to:

Chancellor Anne Reynolds  
City University of New York  
535 East 80th Street  
New York, NY, 10021  
(fax 212-794-5671)

*The writers are members of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Additional information provided by John Rowan (Vietnam Veterans of America) and John Sandman (Newsday).*

## Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano

*continued from page 5*

MacMichael, ex-CIA in Nicaragua.

Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") is not the "champion of the people" some ignorant opportunist groups such as the RCP would have us believe. Sendero wants violence, just like the fascist elements in the military who disappeared Guadalupe. Peru is full of non-violent resistance, and many like Guadalupe suffer the ultimate fate at the hands of either the military or Sendero (the military kills about twice as many people as Sendero).

None of us know what we would do given certain situations of repression until we are in it. Guadalupe always dreamed of peace and life for her children. She chose a non-violent way in the face of horrible violence. I hope that her non-violence fell somewhere. We always shared and encouraged each other towards non-violence, but she did it much better than I did.

I returned again to Peru to visit my godchildren who were adjusting to their new life in Lima and being cared for by Guadalupe's oldest sister. In 1993 the UN truth commission published their report on the disappearance of Guadalupe and concluded that the Peruvian military had violated the human rights of this activist and asked the Peru government to seek justice. Under Fugimore, the new president

of Peru, nothing has been done about the case. Fugimore had disbanded the congress and has now been re-elected for five more years. He is a dictator and totally in control of the military. Now that Sendero Luminoso is all but eradicated, Fugimore has granted amnesty to all military personnel who were or could be responsible for human rights abuses from 1980 to the present. During my most recent visit to Peru in 1995 a war broke out between Ecuador and Peru over border land. Peru is not going to get any better for Quechua Indian people and it would seem that elements of the military would just as soon see the Indians die. In most of the Indian regions there remains political-military command. We can't let this evil continue.



# In Memory of the War Heroes

BY BUI DINH NGUYEN

from *Vietnam Courier*, July 23-29, 1995

No accurate tally has been made available about the number of dead and wounded, both military and civilian, in the two wars of resistance from 1946 to 1975.

According to the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, this must run into a dozen million. In the resistance against the US aggression alone, two million soldiers were killed or wounded, two million civilians were killed, two million others rendered invalids and still another two million were affected by Agent Orange sprayed by American aircraft which also caused malformation and deformities in 50,000 children.

So far, 1.1 million war dead have been identified. They left behind 1.8 million relatives. Also 600,000 wounded or diseased soldiers are still alive, not counting 300,000 war dead still accounted for.

## Socialization of the care for war victims

In addition to two million fallen heroes and wounded and more than 6 million other war victims, the country has 8,500 veterans with outstanding services to the revolution and 27,861 mothers who have been honored as Hero Mothers. There are also 150,000 former resistance members captured and imprisoned by the enemy and four million war veterans. All of them are beneficiaries of preferential policies of the government.

The Vietnamese nation has a millenary tradition of gratitude to the sons and daughters who laid down their lives for the nation's freedom and independence. In his appeal on July 27, 1948, President Ho Chi Minh said: "...They sacrificed their lives to defend the lives of their compatriots. They are our heroes. Some have left part of their bodies on the front, others fell on the field of honor. Their parents lost their dearest ones. Their wives and children became widows and orphans... The war heroes and war wounded have sacrificed their lives for the Motherland and our people. To return their services our government has always sought every means to help the war invalids and the families of war heroes. I earnestly hope that our people will give them every possible material and spiritual assistance."

Since 1947, July 27 was made the Day of Fallen Heroes and War Invalids. From then to 1954 on that day each year, President Ho sent gifts and one month of his salary to the war invalids and families of fallen heroes. Also on that date, however, he would not fail to pay a visit to some families of fallen heroes or make bedside visits to war invalids at the hospitals. On the State plane, the government has issued many policies and ordinances providing preferential treatment to war invalids and the families of fallen heroes.

In spite of the enormous difficulties in the economic situation the State has devoted each year a

considerable portion of the budget to supporting the families of fallen heroes and war invalids. On the social plane, an almost spontaneous movement has been formed very early to pay tribute and show indebtedness to the war heroes. So far the so-called Fund of Gratitude has collected 67 VND and more than 800,000 tons of paddy.

This movement also involves the offer of savings accounts totaling 41,300 million VND contributed by various enterprises and social organizations and overseas Vietnamese. In recent years, on the initiative of the social organizations in the localities, more than 70,000 small houses called "Houses of Gratitude" have been built and nearly 300,000 others repaired and refurnished for the benefit of the families of fallen heroes. Most recently, on the occasion of the 48th War Heroes and War Invalids Day, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs together with the daily Nhan Dan and Vietnam Television launched a nationwide movement to care for the war invalids and families of the war heroes and to attend to the old mothers of war heroes or Hero Mothers.

## Searching for and gathering remains of the heroes

So far, more than 600,000 remains of war heroes and heroines have been grouped in more than 3,000 cemeteries, the largest

of which are the Truong Son (Long Range) and Dien Bien Phu cemeteries. In most villages and communes, the remains of war heroes have been gathered in a common place hallowed by a memorial obelisk. All the graves are marked with the names of the dead and in many cases with their portraits sheathed in plastic covering.

In some places memorial houses have been erected where people came to pay tribute on national or local festive occasions. Search is going on for the remaining missing-in-action and this work is conducted by government agencies, former companions-in-arms and their families. It would take at least two more years to identify the places of summary burial of all these young heroes. Since its founding in 1991 the War Veterans Association has opened a regular column called "Quest for information about relatives." So far this has helped identify the burial places of more than one thousand soldiers who had fallen on the field of honor.

for subscription info:

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## Letter from Le Duc Anh

Hanoi, September 2nd 1995

Dear VVAW,

This year, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, is exactly 50 years old. Over the past 50 years, the Vietnamese people have undergone untold trials and hardships and recorded splendid achievements. We have conducted a protracted and hard but also very glorious resistance war of national independence, defense and construction. The just cause of the Vietnamese

people has widely enjoyed the ardent spiritual support and material assistance of the forces struggling for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress in the world, among whom you have been one of the typical representatives. This has strongly encouraged and multiplied the strength of our people's struggle.

"Loyalty" and "Remembering the source when drinking water" are the fine traditions and sacred sentiments of the Vietnamese nation. On this occasion, I would like, on behalf of the Viet-

namese State and people, to express my sincere gratitude to you and all friends, far and near, for the whole-hearted support and assistance accorded to us during the past years of hard struggle, thus making an active contribution to the victory of the Vietnamese people. We highly appreciate, cherish and everlastingly bear in mind your deep sentiments as well as your dedication in the movement to support and assist the Vietnamese people.

I am strongly confident that, as a close friend of the Vietnamese people, in the years to come

you will continue your active contribution to fostering the evermore beautiful and lasting friendship and cooperation between the people of Vietnam and other countries.

I would like to extend to you and your family my compliments, regards and best wishes of health, happiness and success.

Le Duc Anh  
President of the Socialist  
Republic of Vietnam

# I'll Never Forget My Friend

BY PAMELA PETERSON, VVAW

Did you ever have a person in your unit who at first was just another person in your section, until circumstances changed everything and you became good friends? Well, thanks to the military action in the Middle East in '90-'91, I found and lost not just a fellow soldier, but a good friend and brother. If you don't mind, I would like to share my memories of him with you and maybe you will do the same for me sometime.

Everyone, including myself, called him "Brown." He was short and skinny, but he was by no means a weakling! I will never forget his "turtle shell" shaped nose. He used to tape the bottoms of his BDU's to keep them in his boots - you know, two sides pulled back tightly, not "bloused" as the platoon sergeant wanted them. He was a little argumentative sometimes, but one of the most hardworking people I've ever seen in my life.

Before we were deployed in the desert, somewhere in Saudi, I knew very little about him. This was mostly because I was new to the unit. I knew he was a "short-timer" who had put in his time and was very much looking forward to getting out. He was one of the motor pool's mechanics (I was the motor pool's PLL/TAMS clerk for our Halk Missile unit). I also knew he was married, only because I overheard him talking about her one day. But once we were deployed to Saudi and the fear, unknowing, depression, lack of sleep, and the rest of the miseries of combat situations arose, I found a friend.

I suppose any type of military action where you don't know if you are going to die in the next few minutes or ever get to see your family again causes people to develop a strong common bond with others who are there experiencing the depression and anxiety along with you. Brown and I developed our friendship mostly because we were both motor pool and we were almost always "bunker partners" when it came to guard duty. We had to pull anywhere from two to six hours on-off day and night shifts. We also performed the basic courtesy of protecting one another's back when it became necessary to relieve oneself. We even nudged one another when the other one dozed off. Outside of guard duty, it seemed as though I always had

to place an order and get supplies. The motor pool was always in need of fuel. This, of course, made it convenient to send me as the shotgun for Brown while making mo-gas runs and picking up supplies. Of course, that meant we spent a considerable amount of time together.

Like other soldiers, we talked and became good friends. Our conversations helped to relieve much of the stress and misery of a soldier's life in an isolated desert compound. We talked about missing our families, where we were from, past remembrances, and what we had planned when we got

**... there isn't a day that goes by when I don't think about my friend who didn't get to come home alive.**

out of the army. We never really talked about dying. Not even after or while we were crunched up in our scud bunkers wondering whether we were about to die. I suppose everyone thinks about death constantly and wants to try to forget it. That was especially true during the hardest time, the holidays.

I believe it was Thanksgiving when the mess tent actually served "real" food. As if the holiday depression wasn't enough to deal with, Brown and I also had guard duty during the time the food was being served. Luckily we didn't have to wait until after our shift to eat because a private brought us our holiday dinner. Trying to make the best of things, we turned a milk crate upside down to make a table in the bunker. We acted like we were on a picnic, enjoying a delightful meal while watching the countryside. Our mission at the time was just making it through that day without thinking about home and our loved ones whom we might never see again.

As if life wasn't bad enough, on January 5th, 1990, a terrible thing happened. Brown and a sergeant went on a diesel fuel run. After they got fuel, they went to the phones and called home. It was late at night when they started back to our battery's site. It was also raining, and the desert road and sands didn't react well to the rain. No one knows exactly what

happened for sure, but Brown somehow lost control of the diesel truck. It hit the sand and rolled three times. Brown and the sergeant were taken to the closest medical unit. Brown had broken his neck and was quickly medivac'd to Germany.

Later that night -- I think it was about 2300 hours -- my motor pool sergeant came to my tent and told me what had happened. He also said that the rest of the motor pool and some "hawkers" were going to clean up the accident area. I was gathering my M-16, kevlar, flak jacket, etc., when he said that I wasn't going. I didn't

understand why I was not allowed to go. Most importantly, he didn't understand that I had to go! Brown was my friend! I had to help him in any way possible, even if that only meant cleaning up the truck that had almost killed him. I begged and pleaded until he gave in and let me go.

We arrived at the accident site at around 2330 hours. It was dark and wet. The diesel truck was completely totaled. The dented driver's side of the truck rested on top of the sand. The cab's canvas top was ripped completely off and the steering wheel was bent. The pods of diesel fuel were almost thrown off the back of the truck and were leaking. We all worked into the early morning hours in the rain just to get the truck upright and the pods back into their places. I felt like I had to push myself until I couldn't anymore. I had to try and save something. I wanted to save my friend!

The next morning, formation was called a little earlier than usual. Our captain told the platoon what had happened to Brown and the sergeant. Every word the captain spoke brought tears quietly streaming down my cheeks. My tears continued flowing while he tried to give us all hope that Brown would make it.

A few weeks passed. Every once in a while we were told that Brown was doing well, but he was paralyzed from the neck down. One day we were told that Brown

could move his fingers. Eventually I felt relieved that he would live.

Tuesday, January 22nd. My depressing world grew worse. I was swinging a pickaxe to make foxholes in the hard desert terrain when my motor pool sergeant slowly approached me. He told me that he needed to talk to me and took me into the males' tent. He proceeded to tell me that Brown had died on January 21st. I asked for details as my eyes swelled and the tears flowed down my face. Either he didn't know any details regarding Brown's death or he wouldn't tell me. I was so angry! How could he die when they told me he was getting better?! What about his plans for the future? He was to E.T.S. as soon as we got back. He was supposed to go back to Indiana with his wife and start a family! What happened? Why did he die? Why the hell weren't we told the truth if he was so bad that he was dying and wasn't actually getting better? Why did I lose my friend? Was I going to have to die alone? Why couldn't I have saved him somehow? I cried and cried for the rest of the day.

The next day, our battery held a memorial service for Brown. The chaplain arrived with our sergeant major and lieutenant colonel. About 100 yards from site, there was a camouflaged area. Under the camouflage there was a typical soldier's memorial: one M-16 A-1 with the bayonet attached stuck in the ground, a pair of shined combat boots, a kevlar, and an American flag. Everyone in motor pool and our captain wore part of a black leather bootlace tied around our left arms to signify we were in mourning. My tears flowed like a river and so did everyone else's.

Now that I am out of the army, I try very hard not to remember what I experienced over there. But to this day, there isn't a day that goes by when I don't think about my friend who didn't get to come home alive. I am so sorry that he had to die and never got to have his dreams come true. Brown made the holidays a little easier to deal with for me, and hopefully I did the same for him. I was and am still very thankful that Brown helped me during a very emotionally trying time in my life. I will always remember him.

## El Salvador Today

By JOHN POOLE, CHICAGO VVAW

At first glance, there seems to be a new, revitalized El Salvador emerging. The largest populated cities have much more to offer today's consumers compared with the wartime years and modern housing developments abound. With minor modifications, a tourist could easily be reminded of being in the United States.

With a deeper look into the situation, the reality becomes apparent. The people who can afford the consumer goods and the housing comprise a very small percentage of the population. The prices are astronomically high for Salvadorans.

Maybe the most significant observation of the current conditions in El Salvador is that the country is generally much calmer than it was before the signing of the Peace Accords in January of 1992. There is no more military presence and the leading problem these days is crime, such as groups of young men robbing people. There has been a partial re-emergence of death squad activity, but even the president of the country is denouncing it publicly, and perpetrators are being identified.

In rural sectors of the country that had been under FMLN

protection, some of the smaller towns are doing appreciably better. The people now have running water and the beginnings of electricity. In the smaller areas where the ARENA Party still controls the local government, the people are still steeped in poverty. However, some political space is being created. Organizations with projects that have at least partial international support are evolving well. One group even received U.S. AID money without the usual oppressive strings being attached.

While one week isn't long enough to get a complete sense of what's going on in the country, it was easy enough to get a sense of some of the changes that have occurred when compared with observations from a number of previous trips. The Salvadoran people and we in the solidarity movement need to continue to accompany one another. It's wonderful to see projects such as children's centers and small-scale, appropriate technological development doing well. And they will continue to do well as long as we remember to contribute our part to the effort.

## Second Thought for Nguyen Van Hung

You watch with admiration as I roll  
a cigarette from papers and tobacco.  
Hanoi. The Rising Dragon. 1985.  
You can't do what I can do  
because it takes two hands

and you have only one, the other  
lost years ago somewhere near Laos.  
I roll another one for you. You smile,  
then shrug, as if deformity from war  
were just a minor inconvenience.

Together we discover what we share:  
Hue City. Tet. 1968.  
Sipping Lua Moi, we walk again  
familiar ground when you were whole  
and I was whole and everything around us

lay in ruins, dead or burning.  
But not us. Not you or I. We're partners  
in that ugly dance of men  
who do the killing and the dying  
and survive.

Now you run a factory: I teach and write.  
You lost your arm, but have no  
second thoughts about the war you fought.  
I lost a piece of my humanity,  
its absence heavy as a severed arm —

but there I go again: those second thoughts  
I carry always like an empty sleeve  
when you are happy just to share  
a cigarette and Lua Moi, the simple joy  
of being with an old friend.

Reprinted from *Just for Laughs* by W.D. Ehrhart,  
*Vietnam Generation & Burning Cities Press, 1990*

## Recognition, Finally!!

continued from page 1

nize that the people of Vietnam have won once again, but once again, they paid a terrible price for this victory. For many of us, this is another very important step toward finally ending the Vietnam war, and we must celebrate with the people of Vietnam, just as we

celebrated when they got their country back in 1975. We must also be aware that it will be extremely difficult for Vietnam to maintain its independence in the face of overwhelming pressure to adhere to the economic demands of the "New World Order."

## SOLATIUM PAYMENT

continued from page 18

About ten Cowboys are scattered about in a rough perimeter, like wolves waiting for the moose to bleed to death or let down its guard. He's happy to see us, but really pissed off.

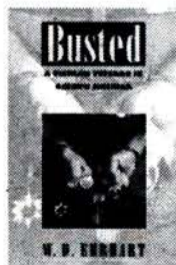
Kim was called to another M.I. unit to perform pressing du-

ties the next week. I never had much more contact with the Butterbar, so I don't know if he saw and felt what I did. I am sure that he tells a version of this story from time to time, but it's really not much of a war story. I still don't know exactly what I felt — or feel today — but I think about it a lot. I do know that, if I still had

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continued from page 10

## McCloskey Recollections:

### Annie Luginbill, Chicago VVAW

It seems that everyone has a story to tell about "His Wackiness," the late Jack McCloskey. I have several contributions.

About six years ago, Jack and his friend Eric Schwartz (another ex-Marine Corps medic) came to visit in Chicago before the annual VVAW campout. When it was campout time, I was "duty driver" for the two, so I elected to take the scenic route. This went past Great Lakes Naval Training Center, where both guys had undergone their training. They both thought that they would like to see "the old place" so I drove them up to the Main Gate and asked if they wanted to go in.

They immediately looked at each other and chorused "Hell no!" They seemed to think that the military actually WANTED a piece of them again. How ridiculous...who would want their raggedy asses NOW?

For the last six or seven years, Jack visited us in Chicago prior to the VVAW campout. He took our dog, Diablo, for twelve walks a day and spoiled him beyond belief; Jack said that he and the dog were brothers. I could always count on getting a phone call at work from him when he did his laundry at our house. He'd call and say "Mommy Annie—this is Jack. The dryer doesn't work." Every time he did this I would tell

him "Jack, the dryer doesn't work because you didn't close the door." "Oh," he'd say. Four minutes later he would call back and say "Mommy Annie — this is Jack. The dryer works now."

Jim and Sukie Wachtendonk will tell you about his love for the children (their son, Zack, was President of the Wacky Jacky Club) and how he could create a wonderful environment for them with his silliness. He and the children would play together for hours, inventing new games and ways to be funny.

Since San Francisco rarely gets thunderstorms, Jack had a fondness for coming to the Midwest and calling rain down on everyone. Two years ago, Wacky Jacky did a raindance at the campfire before he retired to sleep in a motel. At 5 AM, the great-grandmother of all thunderstorms hit

us, and all of us soggy campers cursed him vigorously. Jack appeared while we were drying out and said, "What? There was a storm, and I slept through it?" "Fuck you, Jack" was the reveille that morning!

Many remember the campout when "His Wackiness" celebrated his 20th year since discharge from the military by dropping acid, sitting up all night in a friend's VW bus, and watching a thunderstorm.

"McCluck" — We were always delighted to see him come yet so glad when it was time for him to go home, since he left a trail of effluvia behind him. Jack, if we could have you back for just a little while, we wouldn't harass you about the mess you made in the bedroom or the holes you burned in the chair cover. We miss you, dear friend and brother!

## McCloskey Recollections:

### Mary Sue Planck

Well, do you think Jack finally got someone to Fling Him to the Moon? He was always slinging that line, and when I'd ask him where it came from, he had no idea. It was one of those McCloskey-isms, like "Why Me Lord" or "Squiggy nose."

In the obituary in yesterday's paper, Country Joe said it best: Jack shouldn't have died. He was right, Jack shouldn't have. I'm still mad at him for it — damn it, McCluck, we still need you!

So many of us have needed him and so many times he's been

there. He's not the first one to take care of everyone except for himself, but I think he perfected the art.

Durn your hide McCloskey, who's going to call me in the middle of the night from New York to get someone's phone number who lives in New York? Who's going to keep my floor covered with ashes and newspapers? Who's going to make us all laugh — and who's going to be there when another Vietnam vet can't make it alone through a long dark night?

I hope the answer is a lot of us will be there for each other. I hope we learned from Jack. He was sure one of my teachers, without ever really meaning to be.

Jack was imply one of the best people ever put on earth. You'll hear a lot about how many lives he saved — every word of it true — but he also put a lot of fun in people's lives. McCluck, Wacky Jacky, whatever silly name you called him, Jack didn't mind. He had no false sense of offended dignity or decorum — though he could summon up either quality if the need arose.

I don't know if I ever saw him happier than when he'd be in

the middle of a spirited conversation while six year old Susan would be braiding flowers or ribbons in his hair. Molly would say, "Oh, Dad!" and then we would all laugh. Yeah, we sure could have used a few more years of Jack, but I guess we'll have to go without him. He leaves a tremendous hole in the world and in our hearts.

The best we can do to honor him is to carry on in the same tradition: Remember the promises Jack made to dead men and work for peace. Demonstrate, educate, raise hell — then go dance all night — and always remember to love. I love you Jack.

## The New Winter Soldiers

continued from page 4

ment. It validates the willingness of particularly young men to serve their country, while recognizing their efforts against it and its military when they realized they had been lied to and mistreated. He places their efforts to "straighten out" the military in parallel to those efforts by the young and people of color who were similarly trying to "straighten out" this entire country. This is a book that celebrates the struggle against death and destruction, even when these are sometimes used tactically to stop the war.

It is good that these efforts are finally getting recognition due them. But I don't think even Moser recognizes the importance and risks that people took while on active duty to take a stand. Within the draconian military "just-us"

system (one loses most if not all of their Constitutional rights upon entering the military), resistance was met by arrests, bad discharges and prison time when activists were apprehended. Yet these efforts have largely gone unreported. If there are any heroes on the American side in the war, cer-

tainly these people qualify.

Richard Moser's study is a landmark. One cannot understand the resistance to the war in this country, and certainly not the level of resistance, unless one includes a study of struggles within the military. These young people were not saints, but their love for democracy and justice was a lot greater than most people have recognized, and certainly under much worse conditions than many of us experienced. Moser brings this home in a very powerful way.





## Letter for Maude

President William Clinton  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington DC 20500  
or e-mail: President@Whitehouse.gov

Dear President Clinton,

Maude De Victor is a heroine to millions of people who are fighting the good fight for a world free of chemical toxins and for government accountability.

During the course of her 23 years experience as a government employee, she found a pattern of illnesses among Vietnam veterans contaminated by Agent Orange (dioxin).

Maude was fired in 1984 and banned from full-time government work. We appeal to you, Mr. President, to lift this terrible ban on her employment. For almost 20 years the facts that were revealed in her research have stood the test of time and were the basis for legislation enacted by Congress.

People like Maude truly represent the best of American values and should not be punished, but be rewarded for revealing the truth. They should be employed in the service of our government and not excluded.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Zip

*Please send a letter or e-mail like this in today and help out Maude.*

## Appeal for the Dellingers

July 25, 1995

Dear Friends of Dave and Elizabeth Dellinger:

Since their wedding in 1942, Dave Dellinger and Elizabeth Peterson have been champions of peace and justice, beacons of hope and inspiration, and doers of what needs to be done. Dave continues to speak to and with as many of the countless groups that seek his counsel as his schedule allows. He has just returned from a Peace March through Vietnam and Cambodia, from speaking at a rally for Mumia Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia, and from meetings on behalf of Leonard Peltier in Washington, D.C. Elizabeth is hard at work on her memoirs and is very

active with our local North Country Coalition for Peace and Justice, along with other groups, on issues from prisoners' rights to recognition for the Abenski Nation here in Vermont. She also assists with the local hospice and senior meals programs. Few individuals have given more of themselves than have these two in their lifelong active commitment to non-violent struggle for racial and economic justice. Even fewer have done so with greater humility, compassion, and good humor.

As war-tax resisters, and as individuals committed to a simple lifestyle, the fact that there was often very little financial compensation for years of active dedication to our struggle may have been easier for their family to deal with than it would have been for

most of ours. This summer, Dave will turn 80 and Elizabeth 75. It is time for us to reflect on our love and appreciation for them, and help facilitate their transition into a new, challenging, yet ever-fruitful period of their lives. A period in which it may not always be possible for Dave to split the firewood for their wood stove (and primary heat source) or for Elizabeth to stack that firewood and feed the stove, often many times a day and night. A period in which the trips up and down stairs to the basement laundry and to the sole bathroom upstairs have become an increasingly less manageable burden.

With your help, we would like to raise a minimum of \$10,000 to purchase the materials, and a portion of the labor, to equip the

Dellinger-Peterson home with a backup oil furnace, increased insulation, and a first floor bathroom/laundry. Much of the labor will be donated by local activists. Your help would be deeply appreciated, and would indeed help to ensure that Dave and Elizabeth will be able to remain in the home on Peacham Bay they love so well.

I trust you will help as best you are able. Checks can be made out to the Hardwick Area Peace and Justice Coalition, footnoted to the Dave and Elizabeth Peace and Justice Fund, Box 336, Hardwick, VT 05843. For further information, you can reach me, Robin Cappuccino, the coordinator of this effort, at 802-533-2296.

Many thanks.

## SOLATIUM PAYMENT

*continued from page 20*

who was always speaking to the women and would joke with them when they were doing laundry, etc. He excitedly calls his wife over to tell her of the connection and seems to be introducing me all over again.

We talk some more. We finish the Coke and I realize it's time to get to business. How? First he takes us over to a dresser on one end of the hootch. I hadn't really focused on it before, but they've set up a little shrine on it. There's a couple of candles, a small framed picture of the dead girl, a couple of other mementos including a letter or card of some kind and, incongruously, a watch. The grief in that hootch had been palpable all along, now it was very strong:

my feelings of sharing responsibility helped it along. Don't anyone ever lay that bullshit about "they don't care about death the way we do" on me! I don't know if others have had the same reaction, but except for Vietnam I never saw anything like that little shrine UNTIL I first went to the Wall. The Wall is covered with lots of little Vietnamese shrines; some of us have helped to create them. Ironical, ain't it? I seriously considered just getting the hell out of there without doing that stupid, insulting payment. I considered giving them some money out of my own pocket (if Kim said it'd be O.K.) and going back and saying we couldn't find the place. I wanted to do anything but offer

this family a lousy \$35 and ask them to sign for it (as I recall, they had to sign) while Butterbar and I signed a form and gave them a copy, basically telling them that Uncle Sam had bought 'em off. In the end, intimidated by the presence of the Butterbar and Kim (or maybe because I still believed there was a good reason for me to do this shit, even if I couldn't understand it at my level in the chain of command), I did the deed. I don't know how I felt while I was doing it -- I was numb.

As we started to leave and I realized that the crowd was still there, I just knew that we'd come this far without any grief because they wanted to know what we were up to. I honestly believed that they were going to kill us on the way back. Or maybe we'd just

be captured? Naw, they'll kill us. I can remember being completely fatalistic about it. (O.K., you knew this might happen, right?) Nothing happened. As we retraced our steps, the crowd dwindled, each person peeling off when they got to their own hootch. By the time we got back to the blinding sunlight in the street, there were just a couple of people standing at the entrance to the alley. Not one person had asked for a cigarette, tried to change money or offered a blowjob — on the way in or on the way back. Hernandez, my driver, was one tense dude. He's sitting with his butt on the back of the driver's seat so as to have a clear shot — his knuckles are white from gripping the M16 so hard.

*continued on page 16*

# Membership Form

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

National Office

P.O. Box 408594, Chicago, IL 60640

Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates of Service (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_  
Branch \_\_\_\_\_  
Unit \_\_\_\_\_  
Overseas Duty \_\_\_\_\_  
Dates \_\_\_\_\_  
Military Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Membership in VVAW is open to all people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The initiation fee is \$20.00, sent to the National Office (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

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 the day to day organizational leadership of VVAW and issuing national publications.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax deductible.)

## MACV Insignia

U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV) [official design by the institute of Heraldry, U.S. Army]. Under this insignia 60,000 Americans and 2 million Vietnamese died.



"Yellow and red are the Vietnam colors. The red Ground alludes to the infiltration and aggression from beyond the embattled yellow "wall" (i.e. The Great Wall of China). The opening in the wall through which this infiltration and aggression flow is blocked by the white sword representing United States military aid and support. The wall is arched and the sword pointed upward in reference to the offensive action pushing the aggression back.

It was first issued to the 12,000 "advisors" in Vietnam in March of 1963.

## Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War



We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of U.S. aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. As with all the propaganda put out by the government to justify U.S. intervention in Indochina, the MACV insignia also put forward lies. The U.S. military was not protecting the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China, but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself.

Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families.

Our insignia is 20 years old. It belongs to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without permission.

## Beware of VVAW AI

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individualists calling themselves the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist." Their activities are centered mainly in Seattle, San Francisco and New York City. They often claim to be part of our organization and their most recent antics include burning American flags at demonstrations.

"VVAW AI" is not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW. They are not affiliated with us in any way. "VVAW AI" is actually the creation

of an obscure, ultra-left sect called the Revolutionary Communist Party and is designed to pimp off of VVAW's history of struggle and continued activism. Their objective is to create confusion and deception in order to promote themselves.

We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit. Don't be fooled, they are not what they claim. Forewarned is forearmed.

# RECOLLECTIONS

## SOLATIUM PAYMENT: THE UGLY AMERICAN, EXHIBIT #1

BY JIM LYNCH, VVAW

The single incident that probably had the biggest impact on me while I was in RVN -- and one of only two times I physically was actually scared (mostly was too busy for fright) -- had to do with making a Solatium Payment. I've thought about posting this for a long time but couldn't find the words; now that Cap'n Jack has forced my hand, I'll have to see if the right stuff can be expressed.

As I remember it, a Solatium Payment was made to the next of kin of a local when they died accidentally in an incident in which the U.S. Army was clearly involved. It was understood that the payment was not intended to convey any sense of culpability on the part of Uncle Sam, but simply a sense of regret at the family's loss and any involvement we had in it. (As you might guess, a long-haul trucking outfit like ours made a LOT of Solatium Payments.) The payment had to be made by a commissioned officer and witnessed by another commissioned officer; all of this to lay about \$35 worth of piastres (as I remember it) on a family whose feelings under the circumstances are probably pretty predictable. I cannot express what an asshole this made one feel like, except to say that I drew Burial Officer once back at Ft. Lee, Va. This was worse.

We had this big "cattle car" (you know, enclosed trailer with four rows of benches running front to back) that was used to haul all of the local hooch maids, etc., back into Saigon every afternoon. In one of the weirdest accidents I'll ever witness, the driver was knocked unconscious when his west coast mirror tangled with one on the truck going the other way, and the cattle car went over an embankment, rolled and burned. Naturally, it was grossly overloaded -- there were something like 75 people inside. I can't recall all the particulars, but about 20 or so died, including the driver.

Well, just about every officer in the battalion drew at least one Solatium Payment as a result of this beauty. Mine happened to be for a 17 year old young woman

who lived in Cholon. I knew her.

At this time I was briefly the CO of a 2 1/2 ton outfit that was being deactivated and basically we did bunker guard and other REMF crap. For about six weeks I had a Vietnamese (Chinese) secretary whom the Group Sgt. Major had asked me to take in for a while; apparently she'd been the designated squeeze of some M.I. Major he knew and they didn't know what to do with her when he rotated back to the world. Beautiful little 19 year old woman,

is a very high percentage of young men, much higher than you're accustomed to seeing out of uniform. Ain't nobody looking real happy to see us, although many just seem to be incredulous. If you look up, you can see the sky, but on the ground several stories below, it's twilight.

We move along with Kim asking questions once in a while. We go a long, twisting, turning way. Occasionally another, smaller alley intersects the one we're on like a tributary. There

It never crossed my mind to go back -- got these orders, you know. It never crossed my mind that Kim may have brought us here on purpose.

We keep going for what seems like many miles (even today I think it must have been close to a mile -- SURREAL). Kim stops in front of one of these lean-to's -- you can see right into the living area and there's a blanket or curtain separating off what must be a small sleeping area in the back. A very uncertain man of about forty comes to the entrance and he and Kim talk. She tells me we have the right place, that this is the young woman's (forgot her name, too -- what's new?) father.

I ask her to tell him my canned speech about why we're here, but -- impetuously -- I add that I knew his daughter and am here also to pay my respects. I wonder why in the hell I am really there. The father insists that we come in and he puts his hands in front of him in a prayer gesture and bows as I enter. I don't know from left field about customs at that time, but my reflexes have me bowing back. He goes to a little Styrofoam cooler and pulls out two lukewarm bottles of what's now Classic Coke -- that's all he has, but he insists that Butterbar and I have them. He gives us the only two chairs at a little table and he pulls up a crate or something. Kim stays standing by my shoulder. There are two other women and a little girl in the hooch. We are introduced to the mother -- his wife -- and the grandmother; they stay over in the shadows, but are attentive. The mob is outside, very quiet except for an occasional murmur, just staring. The family doesn't seem to notice and I find myself forgetting about them. We talk for quite awhile. I tell him that his daughter was a hooch maid in my company and that she had a wonderful sense of humor and beautiful smile (didn't have to lie). After we talk a little more, his eyes light up and he says that I must be the handsome Dai Uy

**I wanted to do anything but offer this family a lousy \$35 and ask them to sign for it . . .**

mini-skirts, great sense of humor, still got the pictures and she still looks good... I NEVER laid a glove on her! Anyway, Kim volunteered to go down to Cholon and help us find this place because we didn't have a prayer.

So, we tool on down to Cholon: Kim, me, my driver and a butterbar I borrowed from the outfit next door to be the witness. We go and we go, with Kim asking directions frequently, and finally we pull over on the side of a small, very crowded street -- with NO military vehicles, White Mice or anything else reassuring in sight. I figure, let's get in and get outta here ASAP. So I ask Kim, where's the house we're looking for. She says to come with her down this alley.

So we leave a very unhappy driver clutching his M16 in the jeep and the three of us head on down this alley -- we've got two .45s and one M16 between us. No extra magazines. (Officially, we're overarmed.) Within 10 yards of entering the alley, sunlight has disappeared for good. What we got here is this winding alley between tall buildings out of the backs of which are extending lean-to like dwellings. There's a small path between all of this which is full of people, garbage, people, puddles, people, crates, people, etc. Among these people

are whispers and shouts and murmurs as we pass, but I don't realize what's behind us until I turn around to see us being followed by a growing crowd; the crowd itself is very quiet, but people exclaim as we go by and another one or two people from each little hovel seem to join the group. They are mostly young (under 30, I guess) men and women; some of the guys look like Cowboys.

I notice that Kim has stopped addressing us at all, and her inquiries of Vietnamese seem to come out in a concerned tone. I start thinking that this KID (me being a 22 year old Man of the World O-3 and all), who lives in a nice modern apartment building and whose dad works for an American firm, is NOT on her own turf and is really in over her head. Now I'm getting very, very nervous. Butterbar is soaking wet and practically hyperventilating, and his eyes seem REAL big as he seeks reassurance; maintaining my Command Presence (tryin' hard, anyway), I keep telling him this is all routine. He's got the only M16 and I wonder if he is any good at all with it, then I realize that everything is so dense that even I couldn't miss with the .45. It dawns on me that we are right smack in the bowels of Cholon -- legendary for belonging to no one but Charlie and local warlords.

*continued on page 18*