THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War **50¢**

Volume 27, Number 2 Fall 1997

VVAW Celebrates 30th Anniversary

MCs & Keepers of the Bells:(l-r) Annie Luginbill, Annie Hirschman & Annie Bailey

See Report on 30th Anniversay Festivities on Page 12

Landmines In Cambodia '93

Carl Nyberg

I volunteered for a temporary duty assignment as a United Nations military observer in Cambodia in 1993 when I was a propulsion officer aboard the USS Independence (CV-62). The United States was responsible for much suffering in Cambodia, and I was eager to do my part to improve the situation there.

I knew about the problem of landmines from reading Asiaweek, the English language magazine of East Asia. When I received orders to go to Cambodia, I went to the ship's combat information center to learn what the intelligence guys knew. They told me that a Dutch deminer had just lost his foot. That's a high price to pay for helping global neighbors.

I knew landmines were a problem, but it did not affect me until I was in Cambodia. I did not grasp the scope and impact of the landmine problem until I saw its effects for myself.

I was appalled at the suffering caused by landmines. Amputees seemed ubiquitous. Most were reduced to begging. Outside the bank a half dozen amputees would

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Freedom But Not Yet Justice For Geronimo Pratt

Ben Chitty

On June 10, 1997, after more than a quarter century in California prisons, Vietnam veteran and Black Panther Party leader Geronimo ji-Jaga (aka Elmer Pratt) was released on $25,000 bail, while the Los Angeles District Attorney appeals the judge's decision to overturn Pratt's murder conviction, and then decides whether to try him again for the 1968 Santa Monica murder of Caroline Olsen.

If the DA goes back to trial, the case will be tough to make. The only eyewitness, Olsen's husband, is dead. The only person ever to hear Pratt confess, Julius Butler, has been exposed as a police informant. And a retired FBI agent is prepared to testify that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had monitored Pratt in Oakland near the time of the murder — over 300 miles away. More than reasonable doubt, even after all these years.

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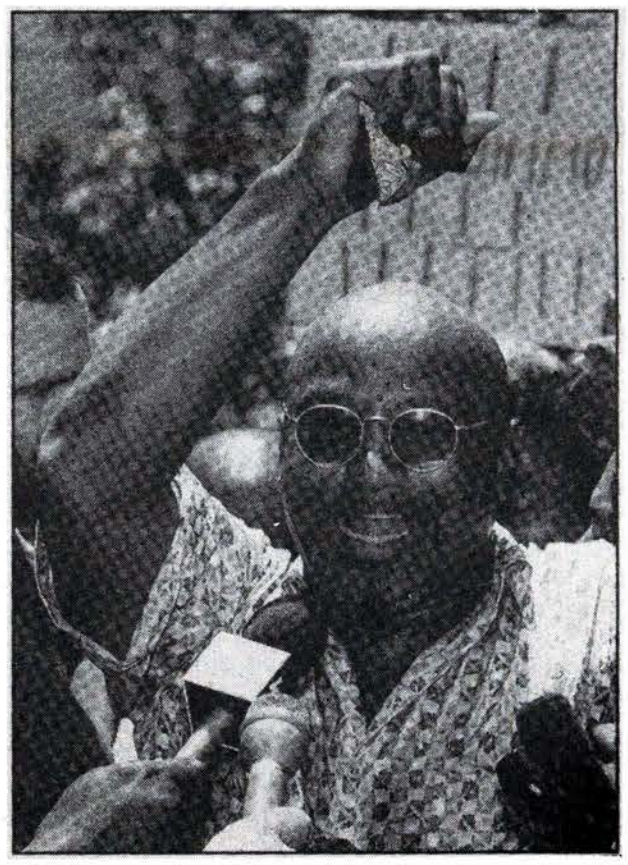

The 1898-1998 Philippine Centennial Commemoration

Dong Tizon

The Philippines were a colony of the Spanish Empire for three hundred years, beginning in 1521. By the late 1800s, this empire was on the brink of collapse because of problems at home and due to peoples in Latin and Central America declaring their independence from Spain. In 1895, Spain was having problems suppressing the Cuban uprising; by 1896, organized Filipinos in Manila were in open rebellion. This would eventually become a nationwide movement.

The United States, a new expanding power, eventually clashed

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30 YEARS OF VVAW!

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

PO Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

From the National Office

Barry Romo

Now that VVAW is over thirty (and some of us are circling fifty), it may be time to take stock and adjust our direction.

• Action has always been VVAW's strong point. Changing the world has always been more important than contemplating change.

• We work with homeless veterans. We cook and feed, and clean floors and pots and pans. We interact with the brothers and sisters on the street because we are one with them. It's not charity — it's good for them and really good for us. Not that we don't bring the issue up on Veteran's Day or Memorial Day, but it's more than a slogan. We cook and communicate.

• Talking is important, especially when it's passing on the lessons we learned in the field. We're not just talking about war stories, but experiences we've had building coalitions with other organizations to work on peace and justice issues. The political lessons we've learned have value to a new generation that should not have to go through the same mistakes we did. It's also extremely important to pass on the nuts and bolts of putting on a demonstration, doing crowd control or running security. Quite frankly, no other group has that experience.

• We encourage you to go on vacation as a political act. Yes, enjoy the beaches, and the music, and the rum, and even the cigars in the tropical sun. You remember Cuba. That's the country we've spent billions on trying to subvert its system, assassinate its leaders, poison its crops and even children's milk, and continue to do so. The government threatens its allies for investing and its citizens for vacationing.

VVAW was the only vets' group that sent members back to Vietnam for over a decade. We did not pay attention to the little warnings in our passports. You can still make a statement, have fun, get a tan and give the finger to that old racist Jesse Helms.

• While we're at it, '98 is going to be big on anniversaries. Not because we're into them (although any excuse for a party). They're cheap for the so-called news organizations to put on. The My Lai massacre, Tet, the assassinations of King and Kennedy — need we say more? We have a role and we have something to say.

• Mines, mines and more mines. Around the world people are being maimed and killed by mines made by the United States. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are suffering from a war that ended twenty years ago. The suffering goes on. And Clinton, that gutless wonder, can't find the courage to sign onto the landmine ban treaty. It's not that he has to come out against war or the military brass or his pretty guards in their pretty uniforms. He just has to join the world's people, including dead Princess Di, in saying NO. We have to remind him.

• Have we forgotten anything? Oh yes — we are still broke, and we still need your financial support and encouragement.

Citizen Soldier: The Story of the VVAW
A 55 minute Documentary
$25.00
Send Check or Money Order to:
Denis Mueller
3847 Lavergne
Chicago, IL 60641

see page 19 for membership info

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!

Editorial Collective
Barry Romo, Joe Miller, Jeff Machota & Lisa Boucher
Special thanks to:
Doc Upton

I Didn't Know We Won: Notes From the Boonies

Paul Wisovaty

Like most guys who weren't smart enough to avoid the draft, I've always found history to be pretty confusing. I could never get all those French Louies straight, and I don't have the foggiest notion how long the Hundred Years War lasted. Like I said, all that historical mumbo-jumbo confuses me.

So, as you might guess, I was really enlightened by reading Barry, Peter and Joe's "History of the US War in Vietnam." *(see website url on page 19)* Predictably (given the authorship), it was written at a reading level even I could understand, and for the first time I was able to put those decades of French-American-Vietnamese relations into an understandable historical context. As our authors so subtly put it: "We got exactly what we paid for: pimps, prostitutes, cowards and gangsters, masquerading as a government and a military."

Well, just when you think you've got it all figured out, somebody comes along to complicate things.

One day earlier this year, I was looking through some stuff in the basement, and I came across this 1985 issue of the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine. (I know what you're thinking, but somebody must have put my name on their mailing list, OK? Don't change the subject.) Anyway, this issue was supposed to be all about the Vietnam War, and I have to admit it had some pretty neat pictures in it. Every time I turned the page, there was Bob Hope or Raquel Welch or Zsa Zsa Gabor, dancing and hugging each other and telling these great hippie/war protester jokes that really got the troops rolling in the aisles. I don't know how you can get any closer to the heart and soul of our Vietnam experience than that.

Anyway, I wasn't even going to bother to read the article itself, because I figured it wouldn't be much different from the VVAW account I'd already read. I mean, after all, history is history, right?

Well, not necessarily. I should like to share with you the very last sentence of this article, which purports to detail our involvement in Vietnam since 1954. (We didn't have anything to do with Vietnam before Dien Bien Phu, you understand.)

"In March, 1973, the last US combat troops departed South Vietnam, leaving behind a more stable, democratic Vietnamese government and a much strengthened armed forces."

That's it; that's the end. That is the last line on the last page in the whole damned article. And what's it mean? Well, I think it's pretty obvious what it means.

We won.

We accomplished everything we set out to accomplish. We turned South Vietnam into the most democratic republic since ancient Athens, and we fine-tuned those much-maligned ARVNs into something like the Minutemen at Lexington Green. We left the Saigon government everything they could possibly have needed to drop-kick Ho Chi Minh onto some historical rock pile usually reserved for the likes of George McGovern and David Dellinger.

Like I said, we won.

If you don't mind, I'll get a little more serious, and I'll even drop the weak sarcasm.

I don't care how much these guys lie to themselves, and I don't even care how much they lie to each other or to some other old farts sitting around the bar at the Legion Hall. But I do mind — a whole lot — when they lie to my kid.

So I'm going to try to do a little more about it than just sit around on my front porch with a cold Busch listening to Phil Ochs (although I'm pretty good at that). Starting this fall, I'm going to approach every high school in my little county and tell them I'd like to talk to their history classes about our Vietnam experience. If nothing else, I'd like to let them know that not all the pimps, prostitutes, cowards and gangsters were on the same side of the Pacific. From what I can tell, the politically correct textbooks don't go out of their way to say those things, and God knows the VFW and the Republican Women don't either.

Paul at the 30th in Chicago

And you know why else I'm going to do it? Because, at the 30 year VVAW reunion in Chicago, I promised Steve Hassna that I would.

It's not like Steve ever danced with Raquel on stage at Cam Ranh or anything, but he is a fellow vet, so I sort of feel like I should keep my promise to him.

Call it a Nam thing.

Paul Wisovaty is a member of VVAW. He lives in Tuscola, IL, where he works for the probation department. He was in Vietnam with the US Army 9th Division in 1968.

Fraggin'

Bill Shunas

When I undertook basic training, I figured that the easiest way to get through was to melt into the crowd. So, when the platoon would form up, I'd never get in the first rank or an end file where a DI would notice you. Likewise, I never got in the last rank. Them DIs thought they were slick. "About face!" Suddenly the last rank was in front, and those who had tried to hide in the back had a DI in their face and were soon on the ground doing pushups.

I didn't need any extra aggravation. There was already plenty of that there. Between sunup and sundown you didn't get much break time. So, when the commands of "Platoon, halt," "At ease," and "Light 'em if you have 'em" came, you could finally feel some relief. If you were lucky you had a DI for the day whose cigarette habit required a lot of breaks.

At these stops guys would get together, light cigarettes, take a deep drag and relax, sharing a moment with their buddies. Some would try to suck down two sticks, but most would take the one drag and let the square slowly burn. That's because the longer they burned, the longer you had break. Also, because if you finished your cigarette or didn't smoke you were likely to be subject to extra harassment while the others quietly kept smoking.

. . . guys would get together, light cigarettes, take a deep drag and relax, sharing a moment with their buddies.

Back in those days I smoked cigars. I carried little ones for these short breaks during training. As it so happened, my platoon sergeant also liked cigars. When he called a halt and told us to light up, he'd come over to me, and I'd give him a cigar. He'd light up and go off to harass and/or bullshit with his favorite targets. Then one day he got his cigar from me and turned to go. He stopped dead in his tracks, turned around with a light-bulb-just-flashed look and said, "After five weeks in my platoon, I don't even know your name. What the hell's your name?" I thought to myself: mission accomplished. I'd achieved anonymity in basic training.

Occasionally I smoked cigarettes too. I remember when I first got to Vietnam I had shit-burning detail. When it was over, the four of us involved sat there sucking cigarettes, lighting them off each other's. We didn't talk, but we communicated as we stared into what the fire had left and smoked. I suppose we were contemplating

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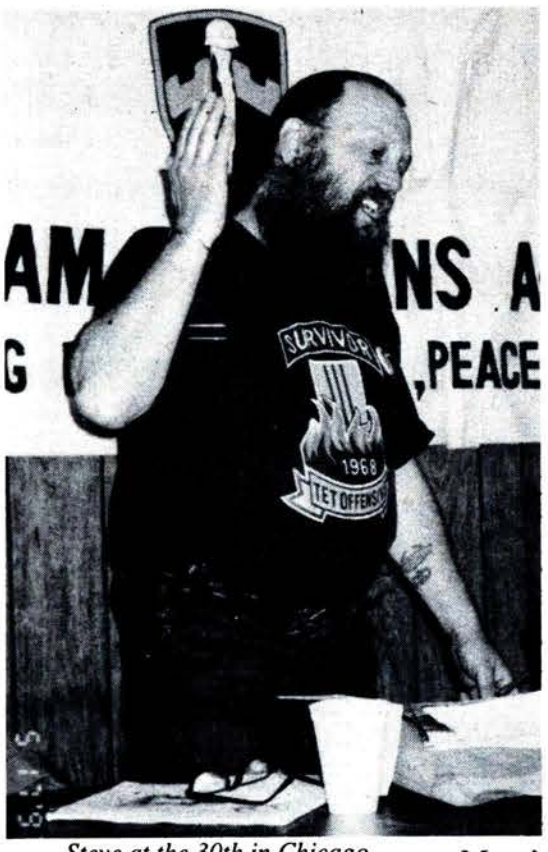
Drill Sergeant Hassna's History Corner: Women In The Military

Steve Hassna



Steve at the 30th in Chicago

Listen up, troops, it's the old Drill Sergeant here. I'm sitting on the Group W bench wondering how I got here. Well, it's not really the Group W bench of Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant" fame; it's the jury selection room of Sonoma County, California. Feels a lot like it, though. You got it — I got tagged to take part in the American justice system. American justice — now, that's a concept. It would be best served by using all this time on my hands to write my next history lesson.

I must admit I have had some prompting recently in the form of having my heels locked by one Command Sergeant Major Mary Moore who told me to get off my third point of contact (that's an Airborne term meaning your ass) and write her a column she would be proud of, not to worry about the electronic age, and to join the 20th century before it is over. All that in that order. (To have one's heels locked is also a military term meaning to come to an extreme position of attention: heels together, feet at 45 degree angles, fingers curled with thumb and index finger along the outside seam of your pants, eyes straight ahead and your attention focused on the instructions the Sergeant Major is dispensing. That, my friends, is having one's heels locked. If you still don't understand, then find a veteran and ask for a demonstration. I'm sure they would be more than happy to oblige.)

As for me, I was receiving the motivation talk from Sergeant Major Moore because of my lack of columns for the Sonoma County Free Press over several months. For which I have no excuse.

There are things one should remember. First off, the army calls this a motivation factor: noncompliance with the Sergeant Major's commands results in your wishing you had been born on another planet in a far-away galaxy. Help from God on your behalf will not be tolerated or allowed. Plus you don't give excuses to a Sergeant Major.

So here I am in Mary's shop, Long Ago And Far Away, in Sebastopol, California, at the position of attention, saying at the right times "yes, Mary, you're right, yes, I'll get right on it." Et cetera, et cetera. You get my drift here? Mary wanted a column and she wanted it yesterday. At that point I lovingly promoted her to Command Sergeant Major.

For those of you who don't know what a Sergeant Major is I'll give a brief rundown. If you still don't understand, find some vets and ask them.

It doesn't matter, officers or enlisted ranks — Sergeant Majors scare everybody. It's amusing to see officers cringe when one of these people gets pissed off.

The highest ranking noncommissioned officer in all services is designated E-9. In the Army and Marine Corps it's called a Sergeant Major; for the Navy and the Coast Guard it's Master Chief Petty Officer; for the Air Force, it's Chief Master Sergeant.

There are some rules to remember when dealing with these people:

1) Sergeant Majors have no sense of humor.

2) They went through basic with God and are on a first name basis with him.

3) If in doubt, the Sergeant Major is right and you don't understand some part of the instructions.

4) If asked, "What are you doing?" never reply, "Nothing, Sergeant Major" or "I don't know what I am doing, Sergeant Major."

(The first, "nothing," would be answered with "well, then, let's find something to do" — which means a work detail. In Vietnam, this means burning shit. Here's a good spot to go find that vet. Preferably a Vietnam vet. Ask him what "burning shit" means.)

(The second, "I don't know," means the locked heels position and reissuance of the instructions with a closing statement of "now do you understand, troop?" Any answer other than "yes, Sergeant Major" will result in immediate transfer to a weather station in Greenland regardless of branch of service or job title.)

5) These people have no sense of humor.

Are you getting all this? If not, you got it — find a vet to translate.

Well now, with all that perfectly clear, let's move on. For some time now I wanted to do a piece on women in the military, but just as I got started something else would come up. Drill Sergeants, PR problems, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) — which isn't. One scandal after another. Ain't the military just great?

So what I'm going to do is just do what I first wanted to do — women in the military. I'll cover all that other stuff in later columns.

In 1996, the movie **Courage Under Fire** came out, about a woman chopper pilot in the Gulf and her being recommended for a posthumous Medal of Honor, America's highest award for valor. (That's a word you should remember here: posthumous, or dead, because that's how most of these things are awarded. I'd like to see Mister Rogers come out someday and say, "Hi, children, can you say 'posthumously'?" with that weird smile on his face.) This was billed as being about the first woman to be recommended for this award. But that was not completely accurate. (I got that line from **Independence Day**.) The San Francisco Chronicle ran a story about one Doctor Mary Walker who received an award for her part in the Civil War. She worked in a field hospital, was captured by Confederate troops, interned in a POW camp, and tended to the sick while there, being released at war's end.

She received the medal from President Andrew Johnson, who by the way took over after Lincoln died of an acute case of lead poisoning. But that is a whole different story.

Things went on just fine for Mary for a lot of years. She wore the medal proudly every day after she received it. She also wore men's suits and conducted her life as if she were in charge of it. Seems no one told her that men were in charge. Then, in 1903, things changed. A congressional committee decided that what Mary did wasn't all that brave and stripped her of the medal. The guys in charge were really upset with the fact that Mary was an outspoken advocate for women's rights and opposed the death penalty. She also had the guts to tell those in authority to go pound salt!

Two Federal cops were sent to take the medal back. They were met by Mary — wearing her medal and a twelve gauge shotgun. The cops decided that being recommended for a posthumous Medal of Honor for taking same medal from a live recipient wasn't worth the trouble and left, never to return. Mary continued to wear the medal every day until her death a few years later. Now that, troops, is an attitude that anyone could be proud of, including this old Drill Sergeant.

All this attention, including the film, has come about due to the arguments about the question of women in combat. There is a misconception that women in combat is a new thing. WRONG!!! Women have been involved in combat and close support roles since the Revolutionary War. They just haven't been acknowledged for their part. Only recently, since the issue hit the public forum, have women's roles been explored. All this publicity should be a warning to any women planning to enlist in the armed forces. Be prepared to get medals posthumously.

Because, as far as I can see, women will be involved more in future wars. One reason for this is the concept of the fluid battlefield. The ebb and flow of the battle can change very rapidly on a modern battlefield. Front lines

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For The Living: The Winter Soldier Investigation

LISA GAYE DIXON

As someone involved in the performing arts, I have come to an understanding of the power of language, both written and spoken. Although a person can also be moved by what is left unwritten or unsaid, sometimes the telling of a dangerous truth has more power than could ever be imagined. I have recently read the full text of the Winter Soldier Investigation (WSI), on the Internet — all of it, beginning to end. This seemed to surprise some of my friends and acquaintances, that one would (or could) read the entire transcript, but I didn't really think about it at the time, not until much later. Then I thought: yes, this is an event, this telling, and it has power. And it has touched me.

I returned to live in my home town late last year, and have only recently become aware of the existence of VVAW and its members. Until my meeting and talking with Joe Miller and Barry Romo and Jeff Machota, and my reading of the WSI, I had been fairly ignorant of the role we played in Vietnam. I suppose I was one of those armchair protesters, who know more about an issue than 80% of the population, but are still sadly lacking in any real, in-depth understanding of it. I knew we were wrong to be in Vietnam. I knew we had fought a basically 'unwinnable' war for unreal reasons; I even knew about things like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Agent Orange and My Lai and atrocities committed by the U.S. troops, but I was also (sadly) a child of the 80s. I grew up with **Rambo** and **Superman** and **Let's Get Harry** and God knows how many other whitewashing films that gave the lie to what we did in Vietnam. I thought about it all with a jaundiced, lazy eye, knowing something was not quite right, but unwilling to look further into it myself. I was, like the rest of the world, truly ignorant of what we did to others, and what we did to ourselves.

As I began to read the Winter Soldier Investigation, the first major impression I got was of looking into a time capsule. As the testimony is verbatim (for the most part), I heard the voices of young men speaking in the vernacular of the Sixties and Seventies: the time of AIM, the Black Panthers, the Chicano movement — people of color beginning to reclaim their own across the land. Having spent way too much time immersed in the cultural wasteland of the Eighties, this hearkened me back to my pre-teen days, when 'hippie' wasn't a bad word and calling someone 'brother' actually meant something. This alone was a re-learning experience.

Then, as I began to read further, as I read page after page after page of young men, often boys really, speaking about what they had done and what had been done to them, I began to feel two distinct things: The first was a deep, profound sadness. My God, what had we been doing? Everyone talks about how Vietnam was the first war brought into our homes because of the arrival of television, but no one ever, ever, EVER told me about the consistent, relentless burning of homes, free fire zones, mad minutes, dropping shackled prisoners from helicopters, torture as a matter of course. Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather had neglected to mention this. I was sad because, well, no one really wants to be proven right in their cynicism. I wanted the bad guys to be only at the top. I wanted to be able to blame the generals and the pentagon and the president yes, but not the boys who came from hometowns like mine, not the young men I might have known. Not everyone.

Even so, my sadness was laced with fear. Not of these men, these Winter Soldiers baring their souls, but of those who spread the terror of an unreal communist threat, of those who didn't really believe, but indoctrinated others to do so. Because throughout reading all the tales of immediate barbarity the same question kept creeping into the back of my mind: Where is the wellspring of this evil? Is it the young man who mistakenly believes he is fighting to save something, and too late realizes his duplicity? Is it the senator, the general, the congressman who sees dollar signs over the green hills of southeast Asia? And, is that not the true evil, to knowingly send men to kill and be killed, to brainwash them into believing in the subhumanity of others for profit? This is as chilling to me as any of the tales told by the Winter Soldiers.

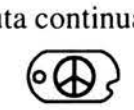
On another level, I also began to feel a rising anger. We hadn't just tortured countless Vietnamese. We had acutely damaged an entire generation of American men. We had taken the souls of young men and twisted them to a dark intention, then discarded them like so much roadside garbage when they were no longer of use to us. I shivered as I read. I read and read, one account after another, each successive man piling his story of atrocity onto that one of brutality, either witnessed or participated in, and...well even now I cannot find the words to express exactly what I felt. But I knew I had to keep reading.

And strangely, I began to feel something else. Even on the page, I felt a courage that was far beyond what any of us experiences in our relatively safe lives on a day to day basis. I sensed the shock and anger of these men as they spoke, not just of actions taken against Vietnamese civilians, but against each other. They spoke of institutionalized and pervasive racism within the armed forces, from who walks point to who gets dishonorably discharged — lies, constant fear of the enemy and of each other. Of the betrayal of their bodies and their beliefs, And always, as they related their stories the shadow of their own deaths lay in the telling. Speaking the truth is sometimes difficult and often dangerous, and the truths told here — about their country and about themselves — the very telling alone was an assault on the powers that be.

There is something in the African-American community (and among other peoples as well) called 'bearing witness.' Bearing Witness means that you become a part of what you learn. You cannot ignore that which passes before your eyes, and though you might not have been an eyewitness or participant, through the giving and the taking in, you become one. You have a responsibility not to let that memory die, to pass the lesson on, to speak for those who are no longer able to do so. To tell the story, and tell it true, so that it will not be forgotten. Holocaust survivors do this for those who died in the camps, Black folks pass down legends from one generation to the next, stories that often reach from the middle passage through slavery down to the present. Most immigrant communities, Latino, Irish, Eastern European, etc., have a history rich with stories of brutality and triumph. While the stories of these men, the Winter Soldiers, came from a different set of circumstances, the crux of the need is still the same. As I read what these men had to say, I began to share something with them, to 'bear witness' to their experiences, and to a pain that I could in no way feel, but nonetheless must somehow come to understand. In reading, I had become a part of the telling, and now I had a responsibility. I was no longer an audience to be kept at a distance, uninvolved and 'clean.' As I read I learned, and as I learned, I had to do. By bearing witness, I join my voice with yours and I say, 'yes, you will be heard.'

So, what have I learned? I have learned that true courage has nothing to do with white-hatted heroes riding into the sunset. Rather, it is to do with everyday people facing inner demons and fire, acknowledging the truth of themselves and thereby reaffirming their own humanity. I cannot say why I feel as deeply as I do. Maybe it's because, as a black woman, living in a country that values neither my color nor my sex, it is a strange comfort to have met VVAW members who often intuitively understand what I feel: the experience of being a 'stranger in a strange land', in my own home country. Maybe it is simply that as a fellow human being I know that I cannot let the truth be lost. Yes, it is important for people to read and review and think about the Vietnam War. For the same reasons we must not forget the Holocaust, or Slavery or the Killing Fields of Cambodia, or the Gaza Strip. In doing this, in remembering, the telling is not done to assuage or absolve guilt, but to scrape away the lies and reveal the truth. Hopefully in doing so we can lessen the pain for those who remain, and begin to dismantle and disempower the status quo, and lend strength to those in struggle everywhere.

A luta continua....



LISA DIXON IS AN 'ALIEN IN RESIDENCE,' HAVING RETURNED TO THE CORNFIELDS AFTER AN EXTENDED ABSENCE. SHE SINGS, WRITES, ACTS, AND WORKS.

Country Joe Plays Milwaukee

John Zutz

VVAW's 30th anniversary was celebrated in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with a sold out fundraising concert by Country Joe McDonald. Though the early June concert was opened and closed by **The DT's**, a relatively new Milwaukee blues band that is gaining local popularity, the standing-room-only crowd clearly came to see, hear, and perhaps even touch McDonald.

The rock & roll legend had not performed publicly in over a year after entering semi-retirement (following the death of Jerry Garcia). He seemed to have grown rather rusty as he opened his two-hour set. His voice had a catch, and he seemed to be uninterested in his surroundings.

However, his personality and presence began to shine through when he began the second song, his ode to Janis, which he includes in every performance. By the end of the song he had the crowd firmly in hand.

McDonald's guitar technique has, if anything, improved over time. He alternated between a complex fingerstyle and slide guitar. His voice, once warmed up, was a pleasant and passionate baritone which enhanced his ability to convey the emotions described in his poetry.

He led the entranced audience through a mix of older and newer songs, interspersed with poetry readings and tales from the Sixties. His repertoire varied from intense antiwar ditties to romantic love ballads, ending with the "Fixin' To Die Rag". He concluded his encore with a save-the-whales sea chantey that had the entire audience singing and clapping.

Though the continuity between songs was a bit rough, the content and presentation of the individual pieces could not have been smoother.

John Zutz is a former VVAW Regional Coordinator. He lives in Milwaukee and makes great beer. He's a Vietnam veteran.

check out Country Joe's website at http:// www.dnai.com/~borneo/

Country Joe in Milwaukee

Sarge Lintecum Vietnam Blues Combat Tested Blues...For Peace

Reviewed by Matt Stewart and Lisa Boucher

On this 14-track CD of authentic Mekong Delta Blues, Sarge Lintecum tells it like it is. Vietnam Blues takes you on a fiercely emotional and poetic ride through the geography of nowhere, and back across the water to a place called home.

Sarge's wit and humor, combined with his vocal, harmonica, and songwriting talents, shine all the way through. On "This Shirt Of Mine" he tells of the significance of his badges and medals, and sings:

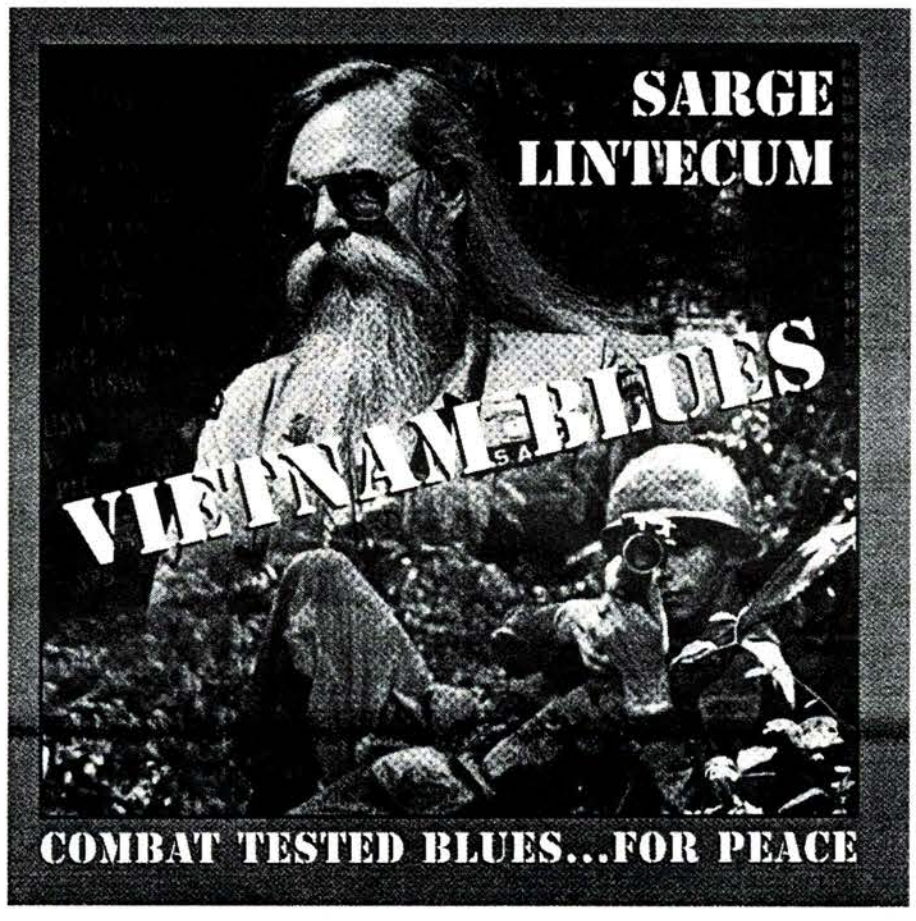
Some people think I'm a hippie / some think I'm insane
Some people think it's Halloween/ when I wear this shirt of mine

There are some instrumental numbers included on the CD, such as "Blue Monsoon" — a duet with Sarge on harp and Mother Nature on rainstorm. There are also a couple of poems read to music. In the song "Combat Fatigue" he sings of some of the less-apparent injuries incurred by Vietnam vets:

Oh we all fought for peace but there ain't none / for the vets of the Vietnam War

"Reunion At The Wall" is a haunting blues song reminiscent of "St. James Infirmary". It's dedicated to all the GIs whose names are on the Wall. Sarge also explains why the government doesn't need to treat vets right in the song "Saturday Morning Cartoons" and asks:

Before you know these kids today / won't be children anymore
Will they march to the beat of a different drum / or go marching off to war?



Vietnam Blues is a great-sounding recording with spirited and solid performances by all involved. Joining Sarge on this recording of many styles of blues, jazz and one "cactus jazz" number are former Howlin' Wolf drummer Chico Chism, outstanding upright and electric bassist Jim Simmons, Glen Campbell guitarist Kenny Skaggs and "Bullet" Bill Tarsha of the Rocket 88s on harmonica. Not to mention the harmonica quintet on "Five Down" and many other musicians.

All in all, Vietnam Blues is a well-produced CD that makes use of a few special audio effects without ever compromising the music and the message. "Some can't talk about it / some can't stop." Here's hoping Sarge never stops coming up with these terrific songs.

Lisa Boucher and Matt Stewart are musicians who perform a variety of musical styles in the Champaign-Urbana area.

For the CD or other Sarge products contact:

Mr. & Mrs. Sarge Enterprises
PO Box 25421
Tempe, AZ 85285-5421
or call 602-966-3942

Jersey City's Secret Memorial

DAVE CLINE

I spent the better part of my twentieth year behind an M-16 rifle or an M-60 machine gun with the 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi and Tay Ninh provinces in Vietnam. When I was med-evaced out at the start of the '68 Tet Offensive, I thought the war was over for me. I knew that I was injured physically from gunshot wounds to my back and right knee. What I didn't know was that I had been wounded emotionally as well.

When I got back to the States, while still on active duty, I took a stand against the war and military oppression. After my discharge, I joined VVAW first in Texas and then in New York City. But inspite of my antiwar activism, I was still one of the walking wounded inside. Some nights I would have nightmares of my last battle when we were overrun by North Vietnamese regulars. I would wake up suddenly, soaked in sweat and afraid. I couldn't forgive myself for having taken other people's lives and for being naive enough to believe the US government's lies and winding up in the war zone to begin with. I thought that if others knew my story, they would shun me as a murderer. Sometimes when I was alone I would cry and I never talked to anyone about what was going on inside my head. I heard about Post-Vietnam Syndrome (now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD) but didn't understand that I was experiencing it.

I learned that if I drank enough booze before I went to bed, I didn't have dreams. If I got stoned enough, I didn't have to think about my feelings, much less anyone else's. You might know the story: Attitude Check — Fuck It. I wasn't just getting high, I was self-medicating. I didn't (and I still don't) trust VA doctors. I saw too many guys turned into zombies with government-issue tranquilizers and anti-depressants. So I wrote my own prescription: beer, marijuana, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

That worked for a while, but somewhere along the way I crossed that invisible line from use to abuse and dependency. Now I had another problem. During the 80s I joined a combat vets' rap group at the local Vet Center. I went into several detoxes and rehabs. I stayed clean and sober for long periods of time and remained an active organizer for the veterans' and labor movements. But things still weren't going right. By the early 90s, my personal life was a mess and I "picked up" again. The alcohol and drugs got harder and so did my life. Things kept going from bad to worse and I was miserable. For a long time I was MIA — Missing In America.

By the end of 1996 I was "sick & tired of being sick & tired" and started going to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings again. One Sunday morning I found myself at a meeting in Pershing Field, a park about ten blocks from my home. I had never been in the building before and didn't know what it was. There was no sign identifying it and the place was usually locked up. When I entered the building, I was surprised to see a bronze plaque identifying it as the "Heights Vietnam Veterans Memorial Community Center" since its dedication in 1986. A second plaque bore sixty names: the young men from Jersey City who lost their lives in Vietnam. I was glad these dead brothers were remembered but wondered why hardly anyone knew of this memorial's existence.

I kept going to that AA meeting and would often reread the plaques. One of the guys was Bradford Hippie and I'd laugh to myself, thinking about how his name must have driven some lifers nuts. After a while, I started getting angry. Why the hell was this memorial being kept a secret? I talked to other vets about it. Some responded cynically, saying *what do you expect? no one cares*. Others felt the politicians wouldn't do anything so why bother? Sometimes I wondered if I was making a mountain out of a molehill. A few people encouraged me to do something about it. Instead of letting my anger eat me up, I decided to take action.

First I wrote a letter to the Mayor and the members of the City Council asking "Why the secret?" Then I got it printed in two local newpapers under the title "The Secret Memorial." Within a week, I got a response. Councilman Jamie Vasquez, himself a Marine Corps vet who was wounded during his tour of duty, wrote the director of the Department of Public Works in support of my efforts. Then the DPW head wrote to say there were plans to put up a plaque and renovate the building, "but for now we will certainly show the respect deserved by erecting a sign idenifying its name." By the end of June (and coincidentally several days before a hotly contested mayoral runoff election) the sign was put up. Twenty-two years after the end of the war and eleven years after its dedication, the public was finally told that it was the Heights Vietnam Veterans Memorial Community Center. By the middle of August, the Mayor's office wrote to assure me that the "failure to have a dedication plaque placed on the front of this building was nothing more than a mere oversight."

It turned out that I wasn't the only one who was riled up about Jersey City's failure to maintain veteran memorials. The July 3 edition of The Jersey Journal ran a lead story titled "Faded Memories: Vets See Personal Slight In Decaying War Memorial." It turns out that Pershing Field was the location of a training camp during World War I, "the war to end all wars." The park was named after General "Black Jack" Pershing, the commander of the American Expiditionary Force in Europe. On July 4, 1922, a crowd of ten thousand people showed up to dedicate a statue of Lady Liberty holding a sword and olive branches. In front of her is a shield with the inscription: "Erected by the people of this community in grateful remembrance of the labor, sacrifices and suffering of those who suffered and died in the World War that the blessings of free government might live. April 6, 1917-November 11, 1918".

Over the years, the statue has been painted over many times and the inscription is barely legible. *The dedication plaque is missing.* Throughout this section of the park are also numerous markers bearing the names of Jersey City residents who lost their lives in World War II and the Korean War. Some of these are broken, missing nameplates or pulled out of the ground. The vets quoted in the newspaper article are members of the Pershing Field Neighborhood Association. I have been asked to come to their next meeting and hope to help build a broader effort to demand the municipal government restore and properly maintain this whole area as a fitting veterans (not war) memorial.

One of VVAW's action slogans has long been "Honor The Dead & Fight For The Living." Creating and maintaining memorials is one way of doing this. If these deaths are not to be in vain, we must remember them and learn the lessons of those wars. That is our responsibility. If we don't do it, who will?

Dave Cline, Clarence Fitch, Elena Fitch & Vietnam Vet Homeless Activist - 1987

DAVE CLINE IS A 100% DISABLED VIETNAM VET AND A FORMER NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW.

Drill Sergeant Hassna's History Corner: Women In The Military

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will change quickly, and the rear, or support, may become the front. The US military started looking at this in the 1970s. From this came the rapid deployment forces — Army Airborne and Air Assault units, Marine amphibious forces, and reliance on reserve and National Guard units for support. I will go over this stuff in later columns. Now let's get back to the main question — women getting posthumous medals.

I stated earlier that women have been involved since revolutionary times. One job women had was support to field artillery. Their job was to stand by the guns with pitchers of water and pour the water over the hot barrels to help cool them so gunners could keep firing. Now where did I glean this tidbit of history? Why, from a US Army recruitment poster showing a woman in 18th century dress standing by a cannon with a pitcher in her hand. Oh, before I forget, these women were nicknamed Molly Pitchers by the male troops. The poster went on to explain that women have been there when their country needed them since the Revolution. I have this poster at home.

Let's move on to World War I. Now that was a great time to test the idea of human wave assaults across open areas against fortified machine gun positions. The machine guns won. Also long range artillery, air strikes, submarines, and — who could forget — mustard gas? All these lovely examples of mass killing caused high casualties on all sides. Field hospitals were packed, and women were there doing what needed to be done. Bombs do not sort out combat and noncombat personnel. Or did you already know this?

After World War I everybody went home to regroup and rearm, vowing to meet in the near future for an even bigger stage production with a cast of millions. In fact, just about everybody on the planet would be involved. This is called an Equal Opportunity War.

When the US entered World War II, full mobilization brought about a call for women to do their part again. Weapons factories were filled with women while the men went off to fight the good fight. In the military, women were shunted to support roles, but one of these support jobs took them directly into harm's way. Female pilots were used to transport unarmed bombers into combat theaters of operation. Then male crews would arm and man the bombers and go out to bomb the bad guys. These women were not considered combatants because they didn't fight. No kidding, Sherlock. They didn't fight because they didn't have any guns to fight with. Which made no sense at all if they would be dealing with enemy fighters whose pilots had no concern about whether they were unarmed and defenseless, or whether these planes were piloted by women. They were in enemy aircraft and that was that. It was not until years after the war that these pilots received any recognition for their service.

On to Korea, where women were part of mobile MASH units. Then Vietnam and again into field hospitals where many were killed or wounded. Funny thing about Vietnam is that the military couldn't come up with an exact number of women in country. I have heard numbers over the years from a few thousand to thirty-five thousand. Like women of other wars, they were virtually forgotten.

Now to the present, when we have women as chopper pilots flying close support missions during the Persian Gulf War. That, to me, is as close to combat as you can get. All I can say to women thinking about the military as a career option is this: learn how to spell "posthumously" proficiently.

Well, troops, that's it for today, and today's tips are:

1) If the enemy is in range, so are you.

2) Incoming artillery has the right of way.

See you around the base camp,

Drill Sergeant Hassna

STEVE HASSNA IS THE WEST COAST COORDINATOR OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND IS A POET AND AUTHOR. HE SERVED IN THE 101ST AIRBORNE IN VIETNAM AND WAS A DRILL INSTRUCTOR.

Fraggin'

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the meaning of life. What does it mean to get out into the tropical sun, sweat pouring out of your half-naked body, pull about a dozen foul-smelling, sawed-in-half 65 gallon drums filled with shit of all sorts of colors and textures out from under the latrine, drag them off about twenty yards, pour gasoline over them, light it and sit back and let your senses go to work. What kind of person am I to be doing this? Have I reached the low point yet? We'd all light another one and shake our heads. Is there any up from here? The Army do have a way of humiliating you, don't it? And we thought pots and pans was bad.

Smoking has been an integral part of military life for longer than anyone can remember. When General Pershing was commander of US forces in Europe during World War I, he once was asked what supplies were needed for the war effort. His answer was, "Tobacco. Tobacco. Tobacco. Tobacco. Tobacco." Tobacco was part of relaxation and part of morale.

Then, around the time of the Gulf War, the Pentagon began to discourage smoking among the troops. The motive was financial. They figured that smoking-related illnesses were costing the military over $900 million yearly in lost work days. They figured that too much money in the military and VA hospital systems was going toward smoking-related disease. They finally figured it.

If the pusher wants to make your child a regular customer, he hangs out in or near the school, gives out free crack and talks about how cool it is. In the military we (mostly in our late teens) were given free cigarettes with our K-rats and C-rats and sometimes in wartime by the box, courtesy of the tobacco companies and the Pentagon. At the PX we could buy them cheaper than the big box of Tide. We watched World War II and Korean War movies where soldiers like Robert Mitchum, William Holden and Robert Ryan sat in trenches with dirty faces and cigarettes dangling from their lips, relaxing while they waited for the fighting to resume. From the first day of basic training we learned to use cigarettes to take a break. We learned to use cigarettes to relax with each other and communicate with one another.

It doesn't seem like it's on the same level as Agent Orange, radiation exposure or Gulf War Syndrome. Those were things that came from war either hot or cold. We were pissed and appalled because they resulted from weapons used in those wars. Our leaders callously went ahead using them when they damn well knew (or should have known) the harm they'd cause their own troops.

Cigarettes don't seem to be in that category. Yet — lung cancer. Heart disease. Vascular disease. Emphysema. The list has about twenty of these terms. It means earlier-than-normal death. It means vets coughing and wasting away in VA hospitals. Maybe the suffering doesn't start as soon after as with Gulf War Syndrome, or maybe death doesn't come as soon as from Agent Orange. But it's there, and it comes.

In the recent tobacco cases, R.J. Reynolds acknowledged that Joe Camel was conceived in 1984 when they made a "long-termed commitment to younger adult smoker programs." Most smokers who are unable to kick the habit, and therefore provide the profit margin, are those who started during their teenage years. There are many, many teenagers in the military. Always have been. That's why cigarettes were so easily available and alluring. Starter samples.

There were only 2.8 million of us in Vietnam, and not all were affected by Agent Orange. There were only a couple of hundred thousand in the Gulf and not all were exposed to depleted uranium, oil fires or chemical dumps. There were a couple thousand atomic vets. The number of servicemen and women targeted by the tobacco industry with the complicity of the Pentagon and its forerunner dates back to at least World War I. Tens of millions of targets. Makes you appalled and pissed. I wonder if my fellow shit burners still light up.

BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR & EDITOR OF THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION AT AMC-O'HARE.

Film Review: "Citizen Soldiers: The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War"

RICHARD STACEWICZ

The Vietnam War and the antiwar movements that it spawned have generated a vast number of books and films that have attempted to make sense of the war for younger generations of Americans. Although the academic and artistic output has been great, it has been dominated in recent years by revisionists who have sought to portray the war as just and in concert with the nation's democratic heritage. As a result, little attention has been paid to the emergence of VVAW during the height of the conflict and the organization's historical significance. VVAW has, however, recently become the focus of several academic studies and a documentary film by Denis Mueller entitled **Citizen Soldiers: The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War**.

Mueller, who acted as producer, director and part-time cameraman for the documentary, showed his just-completed film at the 30th anniversary celebration of the founding of VVAW in Chicago. He intersperses film footage of the war, American political leaders, and VVAW actions such as Dewey Canyon III and the Last Patrol, with over a dozen members' reminiscences about VVAW and its development. What emerges is a comprehensive portrait of the VVAW from its founding to the present.

The use of the term "citizen soldier" in the title of the film provides a strong indication of Mueller's perspective. VVAW members are presented as patriots who spoke truth to the lies coming out of Washington and fought to safeguard the nation's democracy which had been undermined by the war. Veterans are portrayed as acting in concert with America's democratic heritage by lending their unimpeachable voices to the antiwar movement.

Citizen Soldiers opens with a shot of Jack McCloskey speaking at the 25th anniversary celebration in New York. Jack's assertion that "the rage, the frustration, the anger, and the alienation that we felt when we came home...are signs of sanity and not insanity" sets the stage for the first third of the film which uncovers the roots of this alienation and anger.

Having explored veterans' transformations from warriors to antiwar activists, the film then delves into the history of the organization. VVAW is depicted as an organization that not only played a significant role in challenging the Nixon administration's portrayal of the war but also offered a safe haven for returning GIs who had, for the most part, been shunned by those who had sent them to Vietnam.. VVAW provided a context in which veterans could work out the traumas they suffered as a result of their experiences in Vietnam. VVAW members' antiwar work and their focus on aiding their former brothers-in-arms are seen as mutually supportive roles.

Finally, the film relates the historical significance of VVAW and its lasting legacy. VVAW members describe their pathbreaking work to gain recognition of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) as a legitimate malady of the war. They also discuss the organization's work on discharge upgrading, Agent Orange, and other issues affecting veterans and their communities.

Denis Mueller, who previously produced **The FBI's War on Black America** with Deb Ellis, has done a great service for VVAW members whose struggles for peace and justice have been neglected by the majority of historians and creators of popular culture. What is more important, he has done a great service for younger generations of Americans who have been bombarded with revisionist accounts of the war during the past twenty years, and who have grown up in an era not unlike that of the Cold War that many VVAW members experienced at the same age. The hour-long length of the film is perfect for classroom use and should be used by anyone who is interested in providing a previously missing perspective on the war. The way in which war is remembered will have a decided impact on the reactions of young Americans to future wars. **Citizen Soldiers** provides further evidence of VVAW's continuing relevance to the antiwar struggle in the United States.

RICHARD STACEWICZ TEACHES HISTORY AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE IN CHICAGO. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF "WINTER SOLDIERS: AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR."

VVAW At 30:
Still Trusted, Still Active, Still Having Fun

Joe Miller

Who would have thought that, thirty years after our first action, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) would still be around? That was one of the central questions asked and responded to during the events surrounding VVAW's thirtieth anniversary in Chicago on May 16-17, 1997.

It all began with the premiere showing of Denis Mueller's new documentary **Citizen Soldier: The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War** on Friday evening. There were just over one hundred folks there at the U.E. Hall for this event sponsored by Chicago Filmmakers. As we watched, laughter mixed with sobs as the faces and voices of fallen comrades like Jack McCloskey flickered across the screen. The film is historically and emotionally very powerful and could easily have become a major three- or four-hour epic. With the view toward producing an educational film and organizing tool that could be shown to community groups, as well as high school and college classes, Mueller kept the length of the film down to 55 minutes. Most everyone's response was overwhelmingly positive.

Saturday's events began around 12:45 PM, a little late, but not unexpectedly so. We were somewhat disappointed that more of our friends did not make it out for this day. Just under one hundred people joined us for the authors' panel, leadership speeches and recollections, and the speakout. The event was hosted by Annie Bailey, Annie Hirschman, Annie Luginbill, and Laurie Sandow.

The afternoon was kicked off by Lisa Boucher (co-editor of The Veteran) with an antiwar song, "I Don't Want to Be a Soldier." This was followed by a poem, "I Don't Dance," from VVAW's West Coast Regional Coordinator, Steve Hassna. National Co-Coordinator Barry Romo then presented some opening remarks.

Barry said it felt strange to be talking about VVAW and tradition, but that our tradition of just struggle against unjust wars, against racism and sexism, and an overall struggle for social justice must be passed on to new generations. We in VVAW should be proud of thirty years of struggle and thirty years of friendship. Barry also called for a moment of silence for fallen comrades.

Next, we moved to the authors' panel which highlighted some of the recent and continuing work done about antiwar GIs and vets. Panelists included VVAW National Office staff person G. David Curry, Ph.D., author of Sunshine Patriots: Punishment and the Viet Nam Offender; Richard Moser, Ph.D., author of The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Viet Nam Era; Richard Stacewicz, Ph.D., author of the forthcoming Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War; Ms Keri Manning, graduate student at the University of Kentucky who is working on a major project concerning VVAW; and Steve Hassna, author and poet, who talked about the autobiographical work he has done in addition to his poetry.

VVAW leadership speeches and recollections followed a break. These remarks were mainly concerned with showing where VVAW came from and what we have been doing over the past thirty years.

Bill Branson of the National Office staff talked about VVAW's work with the Homeless Standdowns in Chicago over the past four years, reminding us how important it was to be there for our brothers and sisters who were going through rough times.

Attendees then heard from the other co-editor of The Veteran, Jeff Machota, who also maintains our web site. Jeff pointed out how VVAW's historical example and continuing struggle is a strong support for succeeding generations of social justice activists. *(See below)*

We also heard from VVAW's Midwest Regional Coordinator Johnny "Doc" Upton of Kansas City. Doc gave a little background on how he had connected with VVAW through Operation Dewey Canyon III in 1971. He arrived at the demonstration a member of Vets For Peace but went back to Kansas City a committed member of VVAW. Doc also talked about his work with the Vietnam Veterans Radio Network, which presents VVAW to an international radio audience these days.

Joe at the 30th in Chicago

There was a very special presentation of VVAW's thanks to Maude DeVictor, who helped blow the whistle on Agent Orange in the late 1970s. Maude also thanked VVAW for being

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"You weren't in Vietnam, were you?"

Jeff Machota

Jeff at the 30th in Chicago

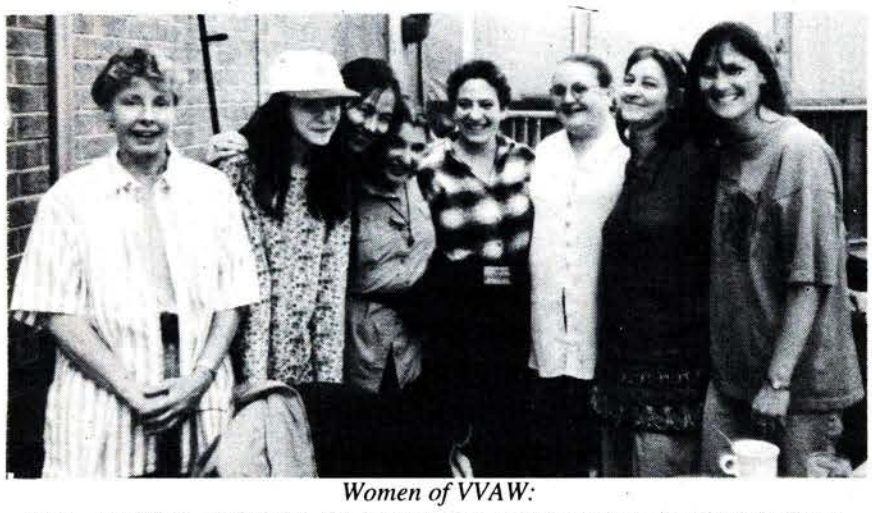
Delivered at the 30th Anniversary in Chicago.

First off, I'd like to say how honored I am to be asked to speak today to VVAW members and supporters at this anniversary. I work and have worked with many grassroots political organizations and appreciate how difficult it is to keep an organization together for five years, let alone thirty years.

When I tell people I do work for VVAW, I often get the response "You weren't in Vietnam, were you?" At that point I let them know how old I am and then explain the political connections I have with VVAW. Even though I always looked old enough to get beer when I was a minor, I was only one year old when VVAW was formed. Now, thirty years later, I'm the co-editor of The Veteran and help maintain the VVAW web-site.

I first entered progressive/revolutionary politics in the anti-apartheid student movement in the mid-1980s. I became aware of VVAW through Joe Miller while doing political organizing around getting the CIA off campus. Through my work with other student organizations and other struggles I first became really conscious of VVAW as a living organization in 1990 at the Kent State 20th Anniversary. My memories of VVAW at this time were seeing VVAW in formation at the protests and then afterwards hanging out at a Kent State bar with disabled Nicaraguan vets.

It wasn't until later that year that I started meeting more VVAW members like Barry Romo and Bill Branson and Ray Parrish. VVAW members kicked our asses in Champaign-Urbana and caused us to get serious about organizing against the impending Gulf War. VVAW was very



Women of VVAW:
(l-r) Ellie Mattern Shunas, Alana Boucher, Lisa Boucher, Annie Hirschman, Laurie Sandow, Edie Zutz, Charlie Branson and Claudia Lennhoff

Maude DeVictor at the 30th

Liz Quispe Ccallocunto & Louis De Benedette at the 30th

supportive of our work and provided not only resources, but leadership and friendship. VVAW spoke at protests and classes. VVAW helped us organize a vets' caucus opposed to the Gulf War of World War II vets, Korean vets, Vietnam vets, Beirut vets and active duty GIs. With VVAW's help we mobilized a few thousand people, got a few people out of the military, and helped keep others out.

It didn't stop there, though. VVAW has helped us and other activists in C-U countless other times. From doing security workshops for demonstrations to political advice to friendship, VVAW has provided these to a few generations of campus and community activists in Champaign-Urbana

It was probably in Kent State in 1990 where I picked up my first copy of The Veteran. Many years (and beers) later, after learning the history of the paper and understanding its importance, I found out that Barry had been doing the layout of the paper himself for quite a while and had become way too overcommitted to do the paper. (Plus the fact that using a computer was only slightly related to this whole process) I had just finished a few years of working on a couple of other publications, so I thought: what the hell, I can learn how to do this. Also, I figured I had gotten so much from VVAW; it was time to pay something back (or maybe it was just lingering Catholic guilt). So I volunteered to take on the task of laying out The Veteran with Barry's expert guidance, along with Joe Miller and his daughter Lisa and son Jack (who lives in Boston, by the way)

While we were tackling our first issue, our crew decided we needed an official website for VVAW, so we took that on as well.

I've learned a lot doing both these projects, both in skills and learning more and more the history of VVAW. The impact and feedback from the paper and website have been great, and it's great to be contributing to an organization so rich in history.

VVAW, to me, has always been about helping the movement. In this spirit, I plan to continue my work with VVAW and look forward to many more years (and most likely, many more beers).

JEFF MACHOTA IS CO-EDITOR OF THE VETERAN

American War Veterans To Pay Their Respects To Ho Chi Minh

The following article appeared in the Viet Nam News, a Vietnamese daily paper:

Ha Noi, May 19, 1997— Three former leading members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) will pay their respects at the tomb of Ho Chi Minh in Ha Noi this morning to commemorate the 30th founding anniversary of the American organization.

The three men, Chuck Searcy, Eric Herter and Joe Bangert, have called on their fellow Americans in Viet Nam to ponder the significance of the date, and to reflect on the fruits of restoration of peace and normalization of ties between Viet Nam and the United States.

Yesterday they were in telephone contact with Barry Romo and the American celebration of the anniversary in Chicago, Illinois. Bangert pointed out that the significance of the founding date of the VVAW (May 19, 1967) coinciding with the birthdate of the late Vietnamese President, and that the 30th anniversary was in the same month that the two countries for the first time have appointed ambassadors to each other's capital cities.

The VVAW, which was founded by only six war veterans in the USA in 1967, became a major national political force in the antiwar movement although its members were continually hounded and persecuted by the Nixon administration.

Bangert said one of its most famous moments came with the publishing of a stark black and white photograph of a coffin draped in an American flag in Playboy magazine in 1970, a publication popular amongst American troops, with the words "Bring our brothers home now" as a caption. He said it saw over 30,000 Americans, both veterans and troops apply to join the organization.

In April 1971, VVAW led a march in Washington which culminated in more than 1,000 veterans from the war in Viet Nam return their medals.

Bangert said his organization continued to ponder why many American foreigners in Viet Nam were still in doubt over whether the American war was a just or an unjust war, when there was never an organization of Viet Nam War Veterans who ever marched in favour of the war.

— Vietnam News Service

In addition to the above printed article an ad also ran in this edition of the Viet Nam News which read as follows:

30 YEARS — Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Doing the right thing!
We honor President Ho Chi Minh on the 107th anniversary of His Birthday!
"After sorrow comes happiness!"

VVAW At 30: Still Trusted, Still Active, Still Having Fun

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there for her during rough times, and she claimed all of us as her "family." Near the end of her comments, she said, "I could not have done it without you." We all realized that it went both ways: we could not have helped those victims of Agent Orange exposure without Maude's courage and persistence.

Following another break, and after we were entertained by Phil Ochs' "Draft Dodger Rag" as sung by Lisa Boucher and Annie Hirschman, we heard from other members and friends of VVAW. This included our members from more recent conflicts like Grenada and the Persian Gulf War. Gulf War Marine combat vet Dave "Buzz" Doyle stepped to the podium to say, "I'm glad you made it as far as you did...You guys let me know we could all be crazy together." These words echoed the sentiments Buzz expressed in the **Citizen Soldier** video, where he pointed out just how crucial it was for his own survival and sanity to have VVAW welcome him into our ranks.

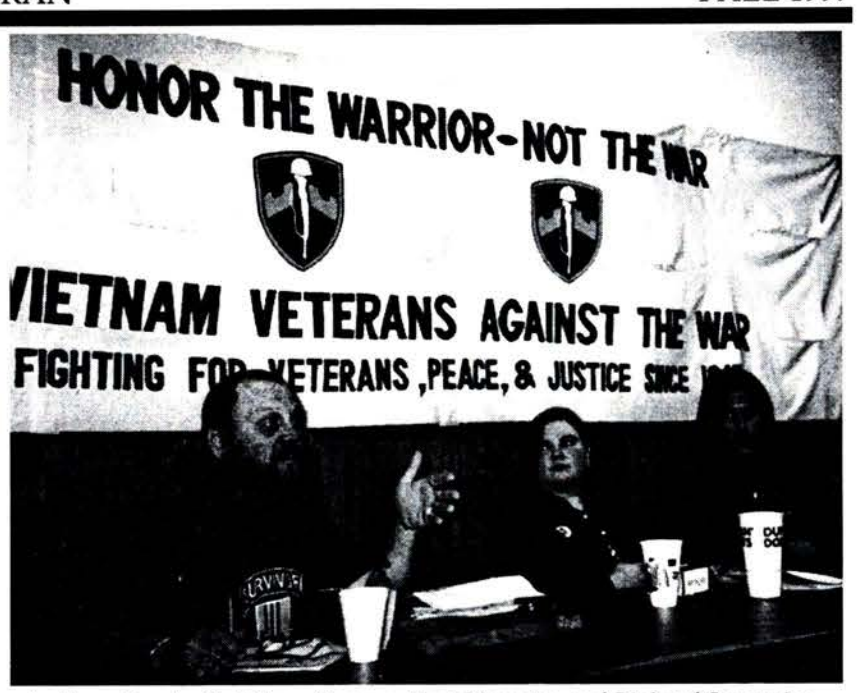
Tim Andruss, who is a veteran of the attack on Grenada, pointed out (to groans from the crowd) that our 30th anniversary was only his tenth, as he is one of our younger members. Tim also made the transition from Vets for Peace to VVAW in 1987, as Doc Upton had in 1971. He said he felt honored and a little sheepish to be included in the speakers' list, but he also expressed his thanks to VVAW "for having the foresight to stick around for us." At this, Tim began to sob, and he was embraced by all three Annies and the applause of the crowd. For many of us, this answered the question, "Why are we still around?"

Tony Russo, who with Daniel Ellsberg helped release the Pentagon Papers to the American people in 1971, pointed out that the system that produced wars like Vietnam and the Gulf War has not really changed. We still have a lot of work to do.

Mark Hartford from Ohio explained how VVAW had reintroduced him to his humanity through the struggle against the war. Paul Wisovaty from Tuscola, Illinois joked about how the VFW magazine had declared "victory" in Vietnam through its own peculiar historical lenses. *(See "Notes From The Boonies" on page 3)*

Louis DeBenedette told the crowd how VVAW kept him alive after he had turned against the war while still in the military. He brought his Peruvian goddaughter Liz up to the podium with him, and he explained how her mother had been disappeared seven years ago. Liz then thanked VVAW for helping Louis and for supporting just struggles of oppressed peoples around the world. She received a standing ovation from those in the room.

Carl Nyberg, a Navy veteran and Annapolis grad (1989) who had joined VVAW that very day, then approached the podium to inform us of the progress of the campaign to ban landmines. Carl had been a Navy observer in Cambodia in 1993, and he described the continuing devastation these horrible weapons wrought. He suggested a variety of ways that other VVAW members might get involved in this campaign in the schools and in community groups. He also expressed an interest in working with anyone who wished to expose recruitment fraud, as he had done a tour as a Navy recruiter in Chicago up to 1995. He received cheers of support for his remarks. *(See "Landmines" on page 1)*

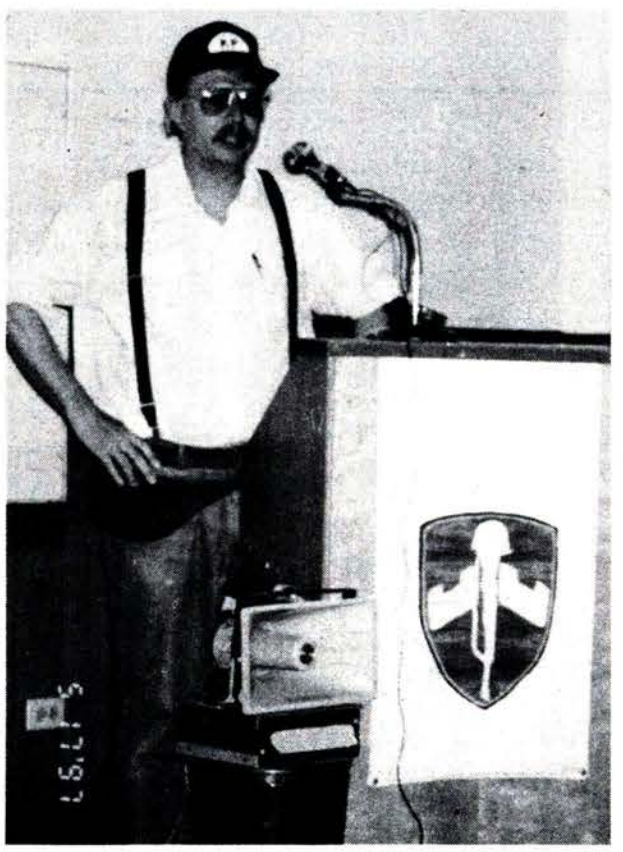


Authors Panel - (l-r) Steve Hassna, Keri Manning and Richard Stacewicz (Richard Moser not pictured)

Dong Tizon, one of VVAW's great friends in the Filipino community, then spoke. He reminded everyone that 1998 would see many events in remembrance of the Spanish-American War and the US takeover of colonies in Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Dong pointed out how the US, after testing weapons and tactics against Native Americans in the "Indian Wars," turned those weapons against the people of the Philippines who were struggling for independence. In reality, he said, the Philippine-American War of the turn of the century was the "first Vietnam War." He saluted VVAW for not confining itself to Vietnam veterans, for bringing in the younger vets, and he reiterated the theme we had heard so often during the day — how very important it was for all of us to share our memories and lessons with newer generations of political activists. *(See 1898-1998 on page 1)*

We heard from many other friends and members of VVAW during that Saturday afternoon. Over and over, people commented on how VVAW had saved their lives by just being around and being a community of support. This good feeling and sense of being re-energized continued into the evening at a great party at Quencher's, a bar on Chicago's North side. This was a real celebration of VVAW's longevity and continued activity. If anyone had any doubts going into the weekend about this organization and its meaning to Vietnam veterans and other veterans, their friends, and younger political and social activists, they disappeared in the warmth and high spirits reflected by everyone.

JOE MILLER IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW. HE TEACHES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN.



Ed Damato (left) and Bill Branson (right) speak at the the 30th Anniversary in Chicago

Landmines In Cambodia '93

continued from page 1

approach every customer.

The landmines seemed to be used in a very haphazard way. It wasn't the grand battlefield strategy the Pentagon philosophizes; it seemed a capricious vindictiveness.

While in Cambodia, I read an article about a woman that worked with male amputees. She taught them various skills. One of the most difficult undertakings for these men was the act of redefining themselves. In Cambodia the men define themselves by their bodies — it's an agrarian country. These men had parts of their bodies removed. Landmines destroyed their images of themselves. Some were able to create a new identity. Many couldn't.

During the second half of my time with the United Nations, I worked in Thailand. Lieutenant Steve Corley, a USN submariner, was in a vehicle that drove over an antitank mine. Steve survived. The driver, an officer from Cameroon, lost both legs and bled to death in remote Cambodia.

Even before I left Cambodia for good I began doing research about landmines. I took a vacation in Singapore and read everything I could find on landmines in the National University of Singapore library. A few points disturbed me. For one hundred years the world has been banning weapons that are indiscriminate or cause unnecessary suffering. What weapon is more indiscriminate than a landmine? If dumdum bullets cause unnecessary suffering because they amputate limbs, what's the logic for continuing to use landmines?

The use of sea mines has been restricted for almost one hundred years. Sea mines cannot be used to target merchant shipping. Free-floating mines must self-disable after one hour. No comparable restrictions exist for landmines. "Weapons That May Cause Unnecessary Suffering Or Have Indiscriminate Effects", a Red Cross International Committee report (1973), limited itself to technically analyzing weapons and the injuries they produce. It made no recommendations, but clearly stated that landmines were by nature indiscriminate.

I'm glad for the progress that has been made towards banning landmines since my time in Cambodia. However, as landmine survivors are quick to point out, banning landmines is only the first step. Humankind must care for the people, communities and societies that have been affected by landmines, and this includes the daunting task of clearing over 100 million landmines.

Carl speaks at the 30th.

CARL NYBERG IS A GRADUATE OF THE US NAVAL ACADEMY (1989). HE SERVED IN BANGLADESH, THE PHILIPPINES & CAMBODIA. HE IS CURRENTLY MIDWEST COORDINATOR FOR THE ANTI-LANDMINES CAMPAIGN AND A NEW MEMBER OF VVAW.

No More Half-People

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of my pistol and the radio operator looked at me through the darkness. I could tell that he knew what I was thinking. It would be a quick short blast of mercy, but I couldn't get myself to do it. I swore at the radioman and begged him to do whatever he could to get these men out. I looked out at the fight in the distance, avoiding the carnage in the pit, as if staring into the darkness could will the helicopter to arrive. For a while, the half-soldier stopped raising his stumps. We all thought he was dead, but then it started again.

Suddenly, the radioman got the call and I heard the rotor blades of the helicopter. I picked up a hand-held strobe light and ran to the center of the airstrip, holding it over my head so that the helicopter could see a friendly face on the ground. We began loading the wounded. The last man out was the man with no legs. The crew chief indicated that he wanted this man on one of the stretchers bolted into the helicopter. As we lifted him up, the prop blast of the helicopter lifted the stretcher under him and covered me with his blood.

Time is a healer. Time is like Novocain. It allows your brain to push events off to the side. My ghosts, especially the half-man, came to visit me in the night for years, but I battled them back. I buried them.

In May of this year, though, I was jarred back to reality during a visit to Angola. Twenty years of war have left Angola a country filled with mine-created half-people. You can't walk down a city street, or visit a village or a school and not see the hobbling victims of mines. A face that I remember is that of a little girl, about 10 years old, walking on crutches — one leg missing — in a refugee camp in Bie Province. I, too, have a little girl.

I thought of my daughter in the United States and wondered what it would be like if something put in the ground years ago ripped her limbs off. The little girl in the refugee camp was not unlike the half-soldiers of Vietnam. She faced a life of frustration, despair and waiting.

There are still 10 million land mines in Angola — one for every man, woman and child in that country. Worldwide, there are an estimated 100 million land mines throughout 68 countries. Wars end, but land mines don't.

These mines are designed to bounce up, out of the ground and explode: to slash, dismember and disembowel a whole squad, rather than just the man

Over 100 countries have pledged to meet in Ottawa in December to ban the use of land mines by the year 2000, to help ensure that no more mine-maimed people are faced with a world of emptiness, frustration, and despair. In August, the US government agreed to participate in those talks. As a result, the United States is now present at the negotiations taking place in Oslo, Norway through September 19, 1997. Unfortunately, however, the United States has already demanded exemptions for mines on the Korean peninsula and the use of certain types of mines.

When we were in our twentiess, President Clinton protested the war in which I met my half-soldier. Today, he has a chance to end US collusion in the creation of more half-people. As the US charts its course with regard to the Ottawa process, may the President remember our children. May he remember the ghost of a half-soldier lying in a pit.

*PAUL GIANNONE IS A MEMBER OF CARE'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE STAFF IN ATLANTA. THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE **THE ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION** ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1997. THIRTY-NINE OF THE 63 COUNTRIES WHERE CARE INTERNATIONAL WORKS ARE AFFECTED BY LAND MINES.*

Freedom But Not Yet Justice For Geronimo Pratt

continued from page 1

A good thing. Some slight justice done at least and at long last. After his release, Pratt spent some time with his wife and children, visited his mother back home in Louisiana, and has since been speaking around the country. Maybe there will even be a movie.

Pratt has already paid a high price for justice: the loss of his first wife and unborn child, decades of incarceration, separation from his family. If now he gets a little celebrity, some money, he's earned it — but getting paid is not exactly what Pratt's about.

When Pratt speaks, he talks about people learning their own history, about becoming disciplined. He tells folks to dedicate themselves to liberation, to work to put an end to crack use, to show respect for elders, to turn the "gangster mentality into a revolutionary mentality." An unreconstructed rebel still.

Pratt should know. He survived one of the harshest campaigns of repression ever seen in our country, and perhaps the most sophisticated — an FBI counterintelligence program, "COINTELPRO: Internal Security-Racial Matters" as it was labeled in the FBI files.

The FBI has always hunted subversives, from the "Red Scares" of the first World War to the anti-communist crusades following the second. For Director J. Edgar Hoover, communism was the gravest threat to the nation, worse than organized crime, drug trafficking, or racist vigilantes. At the beginning of the 1960s he added to his list the movements for Puerto Rican independence and for Negro civil rights.

But by 1967 Hoover had decided the most serious domestic threat to national security came from the black liberation movement. He ordered a new COINTELPRO, directed against "black nationalist hate groups." Though this rubric covered organizations as diverse as the Nation of Islam, the Student Non-Violent (later "National") Coordinating Committee, the Republic of New Afrika, and assorted student and campus organizations, the main target was the Black Panther Party. In November 1968 Hoover circulated a memorandum directing his agents "to exploit all avenues... of creating dissension within the ranks of the BPP," and instructing local offices "to submit imaginative and hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling the BPP."

One of the first such measures was the December 1969 execution of Chicago Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in a police raid coordinated by the local FBI office and assisted by an FBI asset who had infiltrated the Party to become its Chief of Security and Hampton's bodyguard. One of the Bureau's last operations against the BPP also climaxed in an execution — that of George Jackson in San Quentin prison in August 1971, during an escape attempt orchestrated by another FBI asset who provided a defective revolver.

The FBI deployed the usual tactics: surveillance and harassment, propaganda and disinformation, infiltration and provocation, and assassination.

The case of Pratt and the Los Angeles Panthers is equally deadly, and instructive. The FBI deployed the usual tactics: surveillance and harassment, propaganda and disinformation, infiltration and provocation, and assassination.

The purpose of surveillance was as often just harassment as intelligence. But plain harassment was common enough, and the LAPD with its more than half-century history of brutal and racist corruption was especially cooperative. Pratt was arrested four times in 1969 — three times on purely bogus charges (possession of explosives, kidnapping and murder).

Infiltration and provocation were common too. Charles Garry, a movement lawyer, estimated in 1969 that there were 60-70 police agents active in the Party nationwide. In LA, Julius Butler, ex-cop, police informant, and later the main witness against Pratt, was well known as the man with the biggest mouth at confrontations with the police.

But the most effective tactic involved propaganda and disinformation. The FBI fostered a long-running feud between the Panthers and another militant LA group, the US ("United Slaves") Organization. Members of each group were denounced to the other as police agents, posters and letters were fabricated and delivered — all elaborate ruses designed to provoke attack and retaliation. It worked very well: US militants killed Panthers at UCLA in January 1969 and wounded two and killed a third in San Diego in August. More US militants and Panthers were likely killed by each other than directly by the police. Another disinformation campaign aimed to split the Panthers. Pratt himself had to pass a number of "loyalty" trials by the BPP hierarchy.

Four days after the Chicago assassination of Hampton and Clark, the LAPD staged a copycat raid on the local Party headquarters. As Hampton had been specifically targeted in Chicago — his bedroom mapped out by an informant for the FBI who briefed the assault team — so Pratt was targeted in the LA raid. The police informant was Cotton Smith, third ranking officer in the LA Party, and the assault team sprayed Pratt's bed with bullets. They missed killing him, since Pratt slept on the floor instead of the bed, to relieve the pain of a back wound from Vietnam. But all the Panthers were arrested for assaulting the police.

Pratt remained in jail for a couple of months before being released on $125,000 bail. After a national speaking tour, he returned to LA and dropped from sight. Then in August the FBI staged the action at the Marin County Civic Center in San Rafael, in which George Jackson's 17-year-old brother Jonathan (along with his hostage and two inmates) was bushwhacked and killed by sharpshooters bussed in from San Quentin. Pratt took off for Texas, and missed a court date on the explosives charge.

After considerable discussion between the FBI and the LAPD about the best case to make against him, Pratt was indicted in December 1970 for the murder of school teacher Caroline Olsen during a robbery on a tennis court in Santa Monica. LAPD detectives seized Pratt in Texas and returned him to California. Shortly afterwards Newton expelled Pratt from the Party, and the Panthers refused to corroborate his alibi for what was called the "Tennis Court Murder."

For more than a year, the various legal proceedings against Pratt went in his favor. Some charges were dismissed, others went to trial but ended in acquittal; the May 1971 trial on the December 1969 shootout case ended when the chief government witness was exposed as an FBI informant. Then in November Pratt's wife Sandra, eight months pregnant, was murdered — shot five times at point blank range and dumped alongside an LA freeway (perhaps by US militants — the murder was never seriously investigated).

The "Tennis Court Murder" case came to trial in June 1972. Pratt was convicted of first degree murder on July 28, and got the usual sentence: seven years to life. And by the end of the year, the California left — a broad coalition of progressive and revolutionary organizations — had been dismantled and smashed.

So Pratt may now be free, for a time at least, but the operation was still a success. To quote Ward Churchill, historian of the COINTELPRO on the American Indian Movement, "the movement for social change loosely described as the 'New Left' had been shattered, its elements fragmented and factionalized, its goals and methods hugely distorted in the public mind, scores of its leaders and members slain, hundreds more languishing in penal institutions as the result of convictions in cases which remain suspect, to say the least."

After the embarrassing 1971 release of documents stolen from the FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, Hoover declared COINTELPRO suspended. In fact the program's greatest and bloodiest coup still lay ahead — the repression of the "Indian insurrection" at Pine Ridge, South Da-

continued on next page

Filipino W.W.II Vets On The March Again

Dave Cline

In 1941 the world was on fire. Nazi Germany had overrun most of Europe and invaded the Soviet Union. In the Far East, the Japanese Imperial Army had unleashed aggression against China, Korea, Burma and Indochina.

On July 26, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued an executive order authorizing the drafting of Filipino nationals into the US Armed Forces. Four and a half months later, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and America was drawn into World War II.

At that time the Philippines were a colony of the United States that had been seized, along with Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam, from the Spanish monarchy after their defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Nationalists in those countries had fought alongside American troops to overthrow the yoke of colonialism. Cuba became independent, but Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam were annexed by the US. The independent republic of Hawaii was also annexed that year. Instead of liberation, these countries found that one colonial master had replaced another.

Filipino patriots launched an insurrection against US domination that lasted until it was crushed by American troops in 1902. The US command treated all Filipinos as the enemy, and on one island all males over eleven years of age were slaughtered.

By the 1930s, a new threat faced the peoples of Asia. Rabid Japanese militarism sought to replace Western imperialism as the dominant force in the region. The same day they attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces invaded Guam and the Philippines. American and Filipino soldiers fought side by side until their defeat in 1942 at the battles of Bataan and Corregidor. Thousands of American and Filipino prisoners of war died during the infamous Bataan Death March. Those who survived were imprisoned under inhuman conditions, suffering casualties of fifty to two hundred deaths per day. Those soldiers fortunate enough to escape capture joined with civilians to wage a guerrilla war until their liberation in 1945. These guerillas foiled the Japanese plans for a quick takeover of the region and allowed the United States the needed time to prepare a counterattack. After the Philippines were retaken, they were used as a base for the final efforts to win the war against Japan.

In 1946, one year after the war ended, the Philippines became politically independent. The same year Congress passed and President Harry Truman signed a bill reneging on FDR's promise, stripping these veterans of any benefits.

On July 26, 1997, the 56th anniversary of FDR's draft order, three hundred of these veterans and their supporters demonstrated in front of the White House. Chanting "old soldiers never die" and "Clinton, give us justice," fifteen of them chained themselves to the White House fence and were arrested. Arrested with them was Rep. Bob Filmer (D-CA), who together with Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) has sponsored the Filipino Veterans Equity Act (H.R. 836). This bill would grant medical care, pensions, job and educational benefits and burial rights. Survivor benefits are excluded from the legislation. Most of these veterans are in their seventies and eighties now. There are about seventy thousand of them still alive, twenty-six thousand of which are living in the US.

At the beginning of September, two busloads of these veterans left San Francisco, heading for Washington, DC to fight for this bill. Calling their group the Equity Caravan, they have held rallies and picked up other buses in Texas, Kansas City, Chicago, Philadelphia and Bayonne, New Jersey. They are organized in local Filipino-American veterans' groups and are united nationally in the American Coalition for Filipino Veterans.

Samuel Icalinas, a Californian now, was only 14 years old when he started fighting, first as a guerrilla and later as a US Army scout. He said, "When the Japanese came over, they killed my father and mother just to get us to surrender. We kept fighting till the Americans came. Why the Americans give more equality to other GIs and not Filipinos, we don't understand. For fifty years, that's what we're fighting now."

We urge you to contact your Congressional representatives and urge them to support the Filipino Veterans Equity Act so that justice may finally be done them.

Dave Cline is a 100% disabled Vietnam vet and a former National Coordinator of VVAW.

Freedom But Not Yet Justice For Geronimo Pratt

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kota, 1973-76. And counterintelligence programs continued into the 1980s and 1990s; the Bureau has run operations against Latin American solidarity activists (including VVAW during the 1988 Veterans Peace Convoy to Nicaragua), radical environmentalists (such as the bomb attack on Judi Bari in May 1990 during Earth First!'s Redwood Summer campaign), and opponents of the Gulf War in 1991 (again including VVAW).

So, back to basics. The US government considered that it was more important to smash the Black Panthers than it was to stop police brutality or drug trafficking. That government policy cost Pratt 27 years of his life, and more. Now he's out. The police are still arresting, beating, killing young black men in large numbers. The drug trade is the most lucrative profession in the ghetto. Who profited from that policy? For the government, the question had never been justice or peace, or even stability and prosperity — just power. That time they won.

Time will come again. The Black Panther Collective in New York City has started a new "Brutality Prevention Project" — patrolling the community and monitoring police behavior with video cameras. We get another chance to pay attention to the experience of Geronimo ji-Jaga, once also known as Elmer Pratt.

Ben Chitty is a member of the New York area Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and a Navy veteran of two deployments to Vietnam.

This article is based on current wire service, newspaper and magazine accounts, and on unpublished material on political repression collected by the late Frank Donner of Hamden, Connecticut, and on Agents of Repression by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall (South End Press, corrected edition 1990 — the quote is from p.61). For more information about the NYC Panther police patrols, write Black Panther Collective, P.O. Box 20735, Park West Station, New York, NY 10025-1516, or call 718-390-3555.

The 1898-1998 Philippine Centennial Commemoration

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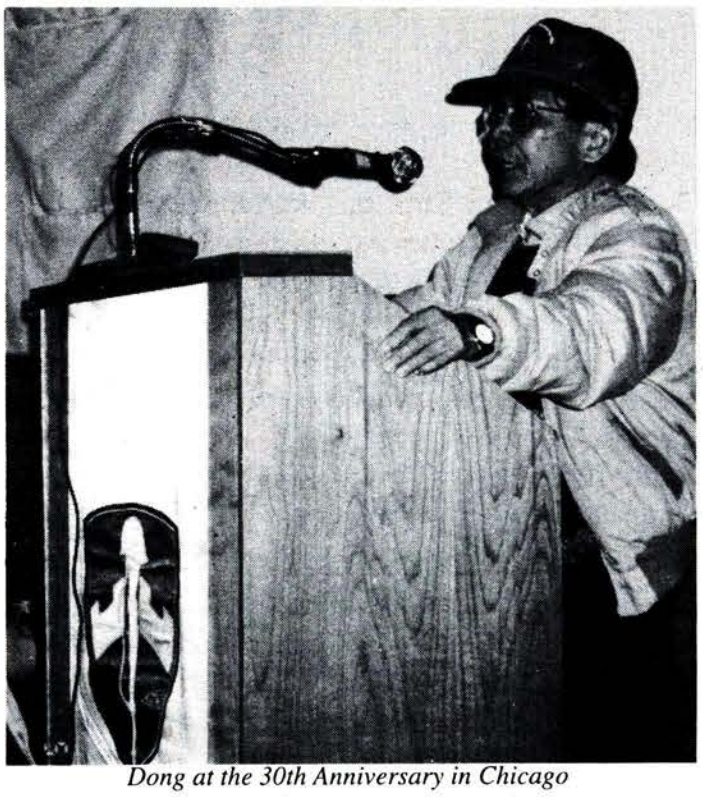
with Spain in the Spanish-American War. In May 1898, US Commodore George Dewey steamed into Manila Bay to attack the Spanish fleet, but by this time the Spanish army in the Philippines was all but thoroughly beaten. The Spaniards controlled only the old walled city of Manila, and the Filipinos were dug in around the city perimeter preparing to finish them off. Spain was prepared to surrender, but not to the Filipinos. A surrender to the Americans was negotiated — on condition that a mock battle be held first. In August 1898, a "battle" took place in Manila Bay between the remnants of the Spanish army and the Americans, during which the Americans prevented the Filipinos from entering the city. The Spaniards then surrendered to Dewey and the Americans took possession of Manila.

On December 10, 1898, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States in the Treaty of Paris. Ratification of this treaty required a two-thirds majority in the US Senate. Despite a strong anti-imperialist movement in the country and an anti-annexationist group in the Senate, the treaty was ratified in the context of the Philippine-American War which broke out in February of 1899. Some historians claim that the war (known as the Philippine Insurrection in the States) was initiated to influence the approval of the treaty. It is little-known in American historical accounts and rarely taught in American schools.

The Filipino army suffered heavy losses in a war of position against a better-trained and better-armed enemy — one that had developed military techniques during the Civil War and the wars against the American Indians. US military officials predicted that the war would end in a few months. But when Filipinos shifted to guerrilla tactics the war dragged on, even after General Aguinaldo's capture in April 1901. The last significant armed opposition lasted until 1916, but throughout the American colonization period opposition persisted, especially in mountainous and rural areas of the Philippines.

It was a brutal and racist war. The statement of General Shafter in April 1899 is characteristic: "It may be necessary to kill half the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords." The war eventually became a war against the population itself, which refused to be pacified.

The Balangiga Massacre, which took place on the island of Samar, serves as a famous example. American troops placed the population of the town in a concentration camp, forcing them to sleep standing up in wooden pens at night. Guerrillas infiltrated the town. On the early morning of September 1901, at the signal of a pealing church bell, they attacked the American garrison as it was having breakfast. Fifty-four Americans died due to wounds inflicted by bolo knives, and eighteen escaped with serious injuries. In response, General Jack Smith was asked to lead a campaign of extermination that was unprecedented until then. His order was: "Kill and burn, kill and burn, the more you kill and the more you burn the more you please me." He ordered the killing of all males over ten years of age. He vowed to turn Samar into a "howling wilderness."



Dong at the 30th Anniversary in Chicago

It is difficult to determine the number of Filipinos who died as a result of the war from bullets, disease, and starvation. Records were not kept. General Bell gave an estimate in a May 1901 New York Times interview; he calculated over 600,000 deaths in Luzon alone. This estimation excludes figures from other places such as Samar and Mindanao and of course does not take into account the war after 1901.

Some historians have brought up the similarities between the Vietnam War and the Philippine-American War. There are similarities but there are also many differences. For instance, the Vietnamese people won, and in the United States during the Vietnam War there was a civil rights movement and an antiwar movement, while during the Philippine-American War, an intense nationalism and jingoism ruled public sentiment.

Much war booty was brought back to the United States, some of which can be found in museums and libraries and in private collections. Somewhere in Wisconsin, the bell from the church tower of Balangiga, Samar is lying in some museum or town square as a silent reminder of a forgotten war.

DONG TIZON IS A PHILIPPINE ACTIVIST WHO WAS IMPRISONED UNDER THE MARCOS REGIME. HE CURRENTLY DOES SOCIAL WORK IN CHICAGO.

Sources for this article:
Luzviminda Francisco, "The First Vietnam, The Philippine-American War 1899-1902," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars (Dec. 1973, 2-16); Stuart Creighton Miller, Benevolent Assimilation (1982, New Haven: Yale University Press)

California contingent, Dewey Canyon III - 1971

Voices: Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Each name etched in black granite of stone
Lost to humanity for gone is the skin and bone.
I am now long gone and among the dead
What right did you have to destroy me, often said.
To remove me as a human being from this earth
Before I had the opportunity to share my worth.
Gone forever to hold my children in my arms
To fulfill my role to insure they come to no harm.
Moments now gone to love, hold and to touch
The girl of my dreams who I loved so very much.
To walk under the sun and also the rain
I cry for my life to gladly do over again.
Now unable to taste or drink the wine
Removed from this sphere of light and also time.

A.H.O.

LETTER TO VVAW

Friends,

I have seen friends in pain, dead and dying, far less than many folks; I still suffer from survivor's guilt. Did I push them too hard? Not hard enough? Did I always do my nest? If so, my best was scarcely good enough. If only I did something different, was not a lazy, incompetent sinner, worked harder, better, faster, maybe they'd be walking around instead of being buried, hooked to machines, or in chairs.

This is a pile of crap. Intellectually, I know I am not responsible for any of the two million dead and years of pain; I know the system did it to us, but my gut does not believe. Put a gun in a "Christian Soldier's" hand; call him an NCO; send him to where millions were murdered for less than nothing; let him live — the boy is going to have head problems.

As I pass through middle age, again my friends are dying, I have come on what I feel is a great truth. When your friends are maimed, mutilated and/or dying, when you can't talk to them without crying, when you are again totally impotent, when there is no one to fight except death, do not say, "Call me if you need anything." Write them a letter offering to do dishes, bathrooms, lawn, shopping, etc. Do what you have offered to do. You may not affect the final outcome, but it is easier to live (with) survivor's guilt. Contact you mutual friends. Give some relief to their caretakers. I wish I did this when Tom died, but I didn't. I will not let another friend go without my maximal effort.

Mother Jones said, "Pray for the dead; fight like hell for the living." I held this to be one of the central truths in my life for twenty years. I've tried to stop the murder machine for a quarter of a century; I do not think I will ever stop, but I can't leave the wounded behind.

Tom Baxter
Vietnam 67-69

My View

JOHN ZUTZ

I have been listening very closely and I haven't heard the uproar I ought to be hearing. In fact, I've hardly heard a peep from veterans' groups in reply to what is the most blatant restriction of veterans' benefits since the Civil War.

It is a little exercise being performed in Washington to help current congressmen and senators get re-elected. It says:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the 'American Hero Protection Act'.

SECTION 2. PROHIBITION OF PERFORMANCE OF MILITARY HONORS AND PROVISION OF BURIAL BENEFITS UPON DEATH OF PERSONS CONVICTED OF CAPITAL CRIMES.

(a) MILITARY FUNERALS - The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Transportation, with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, may not provide military honors at the funeral of a person who has been convicted of a crime under State or Federal law for which death is a possible punishment and sentenced to death or life imprisonment without parole.

(b) BURIAL IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES - A person described in subsection (a) is not eligible for burial in a national cemetery or for any burial benefit provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under chapter 23 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) APPLICABILITY OF SECTION - This section applies without regard to any other provision of law relating to funeral or burial benefits.

This little gem came about because somebody realized that Tim McVeigh, the convicted bomber of the Oklahoma City Federal Building, could be put to death in a Federal prison and then be buried in a veterans' cemetery, with the right to military honors.

It is called the "American Hero Protection Act," as if those dead veterans needed protection, and that protection could only be given by Congress. Congress is likely to rush this measure through. About the only thing it will accomplish is to help re-elect congressmen.

The fact is, full military honors aren't available at most veterans' cemeteries. Any military honors given at most veterans' cemeteries are left to veterans' groups. It is even difficult to bring out the VFW or DAV color guard for a burial in Milwaukee.

The one place military honors are regularly available is Arlington, but burial there is already restricted. Ordinary people need not apply. Therefore, the first part of the act is meaningless posturing by politicians.

It is the burial part of the act that should have veterans' groups howling — but there is only a silent acquiescence at best. Some national veteran leaders even think this is good.

We call services we expect from our government 'benefits' like the feds gave them to us out of generosity. We ought to start calling them 'rights'. We earned the right to decent health care, and the right to be buried in a federal cemetery. The flag that will be given to our survivors is given as a "token of esteem, by a grateful government."

Veterans' groups should be upset because it shouldn't be possible for those benefits to be denied after the fact. There is no precedence for this; it's probably illegal to apply this act to McVeigh.

Tim McVeigh earned the right to be buried in that veterans' cemetery the old-fashioned way — he served his country, the same way you and I did. In fact, he served in a combat zone.

If Tim McVeigh's benefits can be taken away, what makes you think yours are safe? If veterans' groups don't stand up and fight for Tim McVeigh's benefits, who will stand up to fight when Congress decides to take your rights away?

As far as I know, nobody has surveyed those on death row or serving life to determine how many are vets. It wouldn't surprise me to discover as many as 200 in the country who would be liable to lose their burial benefits under this act.

I just wish the folks in Congress were as worried about millions of real, live law-abiding veterans.

JOHN ZUTZ IS A FORMER VVAW REGIONAL COORDINATOR. HE LIVES IN MILWAUKEE AND MAKES GREAT BEER. HE'S A VIETNAM VETERAN.

Vietnam's 'Lost Souls'

In the United States, there has been a lot of controversy surrounding the whereabouts of American soldiers who are Missing In Action (MIA) from the Vietnam (Indochina) War(s). At times, there has been outrage at the Vietnamese government for not doing more to find these soldiers, or their remains. This is a bit much, as these same United States soldiers killed the people of Vietnam and destroyed their country.

Many Americans have the amazing ability to ignore the casualties and suffering of the Vietnamese, focusing upon their own losses and suffering, which are tiny in comparison to the years of bombing, defoliation, war, and destruction of homes inflicted upon Vietnam by American forces (granted, all of their news and entertainment sources tend to help hide this fact). At one point, President Jimmy Carter actually said that the U.S. owed no reparations to Vietnam because "the destruction was mutual."

For the very first time, I have seen a news article that actually presents the idea that the Vietnamese suffered as much, or more than the Americans in the Vietnam war, an unusual viewpoint for a mainstream American newspaper to be writing about. This article ran in the August 30 Los Angeles Times on their front page in the "Column One" section entitled "Seeking Closure for Vietnam's 'Lost Souls'" (Column One tends to be for stories that are issues, but not really "news"). For this, the LA Times is to be commended. There are a number of problems with the article, but it is still a step forward.

The article is about a Vietnamese woman named Pham Kim Ky, whose son, Ho Viet Dung, fought for the North Vietnamese army in the Vietnam War, and has been MIA for 25 years, presumed dead. The article brings up the fact that the number of American MIAs (1578) pales in comparison to the 300,000 Vietnamese MIAs. The article mentions that "thousands" of mothers and fathers like Ky are searching the country for information about their relatives who fought in the war.

According to the article, Vietnamese tradition says that when someone dies, their remains should be unearthed and cleaned three years after their initial burial; once these bones are reburied, the soul of that person can then find peace. The Vietnamese MIAs cannot have their remains tended in this way, and therefore their souls cannot find rest; hence the "lost souls" mentioned in the title.

Several things are admirable and unusual about the article. By showing the numbers of MIAs on both sides, the reader can see that Vietnam is worse off in this respect. The article also portrays North Vietnamese as human beings with personalities and feelings, instead of describing them as a ruthless fighting force, backwards peasants, or brainwashed commie tools.

Now, the downsides: Often, one can tell about a widespread social problem by telling the story of one or several individuals, helping the reader get a proper perspective and context of the problem. This particular article does the contrary; it focuses so heavily on Ky herself, describing her in such a emotionally charged manner, that it overshadows the scope of the problem; the fact that thousands of families are looking for their loved ones fades into the background. Secondly, any implication of guilt on the part of the United States is deftly sidestepped. This is most prominent when the article talks of the difficulty of finding remains on the battlefields, which "had been napalmed; terrain had been transformed by Agent Orange; bodies had been stripped of wallets, identification and family pictures by GIs seeking souvenirs." These actions are described as though they had happened without any cause or agent. A stronger statement would be "US soldiers napalmed ... dropped Agent Orange etc.." The article also makes no mention that many of these "lost souls" were killed by American soldiers.

This article is about as much as we can expect from the American mainstream media on such a touchy issue. A neglected point of view is presented, but truly controversial, unpleasant aspects of the issue are suppressed, ignored, or danced around.

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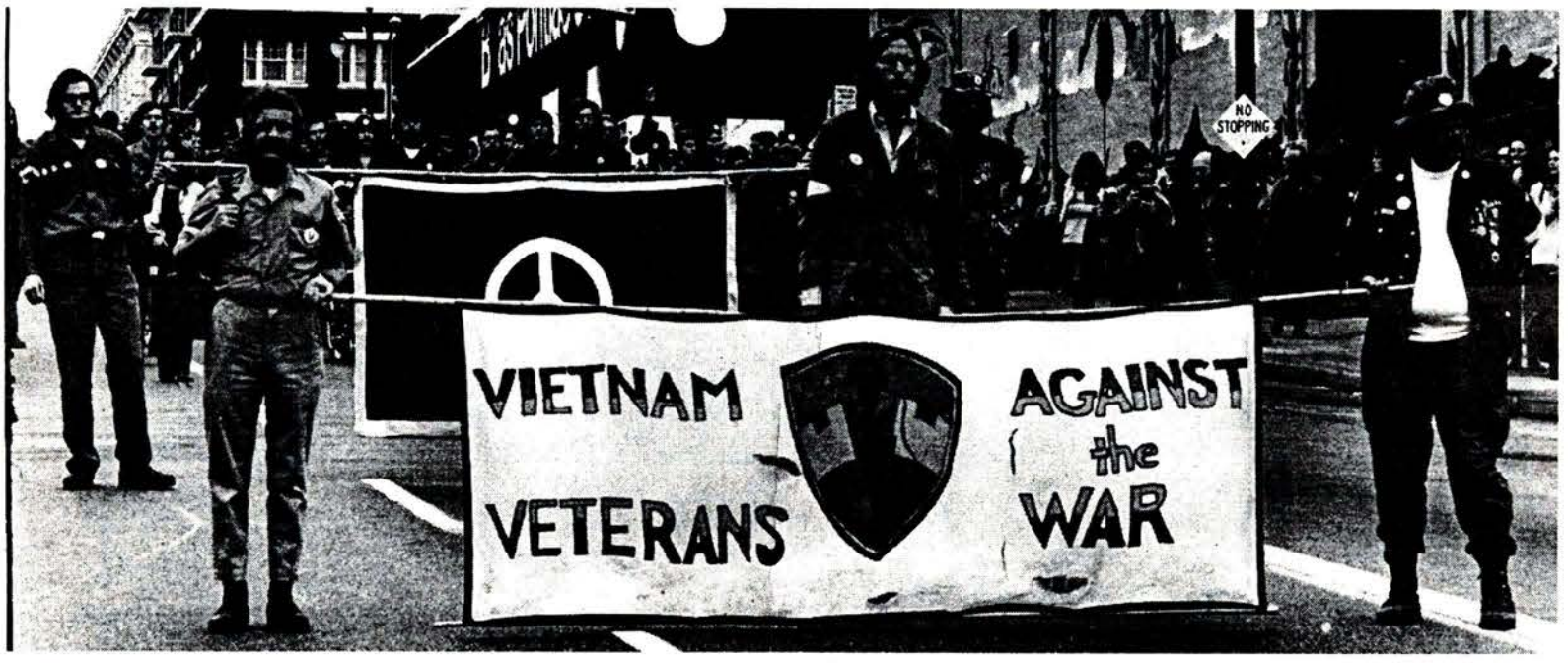
For an email subscription to NEWS WATCH, write to the editor, Jane Sexton, at jsexton@ucla.edu.



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

US Military Assistance Command (MACV) [official design by the institute of Heraldry, US Army]. Under this insignia 60,000 Americans and 3 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 US aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. As with all the propaganda put out by the government to justify US intervention in Indochina, the MACV insignia also put forward lies. The US 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 30 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.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

For more information:

- VVAW, PO Box 408594, Chicago , IL 60640
- 773-327-5756
- jtmiller@uiuc.edu
- http://www.prairienet.org/vvaw/

RECOLLECTIONS

DAVE KETTENHOFEN

I didn't have to go to Vietnam in 1970, I volunteered. People have intimated that I should have known the war was wrong by then and should not have put myself in that position. That's fair enough. I usually respond by saying that I needed to be a part of the biggest event of our lifetime, or that it seemed adventurous, or some such half-truth.

It's been twenty-six years since I returned from Vietnam. At first there was a long period of denial — fifteen years — when I tried not to think, say, or even admit that I had been a part of the war there. I was always quite active in political and social causes during that time, but I always tried to remain insulated or removed from the Vietnam thing. I didn't even become active in VVAW until the mid-80s when the pot was boiling in Latin America and all I could envision were my two sons coming home in body bags.

Last week I was reminded of the real reason why I went to Vietnam, and the reason I joined VVAW. While working on a hospital's boiler, I got into a conversation with Jerry, a maintenance worker there. Upon hearing that I was from Appleton, Wisconsin, he asked if I knew an old Army buddy of his from Vietnam named Tim Arens, also from Appleton. The name hit me like a brick. Tears welled up in my eyes and I said that yes, Tim was a friend of mine from high school.

Tim and I received our draft notices just in time for Christmas, 1967 and were scheduled to leave for the Army together in February of the next year, Well I decided that I didn't really relish the idea of stomping around the jungles of Vietnam as an infantryman, so I signed up for the Air Force instead. After that Tim would always try to talk me out of it, saying that the Army was only two years, instead of the Air Force's four, and that it wouldn't be all that bad. I didn't buy his arguments, and I left for the Air Force four days before he left for the Army.

I didn't see Tim again until the following October. I was home on leave, getting ready to go to Turkey for eighteen months, when Tim's death notice appeared in the paper. Grief-stricken and filled with guilt, I went to his funeral. They had a closed casket. It could've been, should've been me, I thought.

Jerry, the hospital worker, told me he was with Tim when he got killed. They were in-country for only a few weeks when their patrol came upon an NVA encampment and took it hard. Out of about seventy US soldiers, Jerry was one of only thirty who survived that action. He said that he was just getting to know Tim, liked him a lot, and loved his sense of humor. Jerry was wounded in the elbow and finished out his tour convinced that every day would be his last.

Somehow I felt that the only way I could relieve my feelings of guilt was to serve my time in Vietnam too. But I later realized that things don't really work that way.

When I arrived in November 1968, I immediately put in for reassignment to Vietnam. Personnel assured me that it would be no problem and that I would be assigned there upon completion of my current tour. Somehow I felt that the only way I could relieve my feelings of guilt was to serve my time in Vietnam too. But I later realized that things don't really work that way.

A senseless, needless death, that's why I went to Vietnam and that's why I joined VVAW. Going to Vietnam didn't give me the satisfaction and relief I was looking for, but it did at least give me a firsthand look at the lies that were being spewed out by our country's leaders. Being a part of VVAW does give me that satisfaction though, because VVAW is fighting to stop those senseless, needless deaths. I can't make up for Tim Arens' death or even remove the hurt, but I can work to prevent the death of some other Tim. That's one of the reasons why VVAW has been around for thirty years and will continue to be around for many more years.

DAVE KETTENHOFEN IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDIANTOR FROM MILWAUKEE.

No More Half-People

PAUL GIANNONE

We had been lying in a pit by the airstrip for eternity, it seemed. Looking above the rim of that hole, I could see tracer rounds and parachute flares from the battle in the distance. That battle was someone else's hell though. My hell was in the bottom of the pit.

Looking at the mass of flesh and blood below me, I thought to myself, "It must have been a Bouncing Betty mine" triggered by the South Vietnamese patrol that I now shared the pit with. These mines are designed to bounce up, out of the ground and explode: to slash, dismember and disembowel a whole squad, rather than just the man who stepped on it. But then again, it could have been an American-made Claymore mine.

Whatever it was, the mine had done its job well. A South Vietnamese army medic was trying to help the wounded. As a US Army medic, I had been called in with a radioman to assess the damage and call for a helicopter to evacuate the wounded if necessary.

Three of the men looked as if their lower bodies had been ripped open with meat cleavers. As hard as the medic worked, they continued to ooze blood. But the other soldier was the worst off. Everyone's eyes were fixed on him.

"He must have been the one who stepped on the mine," I thought. Both his legs were gone above the knees. If there had been any mercy, shock would have knocked him out. But he lay there, awake, staring up at the sky. I had been in Nam long enough to recognize the glassiness in the human eye that indicates death is stalking. He had that look, but death would not come quick that night.

And then it started. To everyone's horror this half-man began to lift his legs and look at his stumps. He did it slowly, repetitiously.

The chatter from the radioman increased in volume. Calling in a medevac was routine. You gave your location, the number and disposition of the wounded and soon a helicopter appeared. But there was a battle on that night and Americans were being wounded and dying. Four broken up Vietnamese soldiers were a low priority. The radio operator pleaded, then he tried cursing and threatening. All the while, the soldier cut in half kept raising and lowering his bloodied, bandaged stumps.

"What are the odds that he'll survive?" I wondered. "And even if he did, what would a broken half-soldier do in a Third World country?" The South Vietnamese Army threw out their broken soldiers like we toss out garbage. There was an entire street in Da Nang lined with thousands of these dismembered soldiers. They sat in groups, talking, smoking, begging, waiting for nothing.

My hand went to the handle

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