



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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Milwaukee Celebrates 25th Anniversary of War's End

JOHN ZUTZ

The day was cool and windy on Milwaukee's lakefront, though the sun was shining brightly. But there was plenty of warmth generated by over one thousand veter-

ans, their families and friends who came out to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam.

Striving for the goals of heal-

ing, education, and outreach, the program was the first in the nation to involve a coalition of American, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong veterans' groups and to invite the active participation of their communities.

"The healing has been painfully slow and difficult," Milwaukee County Veteran Service officer and Purple Heart recipient Ted Fetting said in his welcoming address, interpreted into three languages.

Veterans, many in uniform, embraced, greeted old friends and

met new comrades. Hundreds of Hmong in camouflage combat fatigues stood in ranks while their national anthem was played.

One of the last active National Guard Hueys made a pinpoint landing yards from the stage, crewed by Vietnam veterans, while rock music blared. As wreaths delivered by the chopper joined others placed at Milwaukee's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a "living statue" duplicating the "Three Fighting Men" appeared as if from nowhere.

There was optimism in the appreciative crowd that veterans and their families could finally bury the past.

"Americans have finally separated the Vietnam War from



Vietnamese traditional dance performed at 25th Anniversary celebration in Milwaukee.

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Veterans Support Vieques

DAVE CLINE

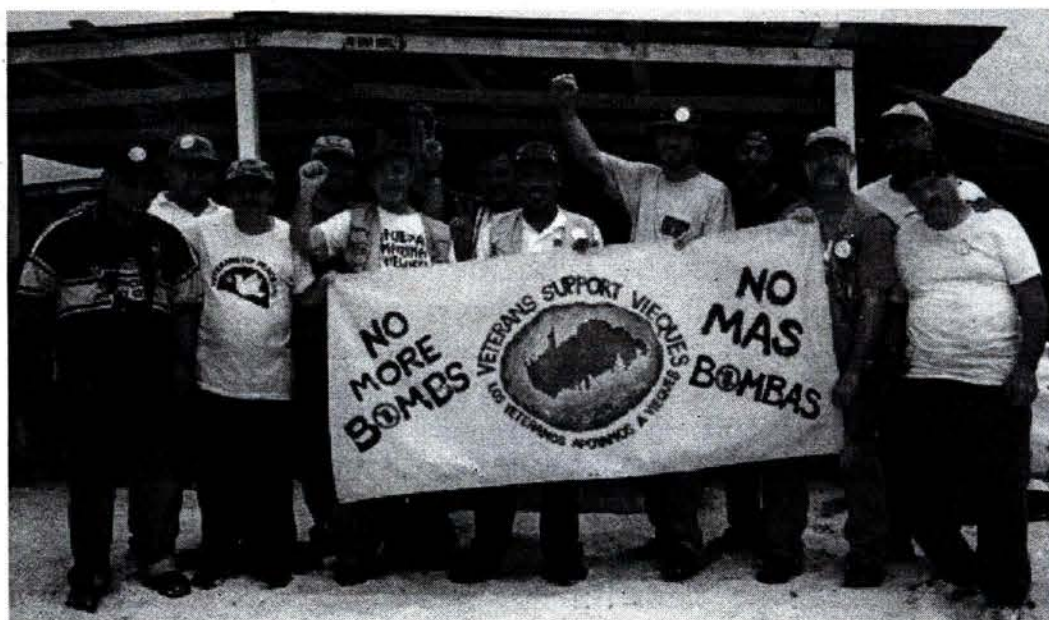
Last fall, the VVAW Clarence Fitch Chapter became involved in the movement to end bombing in Vieques after learning about it from Puerto Rican members and friends. In November, several of us went to a demonstration in Jersey City. We noted similarities with the plight of Agent Orange, Gulf War and atomic veterans. We also knew that many Puerto Rican veterans were involved in the movement and felt a duty to stand with them for peace just as we had been together in war.

We decided to start an effort to rally veterans of all nationalities in support of Vieques, drafting a statement called "Veterans Support Vieques" and getting leaders of the veterans' community to sign on. The original version was issued with thirteen signatures, and the number of names continued to grow as we circulated it at VA hospitals, vet centers, online and at meetings. It was also printed in several newspapers, including *The Stars &*

Stripes.

We were invited to attend a meeting called by Todo Nueva York con Vieques, Todo El Barrio con Vieques, the Vieques Support Campaign and other groups. People at the meeting welcomed our initiative and asked us to conduct a press conference on December 7 (Pearl Harbor Day) to highlight the fact that Americans still remember that "day that will live in infamy," yet the bombing of Vieques, which also began in 1941, has never ended. That press conference was covered on Spanish-language television and in the *New York Daily News*.

We participated in several demonstrations at the Federal Building and circulated a response to the American Legion national



US and Puerto Rican veterans together at a civil disobedience camp, Cayo La Yaya, located on the Navy bombing range in Vieques.



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From the National Office

JOE MILLER

Welcome to another issue of *The Veteran*! We're in the middle of another "anniversary" year. Twenty-five years since the end of the Vietnam war, thirty years since the American invasion of Cambodia and the killings of students at Kent and Jackson State by National Guard troops and police, fifty years since the start of the Korean war, and ten years since the build-up of Desert Shield to what would become the Gulf war — Desert Storm.

This issue includes material related to many of these events and the various commemorations that have taken place. VVAW, Inc. helped to organize and participated in many events recognizing the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of "our" war. From New York, to Chicago, to Milwaukee, to Champaign-Urbana, VVAW members and friends celebrated Vietnam's success in her war for national independence and reunification. We also recalled sadly the extreme price paid for that independence in Indochinese lives, and in the lives of Americans and others who were sent to fight against the Vietnamese people. Plus we have recollections from a carrier sailor and a report from a Milwaukee VVAW member about the people of Viet-

nam today.

This issue also presents our readers with a "new look" at the Korean war, written by VVAW member John Kim. This is an impressive overview and new analysis of events leading up to the war that has been in the headlines recently with the No Gun Ri revelations.

Of course, VVAW members are involved in more than just looking back. Members from the Clarence Fitch Chapter in NY/NJ have been deeply involved in the protests against the Navy bombing practice on the island of Vieques, and national coordinator Dave Cline provides us with a detailed overview of the situation there. We have an update on Chiapas from one of our Chicago members. A member from Rockford, Illinois reports on a protest against gun violence in our streets. Veterans' health issues have always been at the forefront of VVAW work, and one of our Champaign-Urbana members recounts his experiences with hepatitis C and the VA, reminding us that we must always be vigilant about the hidden health hazards of military service. In this connection, we remember our fallen brother, Walter Klim.

Two reviews of the new film

"Regret to Inform" bring home the long-term costs of war to those who survived, the widows and families of those killed on all sides. VVAW worked closely with the producers of this film, and we recommend it to educators and to community organizers.

We expect to have articles on the Gulf war in our next issue (Fall/Winter 2000) written by VVAW members who are veterans of that war. April 2001 is the thirtieth anniversary of Dewey Canyon III, so we'd like to send out a call for any recollections from those events for possible publication.

Finally, the National Office wants to recognize and praise the work of the most important members of the editorial staff, Jeff Machota and Lisa Boucher. Lisa's editorial pencil makes sometimes unfathomable writings read smoothly. Jeff's layout expertise provides our readers with clear and eye-pleasing presentation. Without such dedicated volunteer staff (both Jeff and Lisa work other jobs and receive no compensation for VVAW work), *The Veteran* would be back to real cut-and-paste production on Barry Romo's dining room table. Thanks, Lisa and Jeff!



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Submission Guidelines for *The Veteran*

- We prefer to receive articles via e-mail, but will also take mailed diskettes (3 1/4", ASCII files, PC or Mac) and paper (least preferable).
- To submit your article for possible inclusion in the next issue, email <vvaw@prairienet.org> with "Attn: Veteran Editor" in the subject line or mail to:
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Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Maybe it was touring Africa that put Secretary of State Madeline Albright in the Casablanca mode. Just like Claude Rains was shocked, just shocked that some capitalist was doing business with a repressive government.

Albright toured Africa last year, and she had some comments on the civil war in the Sudan. There the government forces have been involved in suppressing the people of the southern part of the country. Most of the two million dead were from the South. Officially, Washington condemns the Sudanese government, and Ms. Albright expressed her shock in finding that a corporation of one of our allies — Canada — had invested \$400 million in an oil pipeline venture with the Sudanese.

Some countries have the mistaken view that foreign investment in nations under dictatorial

rule will somehow help ordinary people, said the Secretary of State. That was last year. Helping ordinary people was one of the reasons Albright and the Clintonians gave in support of trading with China in the recent debates. It's not like American companies never invested in dictatorships like Saudi Arabia or Guatemala or Burma, or in countries run by Saddam Hussein, the Shah of Iran or Manuel Noriega. I know it's confusing to figure out if trading will help poor people. I guess sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. I guess trade helps when your company is profiting from the trade, and it doesn't help when someone else is profiting.

Here at home we have another election coming up — Gush against Bore. I doubt if any of you who read *The Veteran* will vote for Dubya "There are no poor people in Texas" Bush. You'll

probably fall into one of three categories: vote for Gore as the lesser of two evils, vote for a third party, or not vote at all.

Both of them have been bought by big money, but Bush is more obvious about it than Gore. Maybe that's the difference between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans are proud of who they represent, while Democrats try to keep it quiet. Wealthy people, corporations and Wall Street outfits are contributing heavily to both sides. For instance, everyone knows that Bush has a kindly feeling toward Big Oil companies. Guess what? So does Al.

To be more specific, Al Gore is tied to Occidental Petroleum. That has to do with family history. Al Gore, Senior (a senator from Tennessee) was friends with Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental. Deals were made involving a farm in Tennessee that had a zinc ore deposit. The farm

was bought by Occidental, and sold to Gores Senior and Junior and to a third party. Through all these deals, the Gore family has been receiving \$20,000 a year from Occidental for the zinc. And after his senatorial days Gore, Senior went to work for Occidental at \$500,000 a year. When he died, presidential candidate Al Gore, Junior became executor to his father's estate, which includes a large amount of Occidental stock and continues to receive the twenty thou each year.

Occidental Petroleum's oil reserves became dangerously low a few years back, and the company was in danger of folding. Then the government decided to sell off the Elk Hills oil fields near Bakersfield, California, which were intended to be the Navy's reserve. President Harding tried

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Notes From the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

The astute reader will have noticed that most of VVAW's leadership hails from the more cosmopolitan parts of America. We have Barry from Chicago, Joe in Champaign-Urbana, John in Milwaukee, and Elton in Georgia. (Wait a minute, I was stationed at Fort Gordon; that may be the exception that proves the rule.) Anyway, way down the ranks among the FNGs still pulling pots-and-pans KP duty, we got this guy whose *Veteran* column has been entitled (by the editors) "Notes from the Boonies." Truth to tell, that's not that inaccurate. If Douglas County males could vote on renaming this place, I'd be living in Nascar County, Illinois. Besides, Stephen A. Douglas was a Democrat, and that don't float very well in this neck of the woods either.

Okay, so we don't have the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. We don't wear shoes six months out of the year. And sometimes we get a little more friendly with our daughters than the law prefers. But I'll tell you this. Right here in Douglas County, we have something Barry and Joe and John and Elton don't have, and something they don't even have in Berkeley. What we have, about one hundred and sixty miles south of

the town that hasn't won a World Series since Christ was a corporal (as our drill sergeants used to tell us), is America's one and only Hippie Memorial.

If you will pardon me, I will now get a little more serious.

The Hippie Memorial was constructed several years ago by a gentleman from Arcola, Illinois named Bob Moomaw. Bob passed away a couple of years go, in his early sixties, and in 1999 the Arcola City Council elected to place his Memorial on City property. From what I can tell, Bob was considered a bit of a local flake, he being a pretty left-wing guy in a right-wing world, but he was nevertheless very much liked in his hometown. (I guarantee you, I couldn't have gotten away with it.)

I will now reproduce for you the dedication speech for this memorial, given last year by his widow upon that occasion. It will say a lot more about Bob's *magnum opus* than I ever could.

"Bob explained that the Memorial is made of iron rods, junk parts and crafted metal. Each foot represents one year of his life. The short portion on the left is the first 26 years of his life, which included the Depression, World War II, the Red Scare and the

hypocrisies of the 1950s. Bob said it was like living in a coal mine with a three-foot ceiling. The tallest man he ever met was three feet tall, because society forced people to stoop.

"The memorial rises to six feet representing the 60s to the 80s, when the Hippies hit and raised the ceiling off everything. Everyone got to stand up against repression and oppression. Bob said it was like growing up. They broke free from small-town morality during the Kennedy Camelot and the Hippie Movement. The metal shapes are brightly colored, showing love and peace symbols and individuality. In 1980, Ronald Reagan necked society down into small-mindedness again.

"The crossbars are the 'webs of his life.' As his life passed through time, other people's junk stuck to him and made him what he was — the product of leftovers from a previous existence. He said he never got to determine a thing in his life; it was all determined for him. He said he left the pieces raw so they could rust, the way life is, junk collecting rust.

"Was Bob Moomaw a hippie? No. He did have a beard and a ponytail while attending Eastern Illinois University. He was there at the same time and place as hip-

pies were, but was raising his children then to use the freedom of their minds to search for knowledge and education as he did. As he said: to his shame, he was no hippie. Hippies, he said, gave us freedom to appreciate individual artistic creativeness. That is what aspect of their existence he is honoring."

That's it. That's the dedication speech, and a kind of loose explanation of how this ungainly and unlikely edifice ever came into being. Like Mrs. Moomaw said, most of it is junk, but it's the "non-junk" parts — the years when the hippies burst upon the scene — that the artist wanted to memorialize.

Maybe this is one of those "you had to be there" columns. I mean, it's not like busloads of tourists stop in Arcola every day to see this thing. We do have tourists here, but they're usually more interested in the Amish craft stores and our new golf course. Douglas County has one of the few original Grand Army of the Republic rooms still in existence, and we're in the process of building a National Korean War Museum and Library, which is a pretty big deal

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Memorial Day 2000, Chicago

BROOKE ANDERSON

"We in VVAW have always taken Mother Jones's saying to heart: 'Remember the dead and fight like hell for the living.' So we also want to remind folks of the continuing social costs of war. Wars don't end with treaties."

It was this sentiment, expressed by VVAW National Coordinator Joe Miller, that set the tone for this year's VVAW Memorial Day action at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fountain in Chicago. We gathered on May 29 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the end of the war and to remember people who fell on both sides of the war. We also came to remember those who are still falling because of service-related illnesses and lack of affordable health care, as well as those who continue to fall as a result of American intervention abroad. This year we were blessed with beautiful weather, a large

veterans and thereby glorify war. "In the same breath, they talk about the great sacrifices people have made, but on the other hand, they treat veterans so poorly."

Joan Davis, now a high school teacher, was active in the anti-war movement at the University of Wisconsin at Madison from 1968 to 1974 while her future husband, Bill Davis, was fighting in Vietnam. "Something we learned from that struggle is that people can effect change."

Joan spoke about both the anti-war movement and why it is important to educate today's young people about the reality of the war and the power of anti-war movements. "The stories need to be told to young people... but I'm wondering what it takes to make sure young people understand the enormity of what it means to go and fight and kill, as a young person, people you have nothing



loved ones and your comrades, and those of you who are teaching the next generation... I'm telling you: it's not over. I can see us coming out of our nursing homes thirty years from now trying to sensitize people!"

Jeanne Douglas, a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) team leader and Co-Coordinator of the Homeless Veterans Stand Down, spoke about health care. She told us "stories that might give us some hope" in an era in which, as more World War II veterans die and the population the VA serves declines, so does VA funding.

The stories she told were about people at the VA who are committed to giving quality health care to veterans. She spoke of a nurse who organized after-hours rap groups for veterans diagnosed with hepatitis C, about a patient representative who advocated for veterans, about a psychiatrist who gave out his personal pager number on weekends to veterans suffering from PTSD, about a social worker who scoured the city's shelters at night in search of veterans, and about a dentist who provided dental care for homeless

veterans.

After telling us these stories of VA workers who recognized the needs of veterans and stepped up to serve, Jeanne asked, "If these people are for us, how can the veteran lose? There are simply too many people working too hard at their jobs for the system to fail completely."

Joe Miller, a Navy veteran during the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, professor at the University of Illinois, and VVAW National Coordinator, spoke about the so-called "recent discovery" of hepatitis C infections in Vietnam veterans. He also called for the elimination of anthrax vaccine testing on service personnel.

Joe told us that least 7% of American veterans are infected with the hepatitis C virus. There is no real cure yet and the current treatment is much like chemotherapy, with painful side effects. Joe then reminded us that 6,700 "atomic vets" were exposed to radiation experiments, received no medical outreach or follow-up, and now suffer from increased illness.

"And now the government asks us and asks GIs to trust them



crowd, extensive media coverage, and truly inspiring speakers.

Our first speaker was Bill Davis, a Vietnam Air Force veteran who spoke about the "Electronic Battlefield," which he helped implement. He also discussed the continuing costs of the war and the steady decline in veterans' benefits since the end of the war twenty-five years ago.

Bill noted how the United States government originally denied the existence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the health hazards caused by exposure to Agent Orange, the use of veterans ("atomic vets") for radiation experiments, and the existence of the Gulf War Syndrome. As he reminded us, this governmental abuse and neglect of veterans is inconsistent with the government's attempt to glorify

against. There's no excuse any more. You've got to make a commitment to stand for truth and to stand for justice."

Maude De Victor, a Navy veteran and former Veterans Administration worker who went public about the effects of Agent Orange on Vietnam veterans, spoke about how veterans are still dying of Agent Orange poisoning. Maude told us that she continues to get calls from Agent Orange victims seeking her assistance. That Agent Orange is continuing to devastate the lives of veterans and that congressional representatives know about the issue, but refuse to take action, is reason for VVAW and others to continue the struggle.

"To those of you who have kept this issue alive, those of you who have fought on behalf of your



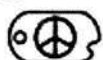
on anthrax vaccines. Bullshit! If they want to test things on people, why don't they test them on themselves and quit using GIs as cannon fodder? There should be no forced use of this vaccine."

Barry Romo, an Army infantry officer in Vietnam (1967-68), Administrative Vice President of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and VVAW National Coordinator, spoke against military aid and personnel from the United States being used in Colombia.

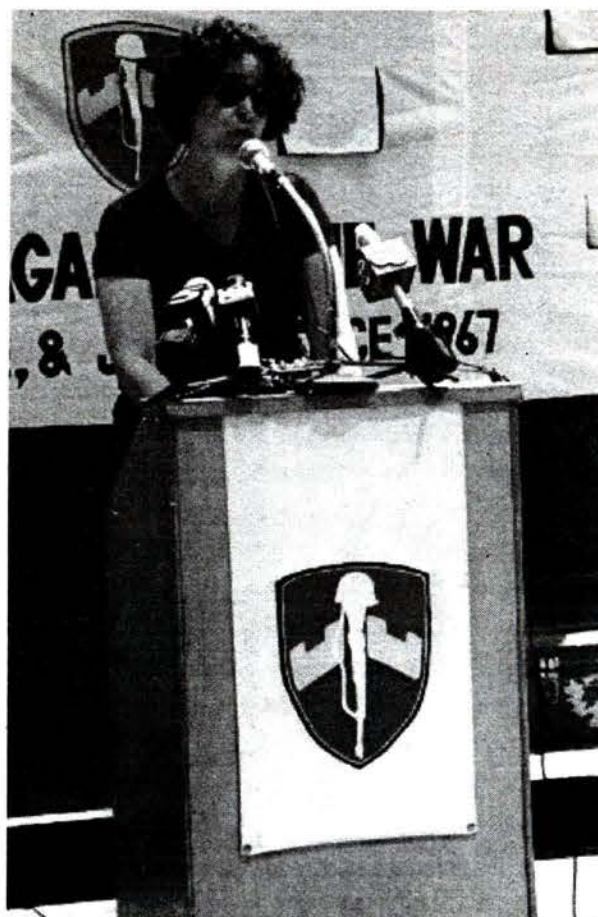
Barry reminded us that for twelve years, VVAW and others have worked in solidarity with the people of Colombia to end the "drug war." Barry discussed the similarity between the massacres — and subsequent government cover-ups — at My Lai, during the Gulf War, and now as a result of American intervention in Colombia. "And now we look into the future. The My Lais, the Persian Gulf, Colombia. Will our kids be there with Agent Orange? Will our kids be there with anthrax vac-

cines? Will our kids be dying for another worthless cause? Not if we're active."

Together these voices articulated the possibility of change through organizing. If we came away from Memorial Day with one thing, it was the testimony of our speakers that the best way to honor the sisters and brothers we've lost in struggle is to continue to organize for justice. As Bill Davis reminded us in his speech: "On the 25th anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, VVAW's focus has not changed. VVAW feels as strongly today about U.S. military intervention and decent benefits for all veterans."



BROOKE ANDERSON IS A RECENT GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, AN ORGANIZER FOR THE GRADUATE EMPLOYEES ORGANIZATION AND A MEMBER OF THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CHAPTER OF VVAW.



Chicago Memorial Day 2000 photos by Bill Branson.

From SEA to Shining C

P-DUB (PAUL WIENKE)

I was sitting on a bench in sick bay at the USNCBC in Port Hueneme, California, having felt really run down and crappy for several months. When I was EXCONUS the doctors had told me I was merely suffering from dysentery, and I was treated for this illness at every duty station since my first return from overseas. The outcome was always the same: no change, no results except for the usual explosive abdominal ones associated with dysentery. But on this particular visit, the gynecologist (the battalion MD assigned to treat 850 males) decided to do some different blood work. A few days later I was told to return to sick bay, where he told me I had a form of hepatitis, at first thought to be type B. I was given a shot of super gammaglobulin and was told that in a few days everything would be fine. Well, for a while everything did improve. It may or may not have been the shot.

The next time I was suffering enough to go to a doctor about my general health was while I was working at the VA hospital in Madison, Wisconsin as a new patient screener. The doctor did another blood test and this time he told me I definitely had hepatitis. But in those days it was classified as non-A/non-B hepatitis. I was not given a shot. After a few weeks the symptoms slacked off, so I just let it go — after all, it was a VA diagnosis. From the first “diagnosis” by the battalion doctor in 1972 to the VA assessment, almost 10 years had passed. I was 31 years old, and other than occasional spells of prolonged general weakness and tiring easily, I felt pretty normal considering my lifestyle.

To say that I have lead a saintly life before or after the military would be more than slightly fictitious: it would be a big fat lie. I had vast experience with intravenous drug use, many different sex partners, and LOTS of heavy drinking. Over time I gave up most of my vices, except the widely-accepted alcohol abuse, which I pursued with a vengeance for many more years. Sure, after enough days of heavy drinking I would feel like shit, but who doesn't feel that way after a bender?

After a prolonged hospital stay — and many trips to emer-

gency rooms — it finally dawned on me that I had a chronic illness and needed more detailed medical help. I got that help by default three years ago when an emergency room doctor took another blood test on a hunch based on something he had recently read. A few days later my personal physician called me for an appointment. He told me that I had hepatitis C and that I needed to see a gastroenterologist about potential liver damage. So, as you may already have guessed, when I heard “potential liver damage” the red light went on and I cut down my alcohol intake to maybe two to three quarts of bourbon a week — a big im-

VA hospitals have been reporting that veterans have been found to be at least five times more likely to have hep-C than the general population.

provement.

The specialist took my history (such a peculiar word, “history”). After hearing about some of the places I had been and the lifestyle I had lived, he determined that if I cut my drinking down to a glass or two of wine now and then I could live maybe two more years. He said I should start getting my affairs in order. Then he said he wanted to do a liver biopsy to determine how sick I really was and how much time was really left. (I think the Jim Beam stock took a major hit in the market that week from which it still may not have recovered.) Then came the results of the biopsy and a special DNA test, with very mixed results. The DNA test is done to determine the level of infection in your entire system. Mine read at over 500,000 parts per million. Or, in more realistic terms, one of every two cells in my body was carrying the virus. Yikes! I was certain that two years was asking for too much luck. When the biopsy results came in I had one pissed-off specialist on my hands. He didn't

seem happy to tell me that for some damn reason my liver was in relatively good shape and I would probably live to be ninety. Just my luck: my life was only half over and I'd already con-

sumed my allotment of bourbon.

I have made many lifestyle changes as a result of this diagnosis. I still drink, only I limit my intake very carefully (unless I'm with Jeff Machota). I altered my diet by reducing fat and eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. I have a regular exercise routine of both aerobic and weight training. As a result of better diet and exercise, I now get decent sleep every night. I have good and bad days (so does any other former junky or alcoholic), but more good than bad lately.

I'm telling you this because prior to 1992, no one was screening blood donations for the hepatitis C virus. Also, between the early 60s and the mid-70s the government was paying junkies and derelicts to donate blood, which was then widely used by the military to transfuse GIs. VA hospitals have been reporting that veterans have been found to be at least five times more likely to have hep-C than the general population. If you were in the military between about 1964 and 1992, and you shared blood for what-

ever reason, you are in REAL DANGER of having been exposed to hep-C. The danger could come not only from sharing needles or getting a transfusion for a wound, but even something as innocuous as helping a wounded comrade if you had any open sores or wounds. If you may have come in contact with anyone else's blood YOU SHOULD BE TESTED.

The kicker is: there is no real cure for hep-C. The current treatment is much like chemotherapy with loss of appetite, loss of hair, and other side effects. Powerful anti-viral drugs are successful at lowering the virus level — not getting rid of it — in only 30% of cases. Not very good odds. And this treatment is not a cure; it only lessens the effects of the virus. Hepatitis C can take thirty years or more to manifest obvious symptoms. In the meantime, it is silently taking years off your life. In many cases you may not even know you have it until you need a liver transplant or are dying from liver disease.

So get tested! It is a simple blood test and you can at least know if you are a carrier or if you can continue your life as normally as you think you do now.



PAUL WIENKE IS A MEMBER OF THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CHAPTER OF VVAW.

On the Internet, My WebMD provides links and current information on hepatitis C and other liver diseases. The site is continually updated about new treatments; most are experimental. You can find answers to almost any questions you have about hepatitis C and other liver diseases from this site. <<http://my.webmd.com>>



VVAW Collecting Funds for Colombian Nun's Bulletproof Vest

ALYNNE ROMO

One of the most dangerous things that Colombians can do is to decide to work for human rights. For the last year, the Colombian government agreed to provide protection — guards, bulletproof

vests, safe transport — for these human rights workers, but these have been nothing but empty promises.

VVAW recently met a humble and diminutive nun, Sr.

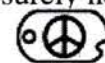
Carolina Pardo, who is doing some very dangerous work investigating the 1998 bombing of civilians in Santo Domingo, an area near where British Petroleum is drilling its new oil well on land dear to the U'Wa people. Nearly twenty people, including children, were killed when government helicopters fired rockets into civilians. The case will take on international ramifications.

Sr. Carolina's important work will put her in the front line of the fight for human rights and it will put her right in the line of fire. So VVAW will raise the funds to get Sr. Carolina her bulletproof vest. There is no guarantee that it will keep her safe. But we do know that the Colombian government will be justifiably embarrassed by our gift. As well they



should!

You can help by sending a donation, care of VVAW, with a note that you want your money used TO SEND A VEST TO A NUN who surely needs it!



ALYNNE ROMO WORKS FOR COLOMBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS.



Sister Carolina with Barry Romo in Chicago.

Fraggin'

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to sell the fields, and that resulted in the Teapot Dome scandal. Nixon tried, and so did Reagan, but there was too much public pressure against it. It didn't happen until the Clinton-Gore administration.

A lot of companies wanted this oil, but Occidental Petroleum walked off with 78% of it. Then, after the contract was awarded to Occidental, the price Occidental had to pay magically dropped from \$4.50 a barrel to \$1.50.

Normally the Department of Energy would oversee this type of deal, but this time it was arranged for ICF Kaiser, a private consulting firm, to be the watchdog. And that completes the circle started by the Gore zinc farm, because the chairman of ICF Kaiser is Tony Coelho, Gore's campaign guru. And you thought that the only problem with Gore was that he's dull. He's just as skilled as Bush.

In case you missed it, a new Army policy took effect in March.

Officers and enlisted personnel are no longer supposed to be dating, let alone getting married. This is the result of action the Army took in March 1999. I guess it was an attempt to prohibit the improper use of rank to compromise authority or impartial treatment or for personal gain. It includes things such as making loans or business deals. The Army in its wisdom decided to include dating. Any relationship between officer and enlisted in March 1999 was to be concluded by March 2000, either by a breakup or by marriage.

Right. I wonder if the Army forgot about hormones. Is this don't ask, don't tell? Maybe they're right. Maybe fraternization is too difficult. I never dated an officer, so I don't know. Do you have to salute?



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR AND EDITOR OF THE NEWSPAPER FOR THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION AT AMC-O'HARE. HE'S A MEMBER OF VVAW'S CHICAGO CHAPTER.

Notes From the Boonies

continued from page 3

in its own right. The Douglas County Tourism Council regularly trumpets these attractions to anyone who will listen, which of course it should.

But you know what? I just love this goddamn Hippie Memo-

rial. It sits there with all the fanfare of a latter-day Ozymandias, and is very much a stranger in a strange land. I should like to invite all of our enlightened readers to come on down to Douglas County, Illinois some day, in be-

tween the otherwise serious things you're doing in your lives, and, well, just dig it. My friend Mary Dilliner and I will give you the cook's tour, and then we'll take you across the railroad tracks to Snoopy's 45 tavern for a few cold cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon.

You just can't get any closer to the heart of America than that.



PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW'S C-U CHAPTER. HE LIVES IN TUSCOLA, IL WHERE HE WORKS FOR THE PROBATION DEPARTMENT. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE U.S. ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.



A Rocky Road to Peace

A REVIEW BY JAN BARRY

***A Patriot After All: The Story of a Chicano Vietnam Vet*, by Juan Ramirez (University of New Mexico Press, 1999)**

The path to peace, and peace work, is often long, twisting, and hard.

Surviving Vietnam battlefields, he struggled to find peace of mind. By his own account, he drank too much, took drugs, went AWOL. Drummed out of the Marines with an undesirable discharge, he robbed fast-food joints with a toy gun, high on the addictive rush of living dangerously. Realizing someone could get hurt, he gave up the bizarre sprees, enrolled in college and volunteered with the United Farm Workers grape boycott campaign.

"I was looking for something far removed from the war and the violence that I had committed on my heart and soul," Ramirez writes in a frank, unflinching memoir telling a redemptive tale of how a macho Chicano GI became a peace advocate. His searing account offers insightful lessons for peace organizers looking to encourage such transformations in hot-tempered youngsters and adults.

Ramirez tells a classic story of how hard it is to be raised in a violent society and become a peaceful person. His career as a boycott activist, for instance, was cut short when he punched a cop who stopped him for drunk driving. He spent time in jail, raging until beaten senseless by guards. He asked a friend to lie in court about his less-than-sober condition. "I was ashamed of myself," Ramirez recalled of his botched sally into civic activism. "Besides my drinking, my temper started to interfere with my UFW work, an obvious problem given the organization's commitment to nonviolence."

Intent on self-improvement, he worked to gain a college degree. In a politics course on Southeast Asia, a fellow student challenged his brooding silence on the war. Ramirez stormed out of the room and dropped out of college. "The blasting I had gotten from that woman brought all my guilt and shame about the war to the fore of my consciousness. I could not bear the thought of being confronted again," he writes, describing an all-too-typical reaction by war veterans when pressed to talk

about themselves.

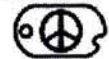
That incident happened in 1975, the year the war ended. By that time, he says, "I had been convicted of drunk driving twice, assault on police officers, and resisting arrest during barroom

blems stemmed more from discriminatory treatment as a Mexican-American, as well as from drinking and drugs, than from engaging in combat.

Eventually, aided by a number of friends, acquaintances and

school classes on his views on war. At last, he writes, "I found a way to use a terrible life experience constructively." He had found his voice, rough-and-tumble but articulate, to describe the battle many ex-soldiers wage to become productive citizens.

"What I have to say, and I'll say it the day I die, is that we were wrong, and it is wrong to kill other people in the name of religion and ideologies," writes Ramirez, who now runs a landscaping business in California. "As a veteran, I feel that what I can contribute, is to help heal the country, not just for my own sake but for all the lives that were sacrificed — Vietnamese and American."



JAN BARRY CRUMB WAS VVAW'S FOUNDING NATIONAL PRESIDENT, 1967-71. A COEDITOR OF *WINNING HEARTS & MINDS*, HE IS A JOURNALIST BASED IN NEW JERSEY.

"What I have to say, and I'll say it the day I die, is that we were wrong, and it is wrong to kill other people in the name of religion and ideologies..."

brawls twice." In subsequent years, he held and lost various jobs and underwent treatment for alcoholism and group therapy for veterans. "When confronted by the rest of the group," he admitted, "I lashed out: 'I don't have the same problems as the rest of you guys in here.'" He felt his prob-

lems, Ramirez confronted his nightmarish war memories and worked on healing long-festered emotional wounds he had been self-medicating with booze, the buzz of street drugs, and bluster. He won an appeal for an honorable discharge, returned to college, and began speaking to high

"A powerful, sensitive, and deeply compassionate reflection from one of the most important and bravest nonviolent revolutionaries of the twentieth century."
— Martin Sheen

From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter David Dellinger



The son of a well-to-do Boston lawyer, David Dellinger seemed cut out for a distinguished career in law or government. But rejecting his comfortable background, he walked out of Yale one afternoon during the Great Depression, in his oldest clothes and without any money, to ride the freight trains, sleep at missions, and stand in bread lines. Dave lived among the poor in Newark, was bloodied in the freedom marches through the South, and led countless hunger strikes in jail.

Dave's memoirs shed new light on many of the most crucial events of the 1960s. His inside account of what happened in those years, and of the people who shaped that decade — Martin Luther King, Jr., Abbie Hoffman, Bayard Rustin, A.J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Jerry Rubin, Joan Baez, and many more — is an indispensable chapter in the story of our time.

Additional praise for *From Yale to Jail*

"... There can be few people in the world who have crafted their lives into something truly inspiring. This autobiography introduces us to one of them, with the simplicity and integrity that have characterized everything Dave has done."
— Noam Chomsky

"Dave Dellinger's life is as American as apple pie wildly seasoned — the life of an active, endlessly inventive peacemaker — resisting, determined, positive...."
— Grace Paley

"... Dave Dellinger, the oldest of the Conspiracy Eight, turns out to be the most obstinate. This book tells us why."
— Studs Terkel

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It Starts When It Ends

A REVIEW BY HORACE COLEMAN

Regret to Inform, Barbara Sonneborn (Artistic License Films)

"It starts when it ends," filmmaker Barbara Sonneborn has said about war.

We think war is macho — and male. And it is. But men aren't the only ones it touches. We think of American suffering and ignore that of Vietnamese — ally or foe, those in the middle — and other Asians. Or that of women. It's as if the Wall and 58,000 American KIA blot out memory or consideration of all pain, suffering and loss not American, not male.

As we all learned, in war it's best not to be a civilian. We forget to remember that more civilians than GIs — and women in particular — are KIAs and MIAs of a different and lingering sort.

For instance, we've heard

stories about vets being spit on, though no one we know actually had that happen to them. But poet/nurse/vet Dusty was slapped for being a 'Nam vet. *Regret to Inform* examines war's effects on women wounded in another way.

PBS (who else?) aired *Regret*, a beautifully shot, deeply felt, haunting odyssey through 'Nam. Sonneborn travels to the place where her young husband died, widowing her at 24. Her Vietnamese refugee friend and guide, silent for years, finally tells what she saw and what she did to survive. *Regret* is a bittersweet travelogue, a journey through soul and time to meet one particular ghost and do an odd reconciliation and acceptance. As Sonneborn travels, other women — American and from the former North Vietnam — tell slivers of their stories. They, and she, re-

visit twisted pasts while looking at tangled presents.

Sonneborn probes her own trampled love and stifled youth, eloquently airing her suppressed and repressed feelings. Other women do the same. Something as bright and illuminating as a parachute flare on a stark, dark, deadly night slowly falls over us.

In some locales, Arkansas for instance, a little righteous acting up had to be done to have this film shown. The moving and quiet pain of woman after woman, finally breaking the surface of indifference, was evidently too much for some to consider. Sonneborn doesn't deal with Big Causes or Important Ideas. "Little" things (atoms of regret, paths of revelation, roads of remembrance leading to rivers of tears, certain looks, sighs and heaves) show us: war is not good and stays in the

heart and mind.

One American woman speaks of her husband who survived 'Nam but died of cancer, probably caused by Agent Orange.

Regret isn't flashy, splashy or preachy. It's well made, sincere, searching and searing. Sonneborn has created a work that took years to finance and to finish. She did a masterful job at both tasks. Catch a PBS rerun. Rent it for a group showing from Artistic License Films (250 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10107 (212) 265-9124). Spread the word. *Regret to Inform* is well worth seeing. It shows the Vietnam experience from a previously unseen perspective.



HORACE COLEMAN IS A VETERAN, POET AND WRITER LIVING IN CALIFORNIA.

A Comfortable Distance

A REVIEW BY EDITH SHILLUE

Regret to Inform, Barbara Sonneborn (Artistic License Films)

There seem to be certain people and projects of which it is distasteful to be critical. War widows figure prominently in this category, so the position of those of us who do not admire the film *Regret to Inform* by Barbara Sonneborn is fraught with social hazard.

In her documentary, Sonneborn journeys to Vietnam in an effort to forge meaning from her loss of her first husband, Jeff Gurvitz. She interviews war widows from both Vietnam and the United States, interspersing these interviews with images of contemporary Vietnam and powerful archival footage of American militarism. PBS promoted the work as a cry against the evils of war and — since it is funded in part by the president's initiative on race — as an educational film about the ways we "create" enemies. In the end, Sonneborn's artistry overwhelms the subject matter to keep us still at a comfortable distance from America's militarism, no closer to the unique suffering of war widows and nowhere near a full discussion of issues of class and race within a war context. What might have been an opportunity for a detailed look at catastrophe

is a mere collage of the beautiful and the horrifying. Sonneborn has, however inadvertently, allowed us to again view war as a mysterious poison for which individuals, societies and governments are not responsible. This is not a film anti-war educators can fruitfully utilize in the classroom.

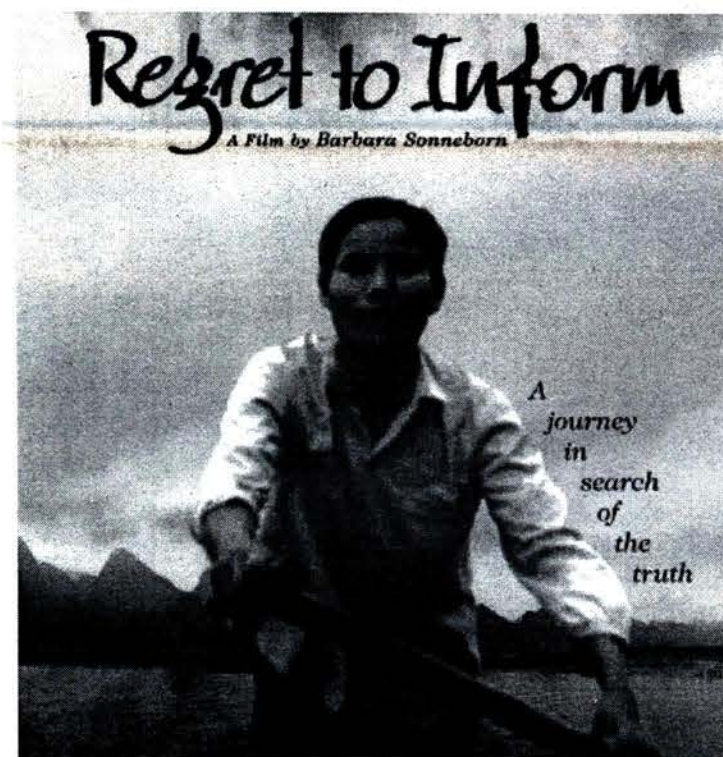
Journeying back to Vietnam to generate reconciliation is clearly a challenge. In her narration Sonneborn tells us that she is plagued by questions about Jeff's death, but does not tell us what they are or even what they are related to, thereby raising expectations that the film does not fulfill. Sonneborn relies too heavily on images to reveal both question and answer for the viewer. Her aloof stance as narrator is confusing for those who may be less informed about Vietnam and the war. Trying to work critically and creatively in a society as solicitous of your comfort as Vietnam is a challenge with which military veterans are painfully familiar, but Sonneborn fails to pursue reconciliation's harsh realities. Opening the PBS broadcast with a monologue explaining the project, she states that it was most difficult because she had to relive her grief, then adds that she had a hard time talking with Vietnamese women because she "had to ask them questions that made them

cry more." Truthfully, she's one of a long line of Americans (and I was one of them) who walk into the lives of the Vietnamese clumsy, grieving, naive and stupid about the reality of their culture and the aftermath of our government's violence. Their public expressions of grief and our requests for them to relive trauma are so grossly voyeuristic that I find it akin to pornography.

As the PBS press kit tries to get us to examine issues of race and enemy-making in its "facilitator's guide," it reveals Sonneborn's idealism but also the film's many missed opportunities. In it she writes, "My hope in mak-

ing *Regret to Inform* is that by hearing these women's stories from both sides, viewers will begin to see that the enemy is war itself." Such popular mythology ignores militarist conditions that lead to war. Further into the narrative of the film there are virtually no comments about race, loyalty, nationalism, or divided loyalties, only the clipped presence of a diversity of American women.

Worse still is the anonymity of the Vietnamese women. Nguyen Ngoc Xuan, Sonneborn's translator, gives extensive, heart-wrenching testimony, but women



continued on page 22

My View: The 25th Anniversary

JOHN ZUTZ

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of our war in Vietnam has come and gone. Our society became aware of that fact, and since we haven't resolved it yet, we wondered just what to think about it.

First we examined the present. We got to see and read about the celebrations in Vietnam. We heard about the veterans returning to assist their former enemies.

Then, as April 30 got closer, we got to relive the past. We got to experience the tragic crash of the cargo plane loaded with babies and medical personnel as the evacuation of the south accelerated. We got to see once again those famous images of choppers lifting desperate refugees from the roofs of Saigon. Finally, we saw the tank bursting through the gates of the Presidential Palace.

Most of all we got to listen to important people tell us what it all means twenty-five years later. Some even went so far as to use the opportunity to advise veterans that since the war has been over for so long that we should put it behind us. Of course that's the same thing they wanted twenty-five years ago.

Veterans have been examining the war's meanings and effects for all those years. They expect us to forget what we have learned, so they won't have to be reminded of how many of today's decisions grow out of the effects of that senseless war.

Like it or not, the way the United States executes military strategy, and even how it picks which wars to fight, is influenced by Vietnam.

Like it or not, our economy is still paying the debts incurred during the Vietnam War. The American budget was balanced until Lyndon Johnson decided he wanted guns and butter. We've still got five years to pay on the thirty-year T-bills issued during the war.

But the biggest effects most veterans see are the human effects. The human problems were created by the war and reinforced by staggering debt. Over those twenty-five years veterans have begged, pleaded, and protested, attempting to solve those problems to no avail.

Though we know the number of names on the wall, we can only estimate the number of vet-

erans who are daily turned away from VA hospitals. If that number were one, it would be one too many, but veterans are getting health care by the lowest bidder.

Though we know the number of those who came home with purple hearts, we can only esti-

der.

Though we kept track of the number of barrels of herbicides shipped to Vietnam, we can only estimate the number of veterans and their children who have had health problems caused by living in a chemical soup. If that number

fired, and rifle rounds expended, we can only estimate the number of veterans who are incapacitated to some degree by post-traumatic stress. If that number were one, it would be one too many, but veterans are getting therapy by the lowest bidder.

Meanwhile, our government continues to stonewall and deny the existence of any problems, including problems indicated by its own studies. If Congress really cares for veterans, as each congressman will attest, why do these problems persist after twenty-five years?

The real problem is that veterans are getting government by the highest bidder.



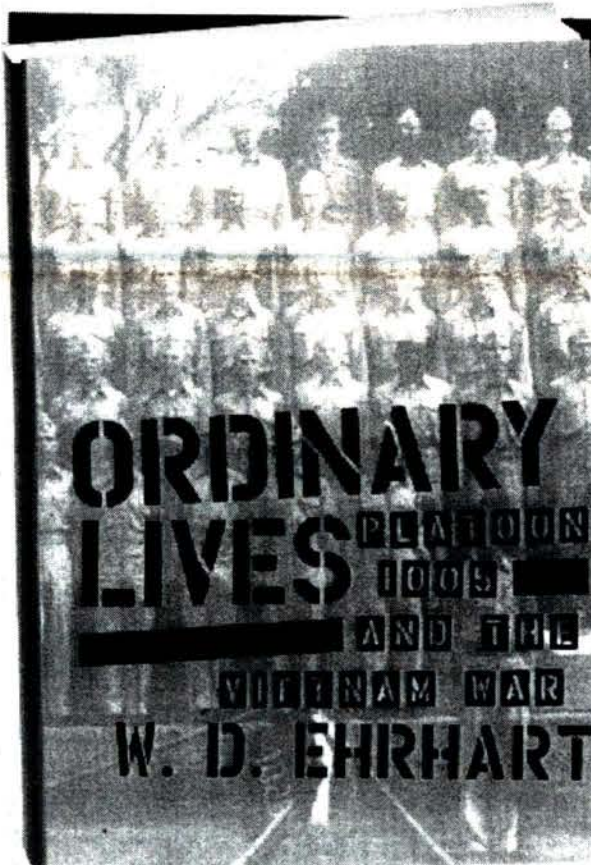
JOHN ZUTZ IS A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER AND A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

... the way the United States executes military strategy, and even how it picks which wars to fight, is influenced by Vietnam.

mate the number of veterans who are homeless on the streets. If that number were one, it would be one too many, but veterans are getting social services by the lowest bid-

were one, it would be one too many, but veterans are getting treatment by the lowest bidder.

Though we have records of the tons of bombs dropped, shells



**Ordinary
LIVES**

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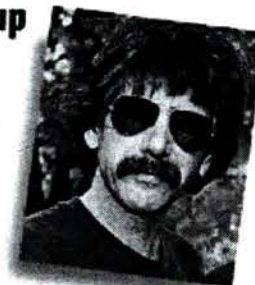
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A writer's
**search
for his
1966 Marine
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**"Post-soldier reporter
Bill Ehrhart in this searingly
honest book will win your
heart and mind as he chroni-
cles without histrionics the
lives of a group
of ordinary
Americans**



**who did not think they were
doing anything extraordinary
when they risked, and often
lost, their lives just because their country
asked them to. After the war the survivors
silently went back to work, often at low-paying,
non-establishment jobs for an establishment
that never even said thanks. Ehrhart, by giving
'just the facts,' says thanks admirably."**

-George C. Wilson,
author of *Mud Soldiers* and *Supercarrier*,
and former military correspondent for
The Washington Post



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A New Look at the Korean War

JOHN H. KIM

Starting this June and continuing for the next three years, the Pentagon will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War with special commemorative events in the United States and South Korea, spending several million dollars of our tax money. At the same time, the Pentagon faces the daunting task of reinvestigating the Associated Press report concerning the U. S. killing of several hundreds of South Korean civilians at No-Gun-Ri in late July 1950.

It's about time that we, American people, take another look at the 'Forgotten War' (a.k.a. 'Unknown War') and try to understand the real nature of the war so that we can do something to bring the war to an end. Many Americans erroneously believe that the war was over a long time ago. In fact, the war continues there in less obvious ways, such as military build-up, the propaganda war, and economic sanctions. The sad truth is that our government has been fighting the longest, most ferocious, unauthorized war in its history.

Even after a half century, the U.S. maintains about 37,000 troops at dozens of military bases in South Korea today. What we have in Korea is merely a precarious cease-fire agreement. We came very close to reigniting the war in 1994 and 1999. How long are we going to stay in Korea, and at what cost? When are we going to bring our boys home at last? How long are we going to ignore our responsibility for the tragic division of Korea and the Korean War?

For a full understanding of the Korean War, it is necessary to understand something about the history of U.S. policy toward Korea prior to the outbreak of war. Korea first emerged as a unified country in 668 A.D. when Silla annexed Paekche and Koguryo, ending the Three Kingdoms period. The U.S. first established diplomatic relations with Korea when it signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the Kingdom of Choson in 1882. However, the U.S. government soon proved not to be a real friend to the Korean people when Japan attempted to colonize Korea. Instead of restraining Japan's imperialist ambitions, President Theodore Roosevelt entered into

a secret deal with Japan in 1905 (a.k.a. 'Taft-Katsura Memorandum') by recognizing Japan's domination of Korea in return for Japanese recognition of American hegemony in the Philippines.

This tendency of the American government to betray Korean interests again shows itself at the end of World War II. To halt the southward march of Soviet troops and secure U.S. influence on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee drew an arbitrary line across the 38th Parallel in Korea, asking the Soviet forces to stop there. Although American forces were

sought permission to attack the South in case the North was attacked. The truth is that the Korean War started in 1945 when the U.S. suppressed the KPR government and imposed its military rule in the southern part of Korea.

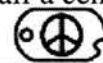
During the American Military Government (1945-1948) and the period from the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the South in August 1948 to the full-scale war in June 1950, the U.S. military and the fascist Rhee regime, allied with pro-Japanese Koreans, imprisoned or killed hundreds of thousands of Korean nationalists and socialists in order

gust 1949.

When the armed clash arose in June 1950, it was more or less a continuation of past conflicts. It was certainly not a surprise attack. Anti-communist dictator Syngman Rhee openly preached military unification of Korea by force. At the same time, the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung was preparing for a military counter-attack against the South. The United States was fully aware of the tense situation and took advantage of it, justifying the rapid and gigantic military build-up plan officially adopted in April 1950 (National Security Council resolution #68). When the fighting began on June 25, each side accused the other of starting the war. Despite this murky picture, President Truman labeled the civil war as the naked aggression of the communist world against a free nation, and intervened under the UN flag to avoid an official declaration of war in Congress. Truman characterized his decision as a 'police action,' setting a bad precedent for other U.S. military adventures, including the Vietnam War.

To American people of today, it doesn't matter much which side started the American Civil War. The important thing we remember is that the war was fought over the issues of slavery and the preservation of national union. Likewise, the Korean War was mainly a civil war of Korean people over the question of national reunification, which turned into an international military conflict upon the intervention of outside forces. Professor Bruce Cumings of the University of Chicago, the author of two monumental books on the origins of the Korean War, sums it up the best:

"The Nogun massacre can help Americans understand what this 'forgotten war' was really about. It was a civil and unconventional war that had its origins long before June 1950, and the official repositories of historical truth in Washington and Seoul have been lying about its basic nature for half a century."*



JOHN H. KIM IS A MEMBER OF VVAW, CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER, AND PRESIDENT OF VETERANS FOR PEACE, NYC CHAPTER. HE SERVED IN THE U.S. ARMY IN SOUTH KOREA.

*Bruce Cumings, "Korean My Lai," *The Nation*, Oct. 25, 1999



in Okinawa at the time, the Soviet Union meekly accepted the demand, thus paving the way for the establishment of two separate governments in Korea as the cold war intensified.

In addition to the tragic division of Korea, the U.S. also refused to recognize the Korean People's Republic (KPR), a nationwide, progressive government organized by anti-Japanese nationalist Koreans before the arrival of American troops in South Korea in September 1945. Instead of cooperating with the KPR, the U.S. created a military government in its zone of occupation, outlawing the KPR and the popular People's Committees under the control of KPR.

Official American history has it that the Korean War started on June 25, 1950 when North Korean forces suddenly attacked the South under Stalin's orders. This is a gross misrepresentation of the origin of the war. According to declassified Russian documents, Stalin did not order Kim Il Sung to start the war. On the contrary, it was Kim Il Sung who

to establish a separate, pro-American government in South Korea. This savage repression resulted in bloody armed struggle by angry Korean peasants, workers, students, and soldiers all over the South. Major armed uprisings took place in Daegu, Cheju island, Yosu, and Sunchon. In Cheju island alone from 1948 to 1949, more than 30,000 Koreans were killed — ten percent of the population — by South Korean police and military forces and right-wing youth gangs under the direction of American military officers.

In addition to widespread guerrilla warfare in the South, major battles broke out between the North Korean (DPRK) and South Korean (ROK) armies along the 38th parallel in 1949. The first major battle, initiated by the ROK troops near the border city of Kaesong, began on May 4, 1949 and lasted four days, causing hundreds of casualties. Fighting also occurred in June 1949 on the Ongjin peninsula, the same area where the official Korean War would 'begin' one year later. Another major battle ensued in Au-

Twenty-Five Years Ago Today

HORACE COLEMAN

In 'Nam a technically superior force, mostly composed of and lead by Caucasians, was defeated by a backward (but not primitive) Asian society that was superior in will, purpose, political focus and cultural sophistication.

Americans have grown mentally flabby and spiritually weak and insincere. We suspect we're too good to die and heaven couldn't possibly be as much fun as Disneyland, let alone the rest of America. Besides, we have more stuff. None of this is to imply that the Vietnamese are living saints, or that communism is a superior system, rather that communism (for a short time) can be a better system in some instances than what some people currently have. Vietnam was one of those times and places. Eventually, all forms of government dissolve and degenerate into cliques, oligarchies and corruption. Sic semper or something....

Democracy turns into mob rule or rule by whoever has the most cash/clout. It needs an informed, intelligent and involved electorate, so you know it's going to be sporadic.

Americans first went along with the war in Vietnam because they're greedy sheep and anti-communist, even though the vast majority of the population has no knowledge of or experience with actual communism or socialism (except for "entitlement programs"). They eventually opposed the war because we weren't winning it quickly enough and it required personal sacrifice. The

country can't (won't) sustain long-term efforts — gotta have instant progress/gratification.

We basically ignored Korean war vets. 'Nam was too big to ignore and too complex and visually ugly for a soundbite mentality that wants quick, easily-absorbed knowledge and has no desire for insight or wisdom. So,

is the need for some to justly and satisfactorily explain things, mostly to themselves. To make sense of the experience. Thing is, 'Nam is basically irrational. 'Nam is over; the next time it will get another fifteen minutes of fame will be on the 50th anniversary of the war's end. Except for Henry Kissinger, all the "significant play-

collective you-and-us you really wouldn't want to hear. But it is kind of funny about pissants who never served in 'Nam pretending to be 'Nam vets. I bet talking to some outed ones of that type would give you some good insights. How come you did that?

Many vets don't talk about 'Nam because, although they can easily give you physical details, it was a mystical, lost, youthful "religious" experience no one wanted to hear about for so long that it's lost some precious and precise meaning.

It was Dickens: The best of times; the worst of times. A rite of passage. A science-fiction war. It was an adventure, a mistake. A "patriotic duty," a quasi-colonial war, a civil war, an anti-communist holy crusade and FUBAR — all at the same time. Society pinned a scarlet "N" on our foreheads and treated us as if we were former street whores. It was as if Vietnam made us the winners in Shirley Jackson's lottery. All we were was spouse, lover, father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, cousin, friend, classmate. The person from around the corner or up the street. The roles we played before and after we got blooded or bloody.

After being outcast for so long, you just might decide to keep your memories, dreams, nightmares and hard-earned knowledge to yourself.



HORACE COLEMAN IS A VETERAN, POET AND WRITER LIVING IN CALIFORNIA.

'Nam was too big to ignore and too complex and visually ugly for a soundbite mentality that wants quick, easily-absorbed knowledge and has no desire for insight or wisdom.

"blame" the vets. I think a number of 'Nam vets are secretly (and justifiably) contemptuous of and disdainful toward a society that made unnecessary and excessive demands on them.

So, the home team lost, even though it was favored by the political Las Vegas line, which wasn't necessarily based on reality. The home team not only lost, but didn't cover the point spread. And, even more devastating, all the dire things predicted and expected didn't come to pass. Makes you want to ask, "Was this trip really necessary?" This makes many people automatically do upbeat post-game analyses to cover their tracks.

The real Vietnam syndrome

ers" and most of the vets will be dead by then. Another generation of political troglodytes, militarists and grad students needing dissertation fodder will be interested. Maybe. More than likely, Vietnam will end up in the same limbo as the War of 1812: a war we didn't "lose" (in our minds), but don't talk about. Let alone understand.

If you really want to understand America's Vietnam vets, check out what happened in France before and after Vietnam and Algeria. Or study the two Koreas. You can probably make more sense of another country's misadventures than ours. You're too close to this one. And, an honest 'Nam vet might tell you something about the

I learned a lot in 'Nam. Namely, that:

- People will do whatever it takes to survive.
- America can be humbled (though it won't admit it can be or that it has happened)
- American blacks don't have the wherewithal, culture or temperament to have a revolution — just prayin' ain't gonna get it, though people overestimate "progress" and its consequences all the time.
- People of color basically want the same thing as white Americans: more stuff.
- A white society never really respects a non-white one — even if (especially if) that society can kick its ass.

- Americans tend to be very ignorant about history, recent history and current events, as well as xenophobic.
- People of color aren't inherently any more moral than any other people.
- Americans, like the citizens of most countries, are good at jiving themselves.
- The communist/Stalinist phrase that goes "the capitalists will sell us the rope with which to hang them" is an overstatement — and wrong. We'll hang ourselves with our own behavior and mentality.
- We know most of our rights but few of our responsibilities nor

how overprivileged we are.

- It takes a long time to do things right — and then they don't stay that way long.
- Moral courage is even rarer than physical bravery.
- Very few learn from their mistakes, or even want to. We just prefer a different outcome.
- Racism — and the other isms — are so ingrained in most individuals that they can't recognize their true form and extent in themselves.
- A lifetime is as long as you live, however long that is.
- Tomorrow isn't promised.
- There are few obvious, fixed, permanent or easily understand-

able truths.

- God — assuming there is a sentient being with a gender and an agenda — ain't on no one's side but its own.
- You're capable of more than you think you are, positively and negatively.
- No one is too good to suffer — or die — for no good reason, even if it doesn't say that in the Constitution.
- Eventually you have to "write your own orders" and to accept the consequences of fate and your own actions with grace.
- The best things in life are free but rarely come without effort.

Four Dead in Ohio: Thirty Years Later

MARK WEISBROT

May 4 will mark thirty years since four students protesting the Vietnam War at Kent State University were murdered by Ohio National Guardsmen. It is no exaggeration to call it murder, since the students were unarmed and — given how far they were from the troops — could not have posed any threat. The closest of those killed, Jeffrey Miller, was shot at a distance of 265 feet.

The photo of Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling beside his body, arms outstretched and screaming in anguish, was etched into the national consciousness as a searing image of the war at home.

The campuses responded with an explosion of protest, with five million students taking part in America's largest student strike. Kent State was a turning point in the history of the war — "a shock wave that brought the nation and its leadership close to the point of physical exhaustion..." as Henry

accords of 1954 — because (as President Eisenhower noted) we knew that our adversaries, led by Ho Chi Minh, would win overwhelmingly.

Instead we poured in arms and money, and then troops to support a corrupt, dictatorial client state in South Vietnam. We could never "win" the war, because most Vietnamese saw the United States as a hostile invader trying to take over their country. And the South Vietnamese army was understandably demoralized. So our involvement escalated, and we resorted to increasingly brutal methods — including the bombing of civilians and defoliation of large areas of land. Two million Vietnamese civilians were killed, mostly in the South, in addition to more than one million fighters. As Nixon spread the war to Cambodia — his invasion of which brought the Kent State protesters into the streets — our bombing



Peoples monument to the four students - near the parking lot. Kent State 2000.

Americans thought the Vietnam war was "more than a mistake; it was fundamentally wrong and immoral."

Yet the 25th anniversary has seen numerous attempts to find some middle ground, so that we may "put the war behind us." Fifty-eight thousand American soldiers died in Vietnam, and more committed suicide after returning home. Some say it is a disservice to the millions of veterans who fought there to talk about the evils of the war.

But many veterans do not feel that way. Barry Romo, national coordinator of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, reminds us that his was the only organization of Vietnam veterans that ex-

we should never have been there. The most important thing now is for people to know the truth so that it never happens again."

It's a compelling argument. Our government's support for the mass atrocities in Central America in the 1980s, which included arming the killers of tens of thousands of innocents, might well have been avoided if we had owned up to the truth after the Vietnam war. And since this more recent history, too, has been swept under the rug, we are currently going down the same road in Colombia.

To forgive is a virtue, but forgetting is an indulgence we can ill afford. Our foreign policy establishment remains addicted to empire, and is possessed by a hubris that is arguably even greater than the one that got us into Vietnam. Until they learn the lessons that the anti-war movement tried to teach them, we can expect more Vietnams ahead of us.



MARK WEISBROT IS CO-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C. THIS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE MAY 4, 2000 ISSUE OF THE CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER.



Space in parking lot where William Schroeder fell.

Kissinger would later write in his memoirs.

The war dragged on for five more years, and so we have recently been treated to a series of ruminations on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its conclusion. But not enough space has been given to those who got it right three decades ago: the anti-war movement.

The protesters put forth an alternative analysis of the war. It was not a war to save the world from a "Communist threat," as our leaders told us, but a colonial war. We took over the war from the French, who were trying to regain control of their former colony after World War II. We refused to allow elections in 1956, as provided for by the Geneva

probably killed as many Cambodians as Pol Pot did, and helped create the conditions for the holocaust that ensued there.

The anti-war movement argued that these were heinous crimes that could never be justified. "We have destroyed their land and their crops," said Martin Luther King, Jr. "We have supported the enemies of the peasants. . . we have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. What liberators!"

A 1990 poll by the Chicago Council on Foreign relations found that 71% of

isted thirty years ago — and the only veterans who took to the streets were those protesting the war. "It's unfair to those who lost their lives, and their arms and legs, to pretend that the war had some value. We were lied to by the government and the media —



Kent State, May 4, 2000.

An Interview with Bao Ninh

Part Two

MARC LEVY

Part 1 of this interview appeared in the Fall/Winter 1999 issue.

We got up, shook hands, and headed back to the main campus. Bao Ninh stopped to view Boston Harbor and light a cigarette. I took the opportunity to show him a small photo of my platoon, taken on LZ Compton, near An Loc. He held it firmly, for several minutes surveying the young Americans with their heavy steel helmets, brindled nylon and leather boots, grenades at the hips, machine guns, bandoliers and M-16s draped like metal flags across their chests. How many were killed? he asked. Just a few, I said. Most were wounded. Except for Cambodia, 1970 had been a comparatively light year for the 1st Cavalry Division.

Near the end of my stay in Boston, several American and Vietnamese veteran writers held an impromptu gathering at a local Boston pub. I sat katty corner to Ninh, who sat pensively, occasionally sipping whiskey from a shot glass and casually chain-smoking Camel cigarettes. I off-handedly asked him what he thought of the standard issue M-16, an icon of the War Against The Americans, as the Vietnam War is known to the Vietnamese. He slapped my knee and smiled. His response was swift and direct, expressed without passing judgment on what remains a controversial weapon. The M-16 often jammed, he said. It was prone to malfunctioning if submerged underwater or fouled by dust, dirt or mud. The NVA had difficulty finding the lubricant used to maintain it. In contrast, Bao Ninh described the legendary qualities of the AK-47. Submerged, soaked or covered in mud, this emblematic weapon of the NVA and VC performed without fail. In all ways save one it was a superior weapon. Where the trusty AK-47 hardly ever misfired its larger caliber bullet, the smaller 5.56 M-16 round tumbled after entry into the human body, causing flesh wounds and trauma to internal organs disproportionate to its size. However, Bao Ninh was quick to point out the NVA coveted the now discontinued M-79 grenade launcher since it was simple to operate and very easy to maintain.

Another American vet asked

Ninh what was his saddest memory. Ninh looked into the curling blue smoke from his cigarette, then answered the question matter of factly, with little apparent display of feeling. It was the task of burying his friends, he said. After combat the able-bodied were required to collect the remains of the dead. There was a brief and respectful silence, after which the mood changed, the group returning to lighter topics of conversation, free-flowing beer further working its way into each man. Bao Ninh, however, remained pensive and silent, and I



felt it best to say nothing, though from talking earlier with a Marine combat vet, now a teacher and war poet, I had learned about the NVA poor man's version of the American cleft metal dog tag (which all grunts will recall as noisy unless taped or otherwise noise-suppressed, often strung into boot laces, there to collect dirt and mud). It was likely that Bao Ninh and the soldiers in his unit sewed their names directly into their shirt collars and wore body hooks when going into battle. Strung around the legs or ankles, these wooden hooks, snared by poles, enabled the NVA to drag dead and wounded soldiers quickly out of battle. The cloth dog tags helped to identify KIA not immediately recovered, or who were blasted beyond recognition by heavy artillery or air bombardments. However, when I later mentioned this to Lady Borton, the well-known Quaker and writer who provided medical aid to casualties during the war, and who

coordinated and accompanied the present NVA delegation to America, she was of a different opinion.

Although cloth dog tags may have been used by the NVA, she felt they would be useless after two or three days, as the bodies and fabric decomposed under the heat and organic processes of the jungle. Whatever the case, the attentive reader will recall the opening chapter of Bao Ninh's book, where the main character has been assigned to burial detail. It is 1976, several years after the Americans have left, a year after the libera-

tion of Saigon. An NVA burial detail is scavenging for the remains of those killed in the Forest of Screaming Souls, where a great battle had taken place. According to Vietnamese culture, the spirit will not rest until the body is buried whole. Whether or not one assumes Bao Ninh here represents himself, one is compelled to recall his personal losses. In his six years with the 514th Glorious Youth Brigade, Bao Ninh survived the vast and murderous American arsenal of napalm, heavy artillery, Arc Light, and what the Vietnamese called "lazy dogs," an aerial-dropped hybrid of the Bouncing Betty and Firecracker rounds which had a killing radius of three hundred yards. Where the Americans designated GR Point to assemble the remains of the dead prior to shipment back to the United States (often recovered at great risk by regular grunts or elite teams), it is reasonable to assume Bao Ninh helped to recover and bury several score of

his comrades each year, six years on end. Perhaps this is the reason he maintained silence, having briefly answered a most painful question.

Midway through the evening, when the beer and liquor had begun to work their fermented magic on the now lively crew, Bao Ninh remained quiet and somber, only occasionally speaking. At that point I excused myself, made my way to a liquor store, returned unnoticed to the table and waited for the right moment to hand out the bottles I had purchased. Three seats to my right, Larry Heinemann, author of the award-winning *Paco's Story*, and the highly acclaimed *Close Quarters*, had mentioned in passing Bao Ninh's acquired taste for Jack Daniels. He enjoyed the crisp taste and distinctive slow burn once gulped down. I handed a bottle of scotch to Mr. Mau, a ten-year NVA veteran and distinguished poet, who unwrapped the paper and smiled. Heinemann encouraged me to make an appropriate speech, and with his adept coaching, the right words were exchanged. Another bottle, this time to our patient translator of the evening, Mr. Chung, and finally Bao Ninh, who simply bowed his head, until I gestured to him to open the wrapping. What followed was completely unexpected. Ninh undid the wrapping, and seeing the coveted label, his eyes wide in wonder and disbelief, shouted "Jack Daniels" at the top of his voice, then embraced me hard and strong and close, not once, but three times, each time slapping me on the back. What, in fact, had I done?

Just as it is helpful to gain some perspective on the NVA in war, it is instructive to learn how the NVA and VC veterans handle war stress, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Larry Heinemann and two other vets who know Ninh were quick to point out that many Vietnamese combat veterans drink, and that drinking, and perhaps drinking heavily, unlike in the Western point of view, is culturally and socially accepted in Vietnam as a way to tolerate or dull the war stress, although since an entire generation suffers, it is more a fact of life than an excep-

continued on next page

Bao Ninh

continued from previous page

tion to it. Unlike our Veterans Administration, perhaps only too willing to prescribe from its well-stocked pharmaceutical cache, the Vietnamese government does not or cannot as yet provide sufficient relief to civilians and combatants who suffer from PTSD. Bao Ninh's surprise and deep expression of thanks might then be seen as measures of war trauma and what works to relieve it. And besides, it's American and tastes good.

Near the end of the conference, Ninh was slated to give a public reading from his book. Since prose writing is relatively new to Vietnam and prose writers do not often read in public, I was curious to see how Ninh would approach reading at length to an assembled group at Yenghing Library in Harvard University.

When his turn arrived, Bao

Ninh took the stage almost diffidently, bowed slightly, then began reading. Slowly, in an unhurried atypical Vietnamese voice, the atonal and glottal stops noticeably diminished, he read as if imparting a child's lullaby, soft and gently, the tone incantatory, almost hypnotic. Ninh rocked imperceptibly back and forth, his voice never faltering in its rhythm. When finished, he smartly closed the book shut, bowed humbly to modest applause, then waited as Larry Heinemann, who would read the same passage in English, stepped on stage.

There is no distinguishing between Heinemann the writer and the man. He is unswerving in purpose: every bold word and partnered action arrives at precisely the right place and time. He is a master raconteur. Direct and solid, at all times elegant yet ordi-

nary, he embodies the craft and art of storytelling. Opening the English translation of *The Sorrow of War*, he read, in his signature crisp and booming voice, the same extended passage, the slaughter of an entire NVA unit amidst the Forest of Screaming Souls, a passage so terrifying, so astoundingly read, no one in the audience moved, no one, and those who had not known the book would not soon forget it. When he finished, stunned silence followed by thunderous applause, Heinemann graciously gestured to Bao Ninh, who bowed modestly.

Where the ideologues on both sides will continue debating the sore points of the war, Bao Ninh, an ordinary (or perhaps elite) grunt, has written of its great and overarching sorrow. His reluctance to talk about combat suggests the enormity of his suffering, his extraordinary resilience

and his great literary accomplishment.

In a brief correspondence with Bao Ninh regarding this article, he reiterated his difficulty in talking about the combat experience of NVA soldiers. Indeed, Ninh preferred not to discuss the matter at all. Instead, he asked that I be truthful in recollecting our interview and again emphasized the humanity of the NVA. He hoped an article such as this might further improve relations between the Americans and the Vietnamese. His letters are compelling for their wisdom and understated reference to suffering, eloquently translated by Long, his son, now the same age as his father when he went to war.



MARC LEVY IS A VIETNAM VET WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE CAMBODIAN INVASION IN 1970.

Chiapas Update

JOHN POOLE

From April 15 to 22 I was part of a seventeen-member delegation to Chiapas. The purpose of the trip was threefold. We intended to deepen our understanding of the impact of global economic measures implemented through U.S. government policy and the International Monetary Fund. We strived to deepen the relationships within the group that had come together for the trip. We hoped to begin cultivating relationships with a group in Chiapas toward the development of an ongoing relationship.

In most of the input sessions we had with representatives of a variety of organizations, we heard of the devastation that international policies had on the rural populations in the state of Chiapas. Many of the people most severely impacted are those who live in indigenous communities. Thanks to a presentation from Cloud Forest Initiative, we learned that we could take some positive action by promoting and selling their organic coffee. Some sixty communities are growing and producing the coffee, and they are able to avoid the charges from various "coyotes" who charge the various mark-ups that go with purchasing coffee from conventional coffee companies. Also, the profits go directly to the people who live in areas supported by the Zapatistas.

We put ourselves through

some nonviolence training, and we shared informally at meals and side trips in San Cristobal de Las Casas. We had a brief chat with Bishop Ruiz one morning. Both the more structured training sessions and the informal sharings contributed to the significant closeness that we developed as a group. This factor became important when we passed through two military checkpoints on our way

community, and they have stood up to the military with people power. After they had shared their history with us, we shared some of what we are about in the States. Their faces lit up when we told them about the 12,000 people who had demonstrated at Ft. Benning last November. They had heard of the struggle to close the School of the Americas, and they thanked us for our efforts.



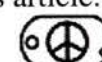
to visiting two indigenous communities in remote rural settings in the mountains. We had confidence in our brothers from Mexico City — both natural leaders — to be our spokespeople when speaking with the soldiers at the checkpoints. When we arrived in the community of Tzajalchen, we met with founding members of Las Abejas (The Bees). They are the quintessence of nonviolent living. They do not allow arms in their

Our last visit in the campo was with a group of North Americans from the Christian Peacemakers Team and another group from a Bees community called Xoyep. There was an encampment at the entrance to a military camp. The people fasted on juice and water during Lent and talked with soldiers as often as possible about leaving the area. A few of us spoke with two majors and a lieutenant from the Mexican Army.

While there was no instant conversion of anyone, there was a spirit of openness in our dialogue. We left them thinking more than they would likely have imagined, as our group was able to approach them from a variety of perspectives. In our group was a Presbyterian minister and a university professor from Mexico City and myself, a Vietnam veteran. The combination of our credentials and sincerity in what we shared with them seemed to have some impact on them.

The net result of the trip was decisively positive. Learning directly from people who live in the reality of what we hear about from a distance gave us stronger convictions about following through with action on our return to the States. The growth we experienced in working, playing, and travelling together improves the probability that we will follow through on our promises that we made to people there. We are planning to support a project from members of The Bees community and staying in contact with them to continue to cultivate a relationship between them and our group.

I would strongly recommend such a trip to all who read or hear about this article.



JOHN POOLE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW'S CHICAGO CHAPTER.

Walter Klim 1952-2000

Walter J. Klim, Jr., of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, died Saturday, March 25, 2000 at the VA Medical Center in Milwaukee after a long illness. He was 48.

Walter was born August 23, 1951 in Milwaukee. He served in the U.S. Army and received the National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the

Army Commendation Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

Shortly after discharge from the military, he joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War. A talented orator and organizer, he worked on issues of peace, veterans' benefits, and compensation for Agent Orange exposure. On behalf of the Washtenaw Committee Against Registration and

the Draft he spoke to Ann Arbor area high schools and college students, sharing his experiences and his hope for peace.

Walter was preceded in death by his sister, Debra Barczak. He is survived by his parents, Walter and Florence (Brzezinski) Klim Sr.; by his sons, Walter J. Klim III of Milwaukee and Casimir C. Klim of Ann Arbor; his sisters, Linda Dorna, Donna Budzinski,

and Bobbi Kern; as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Walter spoke emphatically about his desire that his sons will never have to go to war, and efforts on behalf of peace will honor his memory. Send memorial contributions to Vietnam Veterans Against the War, P.O. Box 408594, Chicago, IL 60640.



Remembering

ANNIE BAILEY

Not many of us had seen much of Walter lately. We all knew he was sick, struggling with AIDS and its many side effects. So when Christy called us to say he was nearing the end, we weren't surprised, but the news sent us all scampering to the VA to say goodbye. For this opportunity, we are eternally grateful for the "heads up."

All members of VVAW, past and present, aware or not, have been affected by Walter's influence on the organization and on every one of us who knew him. Walter contributed a focused energy that was contagious. He was as crazy as the next guy, from all the chaotic effects of the Vietnam experience, but despite the crushing pressures of economic and social crisis, Walter always kept his "eyes on the prize." Imaginative, open-minded and childlike, Walter would do *anything* crazy, dangerous, or even illegal, if it meant getting our point across in

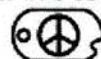
a big way. Consequently, Walter always had the best adventures — like taking over the Statue of Liberty!

Takeovers were a popular VVAW tactic, and we did lots in Milwaukee. Walter was one of the "Bee-Boop Squad" that masterminded an election day fifteen-minute takeover of the Committee to RE-Elect the President (CREEP) offices in November 1972. They took over the phone bank, and they were telling people what Richard Nixon was *really* about — criminal mass-murderer of the Vietnam War. The "Bee-Boop Squad" was in and out of there before any authorities arrived! It was non-violent and fun, and it certainly got the point across! John has always said that Walter was a quick study. He wasn't in town for our first VA takeover; he had missed all the strategy meetings and logistical planning, so we sort of had to bring him up to speed. It took

twenty minutes, and he succeeded each time he planned something like that after that.

Scrounge?! Man, could that guy scrounge. Even if he had the money, he would try to squeeze it out of some poor liberal sympathizer and we'd be able to use the money for something else. He believed in justice, and we set up many a defense committee office based on a steadfast belief in justice and his uncanny ability to scrounge an entire office.

Walter was a total history buff, which helped us a lot. And hey — he could cook. He actually went to chef's school. He was good at so much, and he was a genuinely kind person. As you can see, he influenced us in immeasurable ways. We'll miss him. Bye, Walter. We love you.



ANNIE BAILEY IS A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER OF VVAW.

Walter Klim left two sons when he died March 25, 2000. His younger son Caz is now 12 years old. Caz had no contact with Walter for the last five years, so his memories of his father are limited. I would like to put together a package of material about Walter for Caz, so he will have something concrete to hang onto over the years. Anything people could send — articles, written memories, letters, photos — about Walter would be appreciated. I hope this will give Caz a better idea of who his father was and what he accomplished.

Thanks,
Christy Klim

Send information to:
Walter Klim Memorial
c/o VVAW
P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

Drive-By Gun Protest, Rockford, Illinois

STANLEY CAMPBELL

I was standing next to the mother of Rockford murder victim number fourteen when more than twenty cars showed up and let out 130 demonstrators on April 15, 2000. The mother was amazed. She shed a tear; the sister said, "Wow! That's a lot of people."

The people, mostly Unitarian Universalist senior high youth, brought readings, flowers and songs to the Orton Keyes housing project in memory of Randall "Chip" Jones. The 16-year-old had been gunned down across the street from his yard and was found by his sister on December 17, 1999. He was the 14th gun murder victim that year.

His mother was visibly moved by the ceremony. The kids had come from across the Midwest to a youth conference and volunteered to join this "drive-by." They read from Gandhi and Martin Luther King and laid flowers at the spot where Randall fell. They hugged the mother and sister and sang "We Shall Overcome."

The family then joined us for the second leg of our drive-by to the worst gun shop in the city, the Shootin' Shack on Harrison and South Alpine. The owner was dinged three years ago for selling guns to straw purchasers who then sold them to criminals and kids.

More than 93 guns hit the streets before federal agents caught up with him. He, of course, was slapped on the wrist with a fine and continues to sell to this day.

The procession emptied out into his parking lot, where the kids drew outlines of murder victims and wrote slogans on the ground like *We Want More Gun Control*. The owner was kind enough to come out and yell at the kids, who shouted back, "No more guns!" He was armed, so we moved the kids back and proceeded to the third and final leg of the drive-by: United States Congressman Donald Manzullo's office on South Mulford.

The office was locked, but we taped petitions to the congressman's door. The petitions will hopefully be forwarded to other congressmen's offices, because the kids came from all across the Midwest.

After an impromptu joining of hands, we returned to the Rockford UU Church. Youth advisor Larry Hughes said, "The kids and adults were extremely moved by the action. It was a worthwhile event, if nothing else to express emotion against guns and in support of more control on weaponry and violence."

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First Return

BOB RIGGLE

I arrived in the middle of the war in Vietnam the day after my twenty-first birthday, so I decided to turn that milestone into a memory by celebrating my fiftieth birthday there. Many people asked, and I asked myself, *Why in the hell would you want to go back there?* To the place that generated national and international tensions; the place that brought pain, suffering, chaos and death to people from almost every corner of the earth?

I wanted to do what was not really possible on that first visit: to get out amongst the people and mingle, converse, eat and socialize. When I started to plan my trip I thought of returning to the area I knew from the war, Da Nang, with possible side trips to Hue and My Lai. However, I realized that concentrated too much on the past. I felt it was time to move on, to think in terms of healing, friendship and compassion.

I decided to go to an area I would never have thought about visiting during the war. Upon examining tour literature I came upon a tour of the northern hill tribes of Vietnam, which seemed like the most interesting tour of the bunch. No one I knew had visited the area since the war, and it was the only tour that fit the number of vacation days I had available. I was ready to take the plunge, and I thought Vietnam was ready for me. I went on the birthday trip of

a lifetime and made my first return to Vietnam.

My revised mission was to begin at Hanoi and travel through northern Vietnam for seven days. My tour left Hanoi on a night trip by train. This was hardly first-class accommodation, with six cots per sleeping compartment. It was a milk run with many stops. The train was full of people who apparently worked in the city during the week and then traveled to small hometowns for the weekends. My guide and I left the train at Lao Cai, a decent-sized city across the river from mainland China. From there we turned west to make our way by car with an overnight stop in Sa Pa.

After early-morning shopping I was guided on to Phong To, a sleepy little burg with hill tribe villages scattered along the way. The next stop was Lai Chau for lunch. Then came a 160-kilometer hump to Dien Bien Phu, which is roughly 34 kilometers from the Laos border. There are still occasional skirmishes, and the Vietnamese have armed troops present. The next morning we visited the famous battlefield, as well as General DeCastre's bunker. We took a short side trip to visit General Giap's bunker as well.

Then we traveled on to Son La. From there it was a 360-kilometer haul back to Hanoi for shopping and my birthday celebration. While I did accomplish much



John Lindquist, Bob Riggle and Mike Goetsch at the 25th Anniversary in Milwaukee.

of the agenda I had laid out, I never really planned on the distances to be traveled on inadequate roads and through switchback mountain passes. There were many stops that had to be bypassed. A word to the wise: plan for double the necessary time for whatever tour you want to make. It will still feel like it was too short, but don't they all?

Vietnam appears to be entering a period of strong and rapid economic growth. New construction is occurring in even some of the smallest villages and hamlets along the highway. Most of these new structures are made from locally-manufactured brick. Inflation is still a problem, and the rate of exchange is about half that of five years ago. However, a rough translation of the current national slogan is "economy now." The

sad part is that they might be on the way toward pricing themselves out of the tourist trade for people of moderate income. The millions of Honda motorcycles and the growing numbers of imported autos all had to be purchased with "hard" currency.

As other vets told me, the Vietnamese people are very receptive to us as Americans and as veterans. They have gone so far beyond the war, even after having experienced two smaller incidents since 1975. I was welcomed everywhere I went and the welcome seemed warm and very sincere. It is well worth going back. If you have ever even remotely dreamed of making a return, do it! You will not regret it.



BOB RIGGLE IS A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER OF VVAW.

Milwaukee Celebrates 25th Anniversary

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those who served in it," according to speaker John Kuehl, a VA regional office employee. "Those who served in Vietnam have begun to be held in the same esteem as those who served in prior wars."

Andy Tran, the head of the Milwaukee Vietnamese community, thanked American veterans "from the bottom of our hearts for giving our families freedom and protecting us."

Steve Schofield, a former Special Forces major who later served as a civilian health care worker in Laos described how Hmong farmers and hunters were recruited into guerrilla warfare on behalf of the United States, only to be driven from their homes and their native land after the North triumphed. He described how Hmong children as young as eight

were conscripted with tacit American approval into secret attacks in the supposedly neutral country. Schofield also recalled how the United States abandoned the Hmong, leaving them to become refugees or to be hunted down by the Pathet Lao regime.

Retired colonel Xay Dang Xiong stated, "Some Americans question why the Hmong are in the U.S." He then explained how he and his men rescued American pilots downed in Laos.

Milwaukee County Supervisor Roger Quindel, who served two combat tours, in a rapid-fire burst of memories recalled the mud and the blood, the snakes and the rats. "It wasn't a war for everyone. No senators' sons fought. Only the sons of the poor and working people (served in Viet-



Hmong traditional dance at the 25th Anniversary in Milwaukee.

nam)."

At the end of the ceremony, Vietnam Veterans Against the War distributed buttons to veterans in the crowd, to recognize their service.

Following the ceremony the crowd proceeded to the Milwaukee County War Memorial building where information tables were set up, and where the ethnic com-

munities performed traditional music and dance.

To conclude the day's events, Mayor John Norquist arrived to read the names of the 204 boys from Milwaukee who died in Vietnam.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER AND A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

Vietnam: The Redemptive Potential of Our Forever War

S. BRIAN WILLSON

As we reflect on the 25th anniversary of the end of the tragic U.S. war against the Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian peoples, it is time to accept responsibility for the horrific harms we caused the Southeast Asian peoples and ourselves. The U.S. obsession with Cold War ideology blinded us to authentic struggles of common peoples to be free of external oppression.

This war, as with virtually all wars, was born in and sustained by incredible lies. The U.S. initially was complicit in obstruction of the mandated unifying Vietnamese elections scheduled for 1956 according to the 1954 Geneva Agreement which was signed after defeat of the French by the Vietnamese. Before conclusion of the Agreement the U.S. had already covertly introduced paramilitary sabotage teams into Vietnam and began dispatching hundreds, eventually thousands, of military advisers, activities clearly in violation of the Agreement. The pretext for overtly invading Vietnam (the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin "incident") was fabricated and the subsequent brutal air and ground war was politically reported by exaggerating enemy dead while undercounting civilian murders. As part of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords President Nixon promised Vietnam more than \$4 billion for postwar reconstruction which the U.S. quickly

refused to acknowledge. Again, the first casualty in this war was the truth.

Ironically, we as a nation behaved in a manner far more demonic than the worst that we alleged of our purported enemies. The catastrophic results of our blinding arrogance is nearly incalculable. U.S. airpower dropped more than 6.5 million tons of bombs on these nations, more than three times the tonnage dropped in all World War II theaters. At least ten thousand hamlets were destroyed in the south, as well as countless civilian areas in the north. Ancient societies in north-eastern Laos were totally destroyed by aerial bombings alone. Four hundred thousand tons of "improved" napalm and nearly 20 million gallons of chemical warfare killed and poisoned countless civilians in villages and farming areas. In the process we poisoned our own military forces. Veterans in the United States continue to experience a myriad of unanticipated illnesses and deaths as well as increased rates of birth defects among their offspring.

And then there was the lethal ground war.

Human casualties were almost unimaginable. Mostly civilians, somewhere between four to six million were killed, with countless wounded, maimed, and displaced. Somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 are still miss-

ing from that war, including about 2,000 Americans. Though more than 58,000 U.S. troops were directly killed in the war (and several thousand from Australia, S. Korea, Thailand and the Philippines), many others after returning home have prematurely died from suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, chronic wounds, and other unexplained causes.

An opportunity to genuinely begin a national healing was missed when U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen explicitly refused to apologize on his recent historic visit to Vietnam. Chronic patterns of U.S. violence and arrogance are historically rooted in racism and ethnocentrism that earlier manifested in rationalizing genocides against Indigenous Americans and ancient African cultures, enabling "free" development of the "American civilization." During the 20th Century, termed by some historians "the American Century," U.S. policy justified hundreds of overt and thousands of covert actions interfering with the sovereignty of over one hundred nations by self-righteously asserting the "need" to secure (unjustly) the disproportionately consumptive American Way Of Life (AWOL).

If we continue to believe that Vietnam was a noble cause, then efforts to conceal our humiliating loss will continue to manifest in belligerent activities and their ac-

companying lies. We pretend to have overcome the "Vietnam Syndrome" with a combination of high-tech weapons and proxy forces that assure few or no U.S. casualties. Our "forever war," however, clearly revealed a dark psyche which continues to show in lawless, imperial behavior. The darkness that resides deeply in our cultural soul needs to be pierced, then healed. Genuine apologies create a psychological and emotional basis for reparations and reconciliation. If we are able to genuinely acknowledge the harms we have caused, asking forgiveness while offering appropriate reparations that evidence a profound transformation in our hearts, then space opens for genuine peace. In so doing our "forever war" can be an experience that transforms our dark psyche to a global spirit committed to justice, which is the foundation for enduring peace, as we come to comprehend that all life is sacred and interconnected.

Some of us Vietnam veterans have chosen, out of necessity, to pursue our own healing in this manner. We anxiously await an authentic healing and transformation of our national heart and soul.



S. BRIAN WILLSON WAS AN AIR FORCE CAPTAIN IN VIETNAM WHO LOST HIS LEGS FIGHTING AGAINST U.S. MILITARISM IN THE U.S.

Drive-By Gun Protest

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The neighborhoods remind me of my days in Vietnam. You never know where the shots will come from. There's too many guns flooding the inner city. But I'm very proud of the kids and the way they acted, especially with the gun victim's family. There was much love expressed at that moment, and the family seemed to appreciate the prayers of concern. I can't say the same about the gun dealer.



STANLEY CAMPBELL IS THE DIRECTOR OF ROCKFORD URBAN MINISTRIES, THE LEADER OF THE "DRIVE-BY," AND A VIETNAM VET.

Wearing Faces

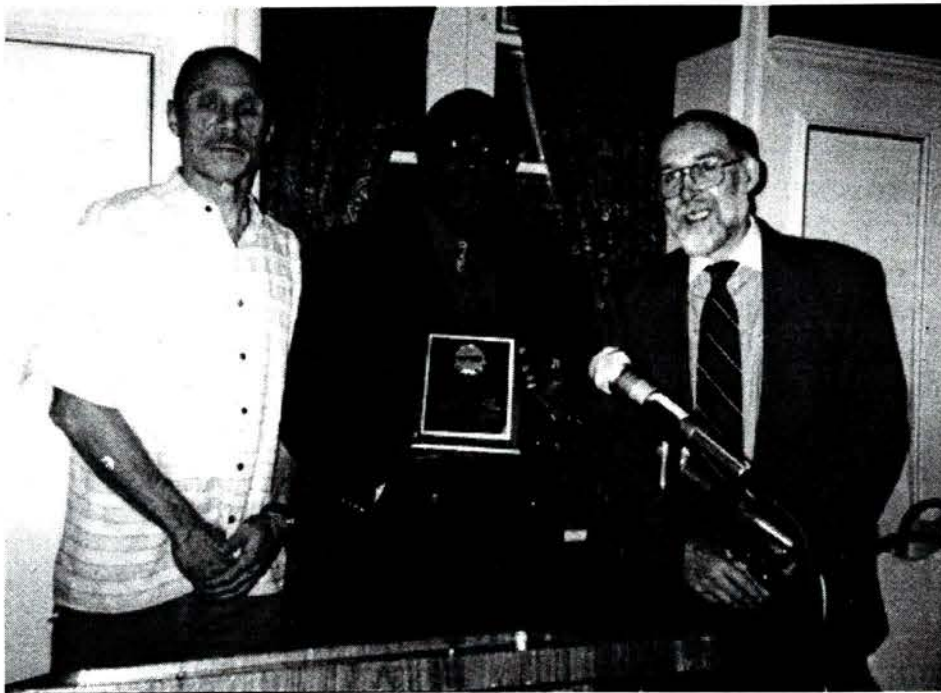
DAVE CONNOLLY

Stand down on the bunker line,
Weed-rapping about the last operation.

And someone said: Ya memba
That little dude got blown away
In that shitstorm of RPGs?

Then someone cried
And none of us could hold it

For a while afterwards
It seemed easier for us
To act like we were men.



Dave Cline, Greg Payton and Jan Barry accepting the Ackelsberg Peace Award for the VVAW Clarence Fitch (NY-NJ) chapter. The award was presented by New Jersey Peace Action at their 43rd Annual Dinner "for courage and determination in the pursuit of peace and justice for all."

Milwaukee Beer Fest, 2000

Once again John Zutz and the Milwaukee chapter hosted the Milwaukee Blessing of the Bock Beer Fest. Hard work and beer drinking once again resulted in funds for VVAW and the My Lai Peace Park in Vietnam.



Members of the Milwaukee, Champaign-Urbana and Chicago chapters pause for a minute in between unloading kegs of beer for the Beer Fest.



Hank Emerle mastering the art of pouring a beer.



Buzz Doyle mastering the art of drinking a beer.

Veterans Support Vieques

continued from page 1

commander's public demand that the President order a resumption of bombing to ensure "national security." Our response pointed out that the Pacific fleet has no comparable training site, yet no one claimed a threat to national security there. The statement concluded: "As the Legion's national commander, you should be standing up for veterans' rights. The people of Vieques are fighting against the same problems that too many vets face, and they should be supported in their just struggle. Instead, you are walking point for the Pentagon."

We learned that a Puerto Rico chapter of Veterans For Peace had been organized, so we contacted them and proposed sending a veterans' delegation to Vieques. They agreed to host our visit. Carlos Zayas, Luis Mendez, Wanda Colon and others put together the itinerary, and the trip was on for March 15-20.

The delegation, mainly from the New York-New Jersey area, included Steve Williams from Black Vets for Social Justice; Jaime Vazquez, a Vietnam Marine vet and former Jersey City councilman; Gideon Rosenbluth, a WW2 vet and long-time labor activist; Carlos Vazquez, a Vietnam-era vet who is vice-president of his municipal workers' union; Anthony Guarisco, director of the Alliance of Atomic Veterans (AAV); and myself, a national coordinator for VVAW and the delegation leader. Accompanying us were photographer Dan Steiger and filmmaker John Nastasi.

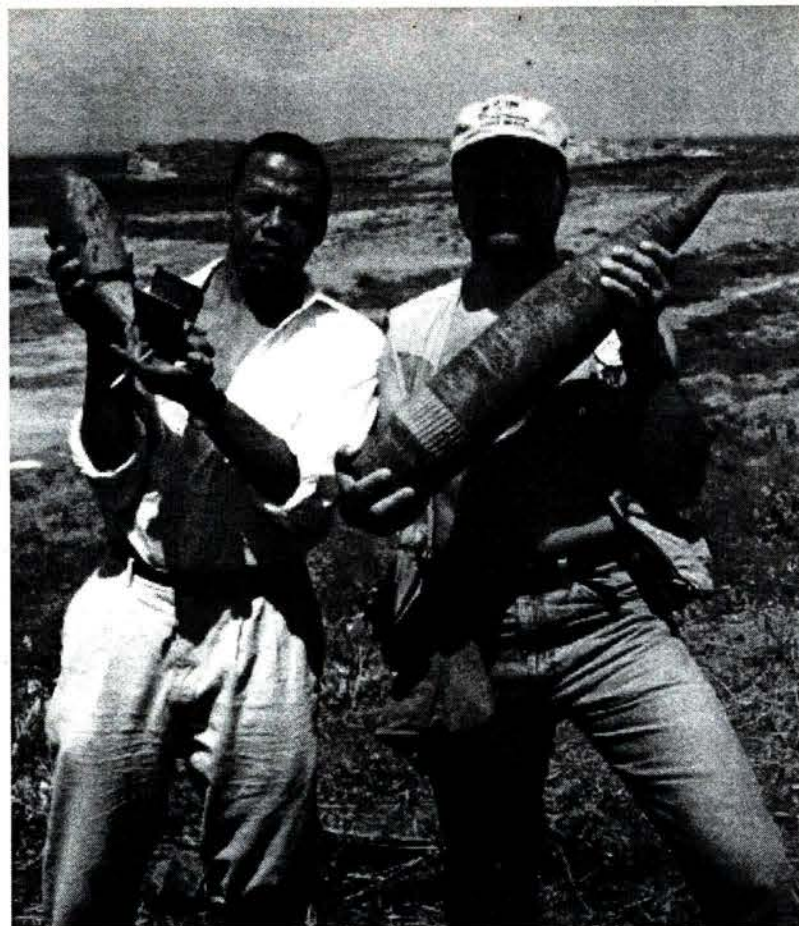
When we arrived in Puerto Rico, we spent several days in San Juan. A press conference about our visit received extensive media coverage. We met with a number of officials from the Popular Democratic Party including Sila Calderon, mayor of San Juan and their candidate for governor. The mayor of Carolina provided us with a van for transportation.

On the third day, while waiting for the ferry to Vieques we were recognized and greeted by many people. A number of vets on their way to the San Juan VA hospital came up to talk to us about the problems they had with the VA or to thank us for supporting them. We met Carlos Zenon, a

leader of the fishermen, who has been involved in this fight since the Seventies, along with his father and his sons — three generations fighting to defend their island.

Upon our arrival on Vieques, we were met by New York City Councilman Jose Rivera. We met many others including Ramon Rodriguez, a senior citizen who showed us a Navy document dated 1943 giving him 48 hours to vacate his home when his land was confiscated. In 1950 he was drafted and sent to fight in Korea with the segregated all-Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment.

We stopped at the home of Rolando Garcia, a 28-year-old man who had worked on Camp Garcia for three weeks, painting near a depleted uranium dump. A few months later, his hair began to fall out until there was no hair left on his body. Medical tests revealed that there was uranium in his stool. Anthony Guarisco told him about the atomic vets' experiences with



Veterans delegation members Steve Williams and Carlos Vasquez hold inert rounds in the Live Impact Area at Camp Garcia, Vieques.

toring the number of people in the camps.

We traveled to most of the camps and saw the destruction of the earth. The area looked like a war zone, with bomb craters everywhere full of filthy, discolored

the party's candidate for governor who resigned his seat in the Puerto Rican senate to stay in their camp. When asked why the Navy seemed so adamant to stay, he said it had nothing to do with national security, but instead imperial arrogance.

We stayed that night at Cayo La Yayi. Hector Oliveri made us members of the collective, and Jaime Vazquez presented them with a small replica of the Statue of Liberty in the hope that America's ideals of liberty and justice for all would prevail. That night we went to sleep on the beach, listening to waves wash up under the moonlit sky. It was hard to imagine that such a tropical paradise was the site of so many years of naval bombardment and devastation.

After two days in the camps, we returned to the main island where we met with Dr. Jose "Che" Paralitici, a leader of Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques; and Don Ricardo Alegria, director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, who at 82 is a legend for his many years of work to defend and preserve Puerto Rico's culture and history. Both encouraged us to continue our efforts.

Seeing the civil disobedience camps were the center of the resistance blocking the Navy's return, the Justice Department gave orders to end the occupation after 381 days. On May 4, armed FBI agents and U.S. marshals con-

Hundreds of people have been arrested, charged with trespassing and ordered not to return. The number of arrests will continue to grow as more and more people put their bodies on the line for peace.

the health effects of radiation exposure and promised to ask the AAV to provide assistance.

We met with leaders of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, including Ismael Guadalupe, Robert Rabin, Doctors Rivera and Soto and others. That night we went to the Peace and Justice Camp at the gates of Camp Garcia where we were welcomed at a community rally and given the honor of changing the sign recording the number of days there had been no bombing. That night the number was 334.

The next morning we took fishing boats to the camps. Minutes after we were ashore, a Navy helicopter flew over the area, recording our presence and moni-

water. One hill used for napalm strikes was completely charred. Unexploded live ordnance lay everywhere.

Freddie Toledo, who had been with the 82nd Airborne in Vietnam, told me that he and several others had made it their mission to mark live bombs and mines for the protection of others in the camps. He also proudly showed us a deuce-and-a-half they had assembled from four trucks formerly used as targets — now the primary means of transportation between the camps.

Many people stayed at the camps for extended periods, and others came on weekends. At the Independence Party camp on the Caribbean side of the island, we sat down with Reuben Berrios,

continued on next page

continued from previous page

ducted pre-dawn amphibious raids. Over 200 people were handcuffed, removed and detained but not charged with any crime. Coast Guard ships and helicopters patrolled the surrounding waters while the camps were destroyed. A Navy spokesman immediately announced they would resume bombing as soon as possible.

The response throughout Puerto Rico was immediate. There were massive demonstrations at Fort Buchanan and other military bases. Students shut down the schools. Utility workers went on a one-day strike and the governor responded by calling out the National Guard. Picket lines went up in front of government buildings and workplaces. People were demonstrating everywhere.

Since then, a new civil disobedience campaign has developed. Every week there are more arrests as groups slip through the fences to return to the bombing ranges. Hundreds of people have been arrested, charged with trespassing and ordered not to return. The number of arrests will continue to grow as more and more people put their bodies on the line for peace.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has joined in the fight. As an environmental lawyer, he has gone to Vieques several times to gather evidence for lawsuits against the Navy by the Natural Resources Defense Council. Support has come from people in Korea, Okinawa and the Philippines who are also fighting against American military bases, and from Tibet's Dalai Lama.

At a Memorial Day ceremony in San Juan, over 250 veterans returned military medals with a signed statement that said in part, "We are sending our National Defense Medals back to you, Mister President, commander-in-chief of the armed forces. From the perspective of common defense, that medal doesn't mean anything to us anymore. How can we otherwise respond to the absurdity of this mutual defense agreement when at this moment of aggression and belligerence, our ally has become the hostile aggressor?" The medals were delivered to Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez, who agreed to present them to President Clinton.

In New York City, the Na-

tional Puerto Rican Day Parade was dedicated to nationalist Albizu Campos and the people of Vieques. It became a popular demonstration of support for that beleaguered island, with a large delegation of Viequeses leading, many pro-Vieques contingents, and thousands of signs among the spectators declaring *Peace For Vieques* and *Navy Out Now*. Unfortunately, a group of young men sexually assaulted women in Central Park after the parade. These attacks have become the focus of most press coverage, obscuring the pro-Vieques message.

Although the Spanish-speak-

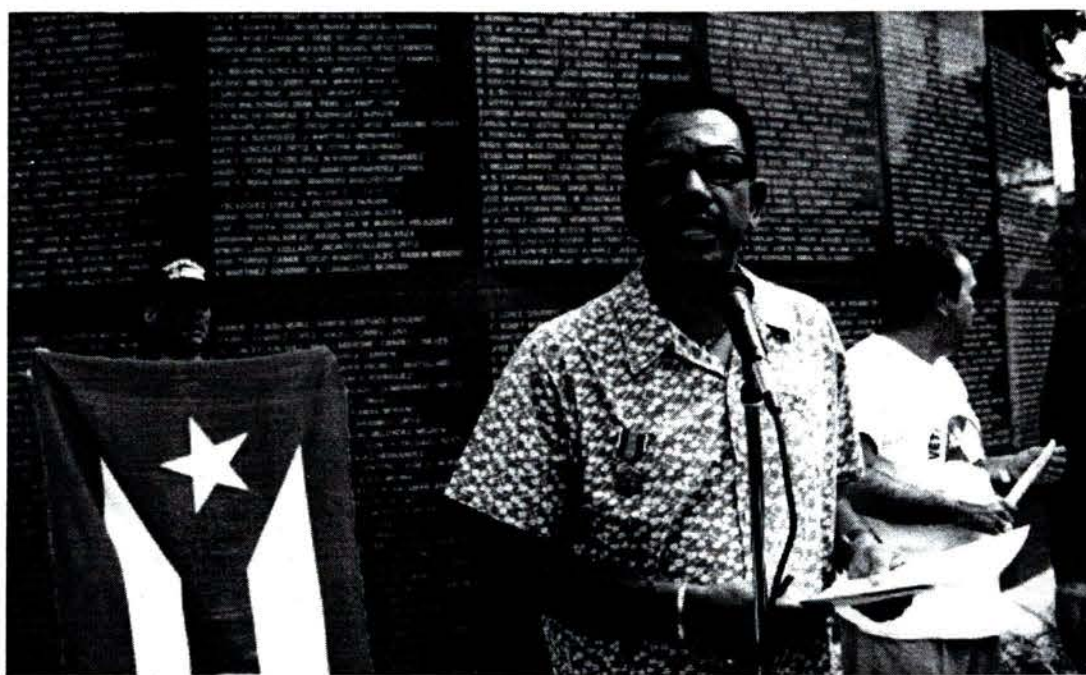
ing media have provided fairly consistent coverage, English-language reporting has been virtually non-existent until recently. Most North Americans still don't know the difference between Vieques and Viagra. The American media's dismal failure to inform the public has left many progressive people unaware of an important movement that needs and deserves their sympathy and support.

Puerto Rico has been an American colony since it was seized during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Puerto Ricans were granted citizenship in 1917

and have had to fight in all this country's wars since then, but instead of the respect and rights that other Americans expect, they continue to be treated as second-class citizens, and their land remains a military colony. They are taking a stand against this oppression. We have a responsibility to assist their struggle for justice, dignity and peace. **NAVY OUT OF VIEQUES! NO MORE BOMBS!**



DAVE CLINE IS A MEMBER OF THE CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER OF VVAW AND A NATIONAL COORDINATOR.



Vietnam veteran Ruben Lind reads a statement to President Clinton opposing the U.S. Navy's bombing on Vieques and announcing the return of military medals at the Monumento De La Recordacion which bears the names of Puerto Ricans who have died in all U.S. wars since World War I.

Photo by Eric Toledo.

Checkout www.viequeslibre.org for more information.

**Veterans Support Vieques
PO Box 7053
Jersey City, NJ 07307
(201) 876-0430**



VVAW member Carlos Zayas presents a wreath at the Veterans for Peace Memorial Day ceremony in San Juan. After the wreath was laid and a dove released, veterans sent their medals to Washington, DC to protest the "re-invasion" of Puerto Rico on May 4, 2000.

Photo by Eric Toledo.

"Regret To Inform"

continued from page 9

still in Vietnam appear and disappear without the recurrence of their names. While it seems natural that as a visual artist Sonneborn would rely on images to convey her message, the result of her choice is a collage of nameless faces and no genuine expression of the many layers of conflict that were brought to the surface of our societies by war. This keeps us at a comfortable distance from both American militarism and the divisive nature of Vietnamese nationalism.

Sonneborn also gives the

impression that she never experienced the painful, awkward conversations that many of us have seen and experienced as we continue to interact with the Vietnamese population. Friends in Hanoi gave me no such room for avoidance; why does Sonneborn give it to us? Was she never scorned by the southern Vietnamese for her liberal stance? Never rejected? Did she never receive e-mail like this from a Vietnamese journalist who complained: "I'm sick of Americans returning here

with their 'war sickness' and I'm supposed to make them feel better." War reconciliation is all of these ugly and awkward conversations.

"Regret to Inform" is a touching film in many ways, but we must not allow its merits to shore up what is clearly American complacency on notions of reconciliation. In short, the movie is good but it is not the vehicle for education and dialogue PBS hopes. We've looked at Vietnam for years and years as our own private war zone, but we're still not listening. Despite the personal testimony,

we see the war as an uncontrolled poison when it was no such thing. The war destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives with grotesque violence. We have to say that this was done in OUR name and express not bewilderment and grief, but dissent.



EDITH SHILLUE TEACHES ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/BOSTON. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF **EARTH AND WATER: ENCOUNTERS IN VIETNAM** (UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS PRESS).



Gloria Green-McKay, Jackson State graduate and sister of the late James Green - killed at Jackson State, May 14, 1970. Speaking at rally at Kent State, May 4, 2000.

Letter to VVAW

You may be interested to know that Gary Jarvis has written the history of the 1st Btln 27th Marines. It is called *Youngblood, The History of 1/27th Marines*. Gary Jarvis can be reached at GEJARVIS@AOL.com.

I would like to thank you for printing my article that you ran in *The Veteran* last year on my experience in the Statue of Liberty called "Three Days With a Lady." I am curious if you heard from any of the brothers that were part of that protest? I would love to hear from them.

Peace with Justice,
Don Bristow-Carrico
B Co. 1st Bn. 27th Marines, VN 68, 1st MarDiv 68-69
PO Box 2099, York Beach ME 03910

Carrier "On the Line"

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quarters..." On one occasion GQ is called because our E2A Hawkeye "spy in the sky" detects five MIGs on a direct approach from Hainan, at about 60,000 feet. Like previous MIG probes, however, this attack is understood only by "those personnel concerned" which include some airedale fire controlmen.

There is still a "barrier" of two Phantom IIs at 20,000 feet above our ship, and a third interceptor sitting armed and fueled on the catapult, the "cat bird," ready to launch in a last-ditch emergency. The very few Marine Corps

interceptors still operational for fire control at the airbases at Da Nang and Chu Lai take off to help us but they are far away, in a fight that is happening within seconds and at speeds around Mach 2. We launch the cat bird, but it has a long way to climb. Our lead fighter, at 40,000 feet, launches two Sparrow radar-guided missiles in a head-on "snap-up" attack, but both missiles are sent astray by enemy electronic countermeasures. The second of our two fighters turns out to have a semi-qualified civilian tech-rep joy-riding in the radar intercept

officer's back seat, and the pilot decides to turn tail and run. Four of the attacking MIGs break away as well, possibly upon detecting the Marine reinforcement coming up from the south. The remaining MIG decides, however, to continue the attack. In the last seconds, the cat bird comes up behind him and fires Sidewinder heat seekers. The enemy pilot ejects seconds before his MIG is destroyed.

The cat bird comes screaming in almost at wavetop level and shoots suddenly up into the sky doing victory rolls. There are, however, civilian war correspondents aboard who want to know just why he is doing this. The pilot gets a severe reprimand when he lands

instead of an award, and is assured that his victory did not happen.

In the dawn following this three day round-the-clock effort I am way beyond exhaustion. It is a very rough sea, there are no aircraft on the flight deck, and alone on the catwalk I look up over my shoulder to see our little underway United States flag high on a mast above the "island." It is sooty, torn, and fluttering with incredible speed against the scudding, roiling, storm clouds.



SFC JAMES MAY, FORMERLY AQF3
JAMES MAY

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

VVAW Membership
PO Box 2065, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825-2065

Membership Application

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail address _____
 Dates of Service (if applicable) _____
 Branch _____
 Unit _____
 Overseas Duty _____
 Dates _____
 Military Occupation _____
 Rank _____
☐ Yes, add me to the VVAW e-mail list

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 annual membership fee is \$20.00 (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 individuals calling themselves "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist." Though few in number, they are highly mobile and may show up at meetings or demonstrations representing themselves as VVAW.

"VVAW AI" is not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW, Inc. They are not affiliated with us in any way. "VVAW AI" is actually the creation of an obscure ultra-left sect known as the Revolutionary

Communist Party and is designed to pimp off VVAW's long history of struggle. 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 and to make donations:

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

RECOLLECTIONS

Carrier "On the Line"

JAMES MAY

From the sea, other ships like ours look like high, flat black islands. Our ship cruises above and below Vietnam's Demilitarized Zone, ironically perhaps the most heavily-militarized zone in history. Every night, those of us on the flight deck can see strings of bright flares in the sky, drifting slowly down over Vietnam to illuminate targets. The ordnance we bring flows through our great ship like blood. It is pumped into the ship from out of the night in underway replenishment operations, in swinging cargo nets and on forklift pallets. Like steel corpses, a stream of bombs and explosives courses through our ship night and day, rolled on low-slung, yellow carts. Olive green two-fifties and five-hundred pounders, and rusted, squat, round thousand-pounders, are trundled along passageways to bomb assembly areas on the mess deck, where we dine to the rrrrrap-rrrap of air tools manned by ceaselessly working sailors and marines. Ordnancemen in blood-red shirts manhandle the load up and into place on white pylons under wings. A constant stream of "birds" screams on the flight deck, vibrating the ribs in one's body. They lift the iron in spurt after spurt up off the catapults, to spatter it on sunny fields or rainy hills and at the vaguely dreadful nightly strings of falling flares. All to spill the blood of unknown Vietnamese.

Many of the air wing or "airedale" sailors slave away for this great destruction machine whenever there are flight operations, nineteen to twenty hours a day. On the line, those of us without much rank also work every fourth day around the clock, on "working parties" slinging the endless ordnance, heavy bomb straps round our necks like horse harness. On the line it is mission first and safety second; the work is dangerous, the more so when one is exhausted, and one is always exhausted. To survive one must stay hyperalert and cultivate a certain level of fear. On the line there is always that "acceptable" level of casualties, dismissed by

those who are not themselves subject to this lifestyle as "accidents." Our first merely loses a leg below the knee. Another man is sucked into the prop of a Skyraider, flipped into the air, and lands ten meters away. He loses one shoulder and all of his face but for one



eye. "Corpsman on the flight deck!" again.

Twice I watch other ships like ours, other flat black islands, seem to explode. The flight deck of a carrier at war is wall to wall with fused ordnance, cluster bombs, rockets, napalm, tanks of jet fuel and aviation gas, and liquid oxygen. Twice I see all of it explode in a hellish chain reaction, throwing up a great, greasy black column of smoke like a volcano, a long black streak across the sky. Our captain brings us close beside these sister ships, why I do not know, as we can only watch helplessly as our tiny brother sailors dance and burn among the continuing detonations. Twice. The Forrestal and the Saratoga. There is no effort to save those who leap into the sea.

Our ship returns to Subic base in the Philippines every six to eight weeks for repairs and resupply, and the crew goes "liberty" for a few hours. Outside the gate (and across "Shit River"), Subic becomes Olongapo town, where we are restricted to one long street lined mainly by bar/whorehouses run by ruthless gangs, the middle class. A ten year old boy was shot dead with a .45 in this muddy street for pickpocketing forty

bucks in Military Payment Certificates. Another shooting, by a sailor so young his helmet made him look like a mushroom, was of a very old man who charged our aircraft carrier clutching a poorly-crafted satchel charge. What was there in his life that would make a

very old man do this?

On liberty in Manila, I accidentally direct my taxi into a suburb where a sea of little doghouses made of trash stretches — as it does still — all the way to the horizon in all directions. Crooked, flyblown paths glisten gray with sewage. The driver and I have to keep the children at bay by leaning out the doors and thwacking them with broomsticks, as some try to thrust a nail or a shard of glass under a tire of the moving car, in the hope of getting a small tip for fixing a flat. A small boy wearing only the ragged last vestige of a T shirt stares up at me through the flies. A shipmate informs me that at the posh hotel downtown, where the whores are beautiful and officers enjoy porterhouse steaks and Mateus wine, the chief pimp drives a white Lamborghini.

Back at the pier there is a huge steel cage into which some gentlemen returning from liberty are violently pitched, some covered in blood and vomit and roaring unintelligibly. In Japan some sailors set a row of folding chairs on one of the elevators overlooking a similar cage, to laugh at the staggering drunks. Japanese dockworkers began to laugh con-

temptuously at the spectators, and our officers furiously ordered the chairs taken away.

Back on the line, after many months of go-for-broke ground-support missions, many of our Phantom II fighter interceptors no longer have operational missile control systems. Maintenance cannot keep up. Curiously, I find that maintenance of the Phantom II's fire control computer is utterly dependent upon the availability of a tiny number 4 Bristol wrench, the size of a sewing needle. I carry our only remaining one stuck in the business card of a Hong Kong gangster named Lee Fat. All efforts fail to procure another, either through supply, or from friends in low places at the Phantom II squadrons at Da Nang. My girlfriend in Arkansas gets her father to drive seventy miles to purchase another, and sends it in a letter. It seems

incredible that effective fighter air cover for our whole sector should depend upon that letter.

At one point our losses are so great that we take the test bench that we use to repair all others and put it into an aircraft and mail it into the sky. Now our ship has no fire control maintenance capability left at all for the fighter interceptors — the most desperate situation possible. A sailor from New York and myself, working round-the-clock for three days, manage to cobble together another test bench for the Phantom II computers by modifying an antique fire control system (from a Korean War era Demon) that we find long abandoned in a cabinet. We use handfuls of variable components and test and modify, over and over, until we get a functioning jury rig. Here we are working with 500 volts instead of the usual 40, and I come literally within a hair's breadth of getting killed, "by accident."

On the line increasingly often all five thousand crew members race to battle stations when the bosun's pipe shrills attention to "general quarters, general

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