



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

Volume 32, Number 1

Spring/Summer 2002

## VVAW Statement on the "War Against Terrorism"

VVAW National Office  
March 2002

The September 11 attacks in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania shocked and saddened much of the world. VVAW continues to condemn those attacks as criminal actions, and continues to call for the capture and punishment of those actually responsible.

As we grieve for our losses of September 11, we also mourn the losses, military and civilian, of Afghans and Americans.

During the intervening months, anyone designated a "terrorist" has become the new bogeyman. We realize that anyone can be called a terrorist or freedom fighter, depending on who is doing the labeling. Our own Minutemen would certainly have been branded terrorists by the English in 1776.

Our military response to the attacks has caused more civilian deaths in Afghanistan than the hijackers caused in our country. This would suggest that the United States is also engaging in terror-

ism. Our leaders want to carry this into other countries.

The broadening of this undeclared war to include a so-called

that Israel has employed victorious military actions against terrorism for twenty years. None of their victories has stopped the snip-

corded rights under the U.N. Charter, the Geneva Convention and other human rights laws, including our own. We also oppose any use of torture against these detainees and demand that they be given decent shelter.

Domestically, we demand the equal protection of everyone's civil rights. We condemn the fact that several thousand Muslims in the United States have been detained and held incommunicado without trial, or charge, or even legal rights. We oppose such practices and their corollary, racial profiling, in the domestic side of this "war on terrorism."

Finally, we in VVAW call upon all who support peace with social justice to act on their principles and join with others in their communities to oppose the "war on terrorism" as it is currently being waged, and to oppose domestic terrorism in the guise of "public safety" as it is codified in the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (HR 3162) and other legislation.



"Axis of Evil" includes loosening the standards for the use of nuclear weapons against Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea, China and Russia. We strongly oppose any open-ended *carte blanche* theory of war and this use of U.S. military power without proper cause or caution.

There are those in our government who will tout the short-term outcome of our "war on terrorism" as a victory. We notice

ing or bombing or made Israel a safer place. On the contrary, military responses have caused an increase in disruptive actions.

We feel that holding prisoners as "detainees" on a military base sets a bad precedent and is bad policy. American citizens will, sooner or later, suffer the consequences of this policy. The detainees must be charged and tried as criminals, granted POW status, or set free. They are clearly ac-

## Questioning the Anti-Terrorist War in the Philippines

ORLANDO TIZON

There are now more than 600 U.S. Special Forces troops stationed in the central and southern Philippines, particularly in the island of Basilan near Zamboanga in Mindanao. Ostensibly they are there to train Filipino forces to fight the Abu Sayyaf, a local bandit group that the Philippine government says has ties with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda. The Bush administration describes this latest deployment of troops as the second phase of the anti-terrorist war after the successful operations in Afghanistan. Lately the administration has claimed this to be a model for military involvement in Yemen, where U.S. forces will train and give technical support to the local military without involvement in the actual fight-

ing.

A deeper analysis of the situation, however, reveals the real political motives of both the Bush administration and the Arroyo administration of the Philippines. First, it is important to remember that this is not the first time U.S. military forces have gone to Mindanao to fight Muslim Filipinos or Moros, as Filipinos call them. The United States fought a long war of pacification against the Moros in Mindanao, Basilan and Sulu from 1902 to 1913 after declaring the area a Moro province with General Leonard Wood as first governor. The United States used superior firepower, deception and divide-and-conquer tactics to prevail against an ill-equipped enemy. Thousands of

Moros were massacred and large numbers displaced. The lessons of the Moro wars and the entire Philippine American war are not lost to Filipinos.

Who are the Abu Sayyaf and why have they attracted the interest of the reigning superpower in the world today? Even Filipino

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# From the National Office

JOE MILLER

This is the 35th anniversary issue of *The Veteran*. Most of us didn't think we'd live to be thirty-five, let alone belong to an organization that has lasted so long. VVAW continues to raise provocative issues, work on the problems of veterans, and define war from a view of our experiences at home and abroad.

## 35th Anniversary Event

We want you to think long and hard about coming to the 35th anniversary in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on June 21 and 22. We aren't getting any younger and quite frankly have lost a lot of friends and comrades this past few seasons, and this might be your last chance. We hope to have an event that provides politics and culture and a time to schmooze and reminisce.

Country Joe McDonald, who, all by himself can provide all four of the above, will be performing at this event. There will be displays, and peace and vet goodies to buy. Videos and an authors' panel are also on the agenda. If you want to remember or honor someone, you can do it in person at the event or buy an ad in the commemorative booklet. You will find more information about the event and accommodations in this issue.

teered to be contacts for their regions, and there is room for you in the next issue to come forward. This is important for the continuing visibility of our organization on a national level.

## What's Happening?

The "war on terrorism" is just a way to break open the Social Security Cookie Jar and expand the war machine to Cold War levels and beyond, while figuring out ways to topple Saddam and finish off Daddy Bush's nemesis. In addition, the erosion of civil liberties and human rights goes apace with cutbacks in the VA system.

Bush won't get any blank check from us, and even if the news cheerleaders (-casters) won't say it, we will: Bush is simply stupid! That's right. He can't put sentences together, eat pretzels, or run this New Roman Empire without his advisors manipulating from behind the scenes like imperial Chinese eunuchs.

America may have the guns and banks, but it's a big world out there, and we as Americans have to figure out a way to work collectively and humanely, at home and abroad.



## Become a Local Contact

As you can see, many more VVAW members have volun-

JOE MILLER IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW AND A MEMBER OF VVAW'S C-U CHAPTER.



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## Got something to say? Submission Guidelines for *The Veteran*

- Send us your article via e-mail or post. Plain text in the body of an e-mail message is preferred; check with us before e-mailing attachments.
- To submit an article, email <vvaw@prairienet.org> with "Attn: Veteran Editor" in the subject line or mail to:  
VVAW, C-U Chapter  
PO Box 2065, Station A  
Champaign, IL 61825-2065



# VVAW 35th Anniversary Milwaukee - June 21 & 22, 2002

Dear VVAW members and friends,

The Milwaukee Chapter is proud that our fair city has been chosen to host the 35th Anniversary of the first (and I might modestly say the best) Vietnam veteran group. VVAW has survived many battles in the past years. We are still working, and if necessary, fighting for veterans, peace and justice today. The Milwaukee Chapter hopes you will all be able to join us for this celebration.

Sincerely,

John Zutz  
National Officer

## WHERE TO STAY

Ramada Inn Downtown, 633 W. Michigan St. (414) 272-8410  
Mention VVAW. Single, double, triple, and quad occupancy for \$69 plus 14.6% tax. Non-smoking and wheelchair-accessible rooms available. Satellite TV, outdoor heated pool, exercise room, etc. They want \$9/night parking (because they cut the room rate) but they advertise free parking so stiff them if you can. Make your reservations by May 20!

## MILWAUKEE CONTACTS

John Zutz, 2922 N. Booth St., Milwaukee, WI, 53212 (414) 372-0749 john@zutz.org  
Bob Riggle, 2019 N. Farwell #113, Milwaukee, WI, 53202 (414) 347-0109  
John Lindquist, 3433 N. Fratney St., Milwaukee, WI 53212 (414) 963-0398

## REGISTRATION

Send the names of those attending, along with your mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address (if applicable) to:

VVAW, Milwaukee Chapter  
3433 N. Fratney St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Indicate how many people will be attending each event:

- Friday night welcome party (no charge)
- Saturday program (\$10/person)
- Saturday social (\$25/person)
- Save \$5 and prepay for both Saturday events (\$30/person)

If you really want to come but are really poor (no, cheap isn't good enough — really poor), contact the Milwaukee chapter. We will do what we can to make your stay easier.

## SCHEDULE

### Friday, June 21

- 8:00 pm - ?

Welcome to Milwaukee Party - sponsored by Milwaukee VVAW  
Lakefront Brewery, 1872 N. Commerce St. (414) 372-8800  
Dinner and refreshments provided

### Saturday, June 22

- 12:00 noon

Registration, program from

- 1:00pm to 6:00pm

35th Anniversary Celebration (\$10)

Ramada Inn Downtown (ballroom), 633 W. Michigan St., (414) 272-8410

- 8:00pm to 2:00am

Social time & entertainment (\$25 cover, cash bar)

The Tasting Room, 1100 E. Kane Pl. (414) 277-9118

## ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET

For information on placing an ad in the souvenir program, or to get your name on the list of sponsors, contact the C-U chapter at <vvaw@prairienet.org> or (217) 344-8209.



## 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 U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and our firsthand 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 aftereffects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling 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 treat-

ment 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!

see page 19  
for membership info



# Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

"The first casualty when war comes is truth." So said Senator Hiram Johnson back in 1917. So now we have the War on Terrorism, and you know that in this one, truth is a casualty.

The War on Terrorism is a war unlike any war we've experienced. Since World War II, the United States has been consistently involved in military actions all around the globe. There have been major conflicts in Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf. We have sent smaller numbers of troops into places too numerous to mention. We've had bombing missions over Iraq, Serbia, Libya and elsewhere. What is clear about all these actions is that they were not done for any noble purpose. They were done to keep America and American business the dominant force on the planet.

This new war has its differences. The attack on the Trade Towers was an attack on the people of this country as well as on the government. As such, it requires

retribution. That makes it different than the wars we're used to. The problem is that the retribution is left in the hands of George II and all those kinds of people who have been conducting fifty years of unjust wars.

George II's idea of how to answer 9-11 and conduct this war has been to declare Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda the masterminds of 9-11, and to decide that Bin Laden and his general staff were being sheltered by the Taliban, making the Taliban also the enemy. (The problem here is that those given the power to make war on terrorism get to choose who the terrorists are.) Since the Taliban is the enemy, it was necessary to bomb the shit out of Afghanistan and then send in foot soldiers to mop up. Meanwhile, the media is unquestioning and plays its role of cheerleader.

If the goal was really to get Bin Laden and key members of Al Qaeda, the best thing they could have done probably would have

been to smoke the peace pipe with Iran. The Iranians didn't like the Taliban, and they had the best intelligence on who was where in Afghanistan. Now it's too late.

**RUMOR CONTROL:** *Rumor Central reports that Osama bin Laden is not hiding out with an Identity Christian group in northern Idaho. The proposed coalition between Bin Laden's people and Identity fell apart over theological differences as to who were the chosen people.*

In Afghanistan, the country's Taliban leaders were giving safe haven to Al Qaeda and probably Bin Laden. If you accept the assumption that Bin Laden and Al Qaeda were behind 9-11, must you accept the Bush line that a war was necessary? Or was there another way out? The Taliban wanted to stay in power and would probably have agreed to a trial in a neutral country — but Bush needed to shed blood.

**RUMOR CONTROL:** *God allegedly blessed America, but*

*Rumor Central checked it out and found that to be negative. Forty-five million people still have no health insurance, and one third of our bridges are badly in need of repair.*

Several Taliban leaders were invited to the United States in 1997. They were taken to Omaha to visit an Afghan cultural center and then on to Houston where they were wine and dined by the good folks at Unocal. Seems Unocal wanted to get permission to build a pipeline across Afghanistan. The Taliban said no to Unocal.

There are large oil and natural gas deposits in southwestern Asia. The most logical and lucrative market for this oil and gas is in east Asia. The most viable distribution would be a pipeline run through Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan to Karachi on the

*continued on page 11*

## Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I work with a lot of guys who belong to Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm not one of them, although my secretary gives me looks on occasional Monday mornings to the effect that I might want to think about it. I then give her looks to the effect that while I hired her, I didn't marry her, so she should just go about helping me to solve crime, shuffle paper clips, and be a good bureaucrat.

I have to give the AA folks credit, though. Among the many worthwhile things they do, one of them is this: they stand up at meetings and talk about how they wound up in Alcoholics Anonymous. This is apparently a sort of soul-cleansing experience, which helps them to go on with their lives with less of the guilt, shame and everything else that St. Paul tells them is unlikely to lead to a pleasant afterlife. It is also intended to help keep them sober, and usually works, except upon those not-so-infrequent occasions when the bailiff brings them into my probation office following another Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol conviction.

I do not mean to make light of this practice; I think self-disclosure and confession (secular or otherwise) are healthy. As we near

the 35th anniversary of VVAW, it occurred to me that I might use this column to write about how I came to be a member. (I will tell you in advance that this is not going to be one of the most inspiring stories you have ever heard.)

**He had tried to tell those numbnuts that not everything they see in a Chuck Norris or Sly Stallone movie may be taken as gospel . . .**

I got back from Vietnam in the summer of 1968, and spent the next five years working on a medieval history degree at the University of Illinois. By the time I was graduated in 1973, the combat troops had been pulled out, and it would be another two years before we got out entirely. I was pretty active in anti-war stuff on campus during those years, and even went to DC a few times for some big-time protest marches. But you know what? For whatever reason, I was only dimly aware of the existence of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I as-

sume that VVAW was on campus, but for some reason I never linked up with them. I have no idea on God's green earth why not. I mean, it's not like I spent all those years as rush chairman of my fraternity and had to skip the

anti-war rallies so I could line up enough Alpha Phis for the next kegger/gang-bang. (As God is my witness, I never, in my entire undergraduate experience, became so depraved as to join a fraternity. I did a lot of things back then that I'm ashamed of, but I never got that low.)

A quarter-century or so later, in 1996, I read an article in the Champaign-Urbana *News-Gazette* about this poor old Navy 'Nam vet who had shown up at a Champaign County Board meeting, objecting to the fact that the Board had gone back on its prom-

ise not to fly a POW/MIA flag at the newly-dedicated courthouse veterans' memorial. His legitimate credentials as a Vietnam veteran notwithstanding, Joe Miller was welcomed about as warmly as John Ashcroft at an ACLU meeting. He had tried to tell those numbnuts that not everything they see in a Chuck Norris or Sly Stallone movie may be taken as gospel, and that, as should be obvious, there is no imaginable reason why the government of Vietnam would want to keep Americans as POWs. (The Socialist Republic of Vietnam may not be in line for any awards from Amnesty International, but the Vietnamese spent 150 years trying to get rid of the Americans and the French; why in the world would they want to keep any of us?)

In any case, there was poor old Joe, kind of standing there with his thumb up his ass, sans any sort of recognition or appreciation from anyone. But he did have one ally in the room. Jennifer Putnam, a longstanding County Board member and one of the neatest people I know, supported his position. (You have to realize something here. The way the '40s

*continued on page 11*



# The Show Goes On: VVAW Honors Veterans in the Concrete Bunker

ANN GOETHALS

VVAW held its 30th annual Veterans Day rally amidst construction on Lower Wacker Drive in Chicago. As the event began, Joe Miller reminded the crowd of about thirty people that this was National Veterans Awareness Week and that everyone should try to get into the schools to talk with kids about what it was like to go to war. The theme of the day, in the shadow of September 11 and the buildings around us, which gave a particular chill to the air, was "Justice, Not War." As speaker after speaker came to the podium the refrain was the same: let us not allow our leaders to continue with criminal activities,

thirty years after their first efforts to end the war in Vietnam, but sadly wars don't end, and so VVAW must keep on holding rallies and spreading the word that wars against civilian populations do not solve problems but create them. In particular, he mentioned that bombing the civilian population of Afghanistan was not going to remedy the situation, was not going to bring the terrorists to their knees, but indeed threatened to create more terrorists. He also reminded the crowd to remember exactly what justice is: an international court and not an undeclared air war and clandestine imprisonments. "And finally, I gotta say



has largely been assisted by American dollars and American military training. In particular, mention was made of the 126 union leaders that were assassinated during their struggle to organize Coca-Cola workers. The larger target of both speeches was the growing oppression brought on by corporate-led globalization propped up by the military. Parejas asked those present to join in the struggle against "the easy exploitation of our peoples and natural resources by mul-

the list is too long to quote, as both he and the crowd had no trouble thinking of those who have suffered and died because of war.



nor let unjust wars against innocent civilians in faraway places be justified by fear and rhetoric.

Joe Miller, after apologizing for his lack of preparation, gave a most lucid and forceful keynote speech on the things we should not forget. The first and perhaps most significant thing to remember, he said, was "our history and where we came from." He went on to talk about how VVAW members find it hard to believe they are still around fighting for peace

something about the flags," said Joe. He reminded us that, just as stereotyping served to oppress Arabs, Muslims and immigrants, so we should be on guard against generalizing about those who fly flags. "Not every one who flies a flag is a conservative. Not everyone in a uniform is the enemy."

Two guest speakers from Colombia, Edgar Parejas and Samuel Morales, spoke of the terror that the civilian population of Colombia has been experiencing, which

something about the flags," said Joe. He reminded us that, just as stereotyping served to oppress Arabs, Muslims and immigrants, so we should be on guard against generalizing about those who fly flags. "Not every one who flies a flag is a conservative. Not everyone in a uniform is the enemy."

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Tom MacGregor, a Franciscan lay missionary who lives in Colombia, served as translator and also brought the rally to a reverent close when he named those we should remember on this most solemn day. Unfortunately,



ANN GOETHALS, A LONG-TIME SUPPORTER OF VVAW, IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AT NILES NORTH HIGH SCHOOL IN SKOKIE, ILLINOIS. SHE HAS CREATED AND IMPLEMENTED CURRICULA ON THE LITERATURE OF THE VIETNAM WAR AT NILES NORTH HIGH SCHOOL AND PRESENTED HER WORK AT VARIOUS CONFERENCES AROUND THE UNITED STATES.





# First Winter Soldier Service Award Presented

BARRY ROMO

VVAW has given awards in the past, but not many. The Veterans' Service Award was given to such outstanding people such as Maude De Victor and Mike Gold for service above and beyond the call of duty to the veterans' community.

At the National Steering Committee meeting held in Chicago on October 27, 2001, we came up with a new award that is not given annually or biannually, but only as called for because of exceptional sacrifice in service to peace, justice and veterans. We decided unanimously to give a Winter Soldier Service Award to Jeff Machota for his tireless service in helping to keep VVAW alive by his volunteer work for the organization.

Born only a year before VVAW was formed, Jeff became politically active through anti-apartheid struggle, and proceeded

to work against racist mascots and for peace in Latin America and in the Persian Gulf. He continues to work for community organizations and to take action for social change.

Jeff volunteered to take responsibility for *The Veteran*, and then established VVAW's online presence by building a website and running our mailing lists. For the past six years he's also been doing the books, all the while attending demonstrations and meetings and showing up for volunteer work, such as the "Blessing of the Bock."

On Veterans Day 2001 in Chicago, we surprised Jeff with a 30-pack of Old Style beer and a bronze plaque.

We don't know if anyone else will ever get this award again, but Jeff sure deserves this one.



*Vietnam Veterans Against the War  
Winter Soldier Service Award*

*presented to  
Jeff Machota*

*In Recognition of Your Dedication to Peace, Justice  
and Veterans' Rights*

*National Steering Committee Meeting*

*First Recipient  
October 27, 2001*

## Chicago Standdown Winter 2001





## Veterans Day, Milwaukee

BOB RIGGLE

After the Madison Veterans Day ceremony in the State Capitol rotunda fizzled a few years ago, the Milwaukee Chapter hadn't participated in a Veterans Day ceremony. After the rush to patriotism since September, we felt we needed to do something.

Whether it was a sense of urgency, a need to reassure, or just because it felt necessary at the moment, we hastily put together a program for a Veterans Day observance.

Sunday, November 11 dawned clear and cool, though by 9:30 it had warmed somewhat for the thirty members and guests who attended the event, near the War Memorial's reflecting pool.

Vets Place Central, Milwaukee's shelter for homeless veterans, provided the color guard. The attendees participated in a 21-flower salute, placing flowers in a vase while a bell tolled. In an effort to show unity with local Muslims, we invited a member of

the Islamic Society of Milwaukee to give an invocation, though he was not able to attend.

I presented a brief history of Veterans Day. National Officer John Zutz spoke on the status of veterans in society today. County Supervisor Roger Quindel talked about veterans' issues and about his Vietnam experiences. John Gilman, a highly decorated World War II veteran, spoke passionately about injustices suffered by black veterans, and touched on the status of troops in Afghanistan.

At the end of the ceremony, Rich Manson floated a wreath on the reflecting pond, while those in attendance presented arms in a moment of silence. Muriel Hogan concluded the event with an *a capella* rendition of "The Green Fields of France."



BOB RIGGLE IS THE COORDINATOR FOR VVAW'S MILWAUKEE CHAPTER.



## Open Letter to the New York Metro Area Congressional Delegation

VVAW, CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER

Approved February 6, 2002

We write on behalf of the Clarence Fitch Chapter, the New York metro area affiliate of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. We write to voice our concern about the state of civil liberties in our country.

When we enlisted in the armed forces, we swore "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Many of us were immediately dispatched to fight an illegal and unconstitutional war by the very authorities we had sworn to obey. Once again, the clearest and most present danger to the Constitution is our own government.

Our civil liberties require the rule of law — respect for the principles and procedures of our Republic and its Constitution as ratified and amended, as interpreted by an independent judiciary, and as monitored by our elected representatives.

In its determination to respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11 with an endless war against terrorism, our government has announced and sometimes

adopted measures which seriously threaten or substantially curtail our civil liberties. Immigrants and foreign visitors are detained indefinitely without hearings, sometimes even without charges. Citizens and legal residents are interrogated, and their confidential business and student records examined, based on their national origin. Attorney-client confidentiality is abrogated in designated cases. Authority to monitor telephone and electronic communications is expanded. Military tribunals for foreign detainees are designed which lack basic procedural protections for defendants. Movement and travel in the daily business of life is arbitrarily restricted. Most recently the Defense Department has proposed setting up a new command for military operations in support of "homeland security," within the United States, which vastly expands the already controversial police function of the military.

Such activities — most of which have long been discredited by police professionals — are flagrant violations of legal and Constitutional (not to say, human) rights.

Even more dangerous to our civil liberties: the president and his administration insist on the right to act in secret, and outside both federal and international law. Last October the president's attorney general directed federal agencies to deny requests for public information, honoring instead "institutional, commercial and personal privacy interests." Even now the Justice Department will not release the names of the people detained during the investigations of the attacks on September 11. The Pentagon has refused to classify detainees from Afghanistan as prisoners of war, and declines to take responsibility for detainees transferred to the custody of Afghan warlords.

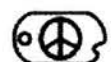
This administration's contempt for law and the Constitution is so pervasive that the attorney general claims that criticism of his policies amounts to support for terrorists.

We all understand that war requires sacrifice and restriction. We understand that in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks this assault on our civil liberties and the law has widespread and bipartisan support. But we rely on

the constitutional system of checks and balances to make sure that our government's actions actually enhance national security and abridge our liberties as little as possible. This is especially important when the president promises us a war that will last for years.

With all too few exceptions, members of Congress have been happy to defer to presidential authority no matter how flagrantly lawless, no matter how likely to fail to provide Americans with real security. This despite the fact that the Bush regime itself has a lawless origin: five Supreme Court judges installed a candidate as president in the wake of a massive partisan campaign to deny the vote to some citizens, in defiance of the constitutional guarantee of voting rights.

We have completed our tours of duty, but we do not forget our responsibilities. Our congressional representatives are our first line of defense. We rely on you to meet your obligations — to the Constitution, to the nation, and to us.





# An Interview with Barry Willdorf

JEANNE FRIEDMAN

## Bring the War Home!

By Barry S. Willdorf (A Gauche Press, 2001)

<www.agauchepress.com>

Jeanne Friedman interviewed Barry Willdorf in Oakland, California on January 5, 2002. Excerpts of this interview follow:

**JF:** Barry, you are now a practicing attorney in SF. In 1970, with your wife Bonnie, as a new young attorney, you went to Oceanside, California, home of Camp Pendleton, to serve as an attorney on a GI Project, known as MDM (Movement for a Democratic Military). You and Bonnie had been active in the student anti-war movement at Columbia University and shortly after you graduated from law school you were hired to represent GIs for a wide range of civil liberties issues related to anti-war activities and the racism of the military, as well as direct attempts by soldiers to get out rather than be shipped to Vietnam. Tell us about the military system you confronted.

**BSW:** These were the middle years of the Vietnam War. The student movement made it OK to protest the war. Now, the opposition was spreading into the military rather quickly. GIs were beginning to openly speak out against the war, to produce underground newspapers and to participate in demonstrations. Because, unlike prior wars, GIs rotated out of the conflict in 12-13 months, they were coming home in large numbers and telling their stories to an increasingly upset population. They had credibility because they couldn't be written off as shirkers, draft-dodgers or privileged students. The brass had no experience handling this kind of protest, so they came down pretty crudely with retaliatory measures and looked for whatever they could to write up dissident GIs and try to give them bad administrative discharges (UDs — undesirable discharge, they were called), or to court-martial them. This was an attempt to silence them or discredit them. That is why it was so important for them to have access to non-military-officer lawyers. And, by the way, Jeanne, I want to make a pitch for the guys, many of them Vietnam combat vets who have been living

with those bad discharges for the past thirty years. They didn't get amnesty as did the draft resisters and it is time to put that right. It is just plain discrimination and it affects their ability to get good jobs and sometimes professional licenses. It is an injustice that ought to be corrected.

**JF:** Camp Pendleton was the primary West Coast base for the Marine Corps, and, as was happening at other bases in cities where GIs congregated when off-base, there were coffeehouses as well as direct GI organizing projects. How many GI organizing projects were there between the late 60s and the end of the war

will meet black Marines who are not afraid to put their lives on the line to oppose racism in the military. And they will meet Marines who are still dedicated to the war and the Corps. Idealism crashes head-on with reality and that nearly destroys Eric and Emma's relationship and it changes their sympathies to include vets.

**JF:** I'd like you to share with people what it felt like to come to Oceanside, to what some might have viewed as a romantic assignment — confronting the enemy. What did Eric and Emma actually find?

**BSW:** The MDM headquarters they arrive at had just been

layered remnants of burned and spilled culinary efforts harbored a blue metal coffee pot with a cascade of brown vertical drippings permanently baked into its lacquer. In the very middle of the room a splintery spool table, six feet in diameter, dominated, like an altar to sloth, on the sticky, discolored black and white checkboard of linoleum.

**JF:** Given the dramatic changes that Eric and Emma were personally going to go through, tell us what GI movement organizers across the country found so compelling about working with veterans and active-duty GIs? There are many people here today who shared that experience with you and with me. I found especially moving your telling of what we might call the Marine Story — the very heart of what Eric and Emma were doing in difficult situation in right-wing Oceanside.

**BSW:** Jeanne, many of the civilian organizers were vets. They were able to coax real feelings out of the GIs. It was a first step in getting many of them to deal with trauma that could make them time-bombs if they kept it bottled up. Here is one of my favorite passages in the book. Many of the vets whom I have talked to are really moved by it and have come up to me and told me that I put into words things that they wanted to say but couldn't bring themselves to say out loud. I'm going to let this passage speak for itself. This is why I was there. This is what motivated me to defend these guys who were serving their country, and why I stayed at it until the war was over.

*You ain't been there yet. You don't know, man. I didn't know shit about the racism part 'til I got into the Suck, man. But then I began to notice how they were always putting the blacks into the shit details. But that kind of shit don't sink in right away, 'cause a lot of the brothers got an attitude, ya know. And it takes time to get the picture. So I figure it's like retaliation, OK. But then, I can't help noticing how we treated the ARVN. You know, they ain't got all the muscle we got, but they been fighting a long time, and they ain't gettin' no respect. Sometimes they take ten times the casualties we do, but the first guys to*

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**GIs were beginning to openly speak out against the war, to produce underground newspapers and to participate in demonstrations.**

in 1975?

**BSW:** I estimate that there were about 15-20 in the U.S. at any given time and maybe 5-6 abroad. There were fewer than a dozen staff lawyers who were doing what I was doing full-time. Unfortunately, a lot of people didn't recognize the need or the potential that the GIs had for ending the war by getting the message to the farms and towns and factories where students would never go.

**JF:** In this book, you created Eric and Emma as a husband and wife team who together confront all kinds of issues raised by this attempt to make change in what we called "the belly of the beast." Barry — set the stage for us — what changes were going to happen to Eric and Emma?

**BSW:** Eric and Emma are former student radicals. They have the idealism of the peace movement and the commitment to volunteer their time to the cause of ending the war but they really have no idea who the GIs really are. There was a lot of stereotyping going on at this time, both ways. Now they are going to meet real people — Marines who have recently fought, who know people who died and who have killed, guys who have been seriously affected by their experience. They

shot up by right-wing vigilantes called the Minutemen. In the book, two people were wounded. Actually, the fact was that the house that Bonnie and I went to in Oceanside was machine-gunned a few weeks before we got there and one Marine was wounded. The place was sandbagged. We had to have a 24-hour armed security watch because the police were very hostile and would not come if we called for help. They would only show up if they thought there was a possibility they could arrest us.

**JF:** I resonated with your description of the kitchen — not so different from many other movement collectives, especially ones that were consciously or unconsciously breaking with "bourgeois" norms of cleanliness. Tell us what that kitchen looked like.

**BSW:** Here's an excerpt from my book about that:

*The room was pungent with the acrid smells of festering edibles. On the left was a sink, burdened by a mound of filthy dishes encrusted with the detritus of meals long past. Against the far wall an antique Frigidaire hummed loudly as it waded in a puddle of meltwater, the result of habitual neglect of defrosting. Opposite, an ancient four-burner gas stove bedecked with many-*



## Barry Willdorf

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get medevac'd out are us. And there's hostility. We're always callin' Charlie gooks and such, but if Charlie's a gook, then so are they. Even the brothers are calling them gooks, like they can't see past racism against blacks to the racism against the yellow man. An' what the fuck did I know, man, I grew up in a place where the only colored people I ever heard of were the black folks we saw on TV, like Rochester and Amos and Andy, and the only fuckin' yellows we ever seen were the ones that ran the laundry or maybe some Chinese restaurant in Albany.

Yeah, we're riskin' our lives and all, but we ain't the heroes that some folks want us to be. We got the planes and we got the artillery and we got the armor. But we also got R&R and are out of there in a year. Them ARVN and, yeah, the VC too, some of them been fightin' five, ten years. Lost all of their family. Got nothin' to go home to but a burnt-up patch of jungle. If we're heroes, what the hell are they? And then, when we take a hamlet, who the fuck knows? Maybe the locals are VC and maybe they ain't. Who's goin' to take a chance, get his ass blown off? We gotta destroy it. So ya end up callin' in air strikes on some shit-hole, piss-poor village full of rag-covered, scarecrow peasants. But hey, after a while you start to see all this shit different. How it's all crazy and mixed up, and it changes you inside. None of it makes any sense, 'cept surviving. An' that's a fuckin' good reason to blow some smoke or drop a tab or shoot a bit of smack 'cause the whole thing's fuckin' insane. 'Cause ya don't want to think about what you're doin' and just want to survive. That's what it's like, man.

But for me, after a while, surviving didn't seem all that fuckin' important anymore, after I added up the stuff I'd been doin' to reach that objective. Maybe some guys can forget, or think they can forget. I ain't about to speak for them, but I can't believe that a whole lotta them are ever gonna forget, and in the end, down the road, they're gonna feel sold out one way or another. I just hit that place maybe sooner than some. We stick up for each other under fire, and that's the best of it. We're all brothers on that score.

*I'll remember that too, the good stuff. But how we got there in the first place and the shit we did while we was there, well, good luck to the guys who can forget that. Good fuckin' luck.*

**JF:** Everyone who was involved in anti-war organizing in any way during the Vietnam war will remember overt and covert surveillance and the planting of informants and provocateurs. As a lawyer, Eric was close to that situation on one prominent occasion in the book — Barry will you tell us what Eric learned and how he dealt with it?

**BSW:** There is a scene in the book where Eric discovers that one of his clients is an informant. He also learns that this Marine is informing on another one of his Marine clients. He learns about this in a confidential communication that, ethically, he is bound not to disclose. But if he plays by that ethical rule, he will be permitting harm to another of his clients. Eric has no time to sit back and debate the fine points of the conflict. He must make a split second decision that may save one of the GIs at the expense of the other. It is one of many twists in the legal plot that I, as a lawyer, find interesting. At another point, Eric has to argue the exact opposite side of an issue for one client than he did for another. I got the inspiration for that from an old tale about Abe Lincoln, who was a railroad attorney before he got elected to office. One day, in the morning he argued an issue for the railroad and in the afternoon, he argued the same issue, but on the other side for an injured worker. When the judge, who had ruled for him in the morning asked why he shouldn't rule against him in the afternoon, Lincoln declared, "Because this afternoon, the worker has a better lawyer." Or so the story goes.

**JF:** In your book, Eric and Emma are coming to grips with a host of contradictions including issues of race and gender. Understandably, Eric has a different slant than Emma, who is drawn to the women members of the collective in a way that Eric cannot be. I think it's not too much to say that Eric's manhood is threatened by all these strong women (who are, of course armed!). Will you share with us a passage in the book that sums up Eric's strengths and weaknesses?

**BSW:** Well, it's interesting that you mention this issue. Every time I read passages from my book

on gender conflict, I get opposite responses from the men and the women. Men love it when Eric tells off Emma and women cheer when Emma gives it to Eric. I just get a kick out of all the shit that this passage stirs up.

*"Did you notice how Joanie backed off on her attacks when it came to criticizing Clayton and Cookie?" I remarked dryly on our return to the motel. "She's ready, willing, and able to bust a white guy's butt even though he's a vet and just got shot. But when it comes to criticizing a black for breaking rules or for blatant sexism, she can't even whisper a criticism."*

*Emma stared over at me. "Go easy, Eric," she said shaking her head. "Dealing with a multiracial organization requires diplomacy. Something you're not too expert on."*

*"Yeah," I conceded readily, "I guess that's true. I just go at things the same way for everybody, even if it pisses people off. But Joanie comes off like a guilty liberal dealing with the blacks. They can see right through her double standard, and believe me, they don't respect it."*

*"And I guess you think they respect you?" she challenged with a shake of her head.*

*"Naw, Emma, I don't believe that. I don't believe Cookie respects me. But that's the result of her own racism. She can feel however she likes about me, but what I say isn't going to change because of her attitude. And her attitude isn't going to change based on what I say. As far as I'm*

*concerned, if she doesn't like my opinions or what I say, she can go fuck herself, because I don't respect racists of any color."*

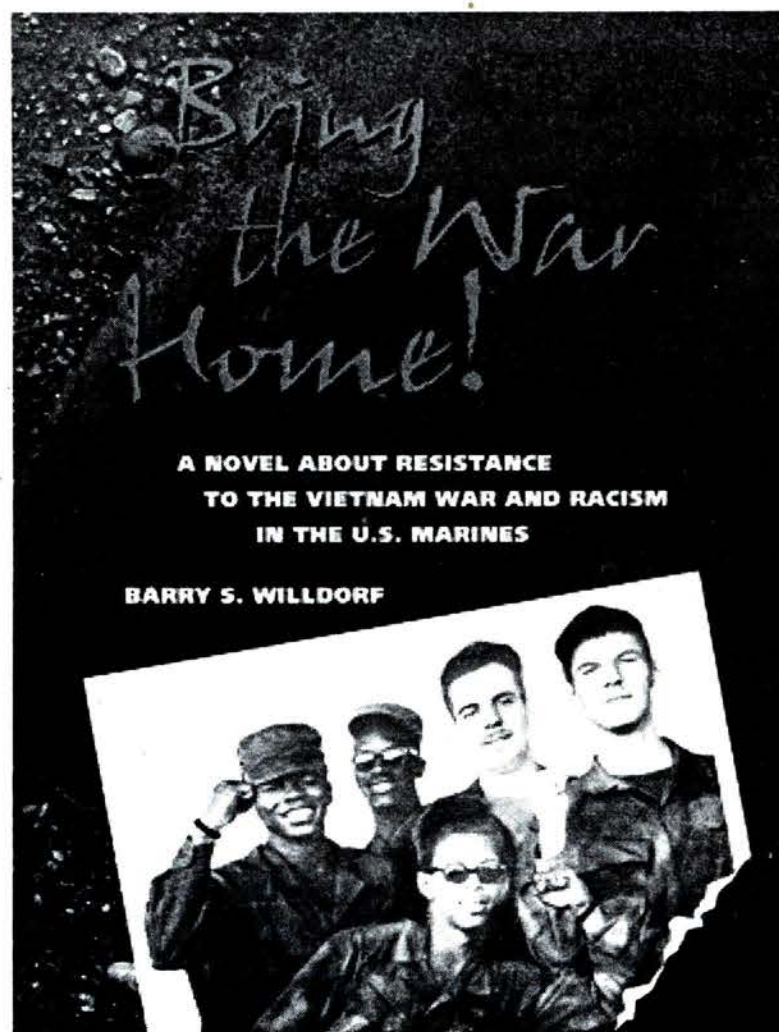
*"You know, Eric," she observed, "you seem to have alienated two out of the three women in this collective in only one day. Have you ever considered that you might have a problem getting along with strong women?"*

*"Well, I get along with you," I said, driving through a red light and forcing her to white-knuckle it.*

**JF:** Thank you, Barry. One last question, what motivated you to write this book?

**BSW:** I worked on this project for more than six years, mostly on nights and weekends because I have a day job. Basically there were two reasons. First, no one has written a novel about the GI movement. I wanted to do a novel specifically so that I didn't have to get bogged down in petty sectarian squabbles about details: who said what to whom and who made or didn't make some crucial commitment. I wanted the story to be free of the small stuff and to force people to focus on the big picture — that there were thousands upon thousands of GIs who came home from service and made a difference in changing the hearts and minds of the American people. A lot of leftists take credit for ending the war these days, but for my money it was the GIs that did it. That's a hell of a story, really. After they came back from the war they served their country one

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# The Veteran as Nigger

RAYMOND PARRISH

The sacrifices of countless veterans built this prosperous society, but many veterans feel that they are second class citizens because of the failure of the laws and agencies that were established in response to disability claims and complaints of abuse. Now, I have to offer what proof I have to explain our feeling that we have been betrayed by our own people, government and veterans' organizations. We feel that we have been used up and discarded for financial or political reasons. Called GIs—that is, Government Issue—how can we help but see ourselves as property? As nothing more than slaves.

During my eighteen years as a military dependent (“brat”), four years of active duty and twenty-five years as a veterans' counselor, I have seen three generations of American veterans come and go. I have been called upon by my fellow veterans to bear witness to the seeming indifference of government bureaucrats, politicians and their neighbors to the problems resulting from their military experience. More than anything else, I am the messenger and the facts that I present will speak for themselves.

Veterans and their families are treated as second-class citizens under the current laws when they are condemned to ineffective legal representation and remedies in disability claims. As GIs, we leave behind families and comfort and risk lives and sanity. At last we come home as veterans, but to a society which seems to be unable to deal with our problems and us.

You brainwash us with songs and stories of glory and send us to die alone in a jungle or the desert or by the thousands on a beach or a hilltop, and we do what we are asked with grim determination and pride. We fight and die to protect the freedoms that you enjoy and upon which our nation was founded, and then we give them up for the sake of military discipline. You march us through radioactive fallout in atomic bomb tests, Agent Orange in Vietnam, oil well fires, chemical weapons and experimental counter-weapons in the Persian Gulf. When we return you spit on us and call us baby killers. You don't allow your daughters to date us and feel fear or suspicion when you see us. You put our exploits on TV to get

the new cannon fodder and then ignore us.

Don't you know that this is all true, no matter how good the parades and speeches make us feel for a little while? Don't you know how it must make us feel? Don't you know that what has happened to us since our return, what you have done to us, is just as devastating as the war that we fought for you? Don't you see that this neglect proves to us that our mere existence is a continued embarrassment to our own country? Don't you know that “better off dead” is merely a thought to many of us, but the last words for far too many of us? Don't you know that even if all of this was done without malice, it doesn't change what has happened or how we see our-

The veterans we are talking about are, by definition, survivors, with all that implies. This is especially true of combat veterans, whose problems may be more severe than those of their non-combat comrades. Although many combat veterans have successfully dealt with their problems, many others conceal their emotions and their past and are able to pass as “normal” civilians.

We are dealing with matters of perception: how veterans remember their military experiences and how they see themselves in that light. How veterans think they are seen by society is based upon the way their neighbors, politicians or VA bureaucrats treat them. Because they misinterpreted your behavior, how veterans think they

They may think that their survival or their friends' deaths can be justified only by their own success, so any shortcoming or failure is amplified and seen as a betrayal of their fallen comrades.

Many veterans are bothered by what they did in order to survive or to insure the survival of their comrades. Many are full of regret and shame because of the cruelties that they inflicted upon innocent civilians. They participate in reconciliation programs designed to help former enemies rebuild battle-torn areas and clear minefields. Some excuse past behavior by embracing anti-communism, patriotism or racism. Some are unable to sleep well no matter how many times they recite the “I was only following orders” mantra, even if it's true.

Sights, sounds or smells may trigger disturbing memories. For some, the war is never over. When you see a veteran with the so-called “thousand-yard stare,” try to remember that he is seeing the faces of the dead and try not to laugh at those who duck when a car backfires. Many veterans turn vegetarian or avoid barbecues because the smell of burning flesh reminds them of a horrific experience with napalm or phosphorous weapons. Similar reasons may cause them to avoid any Asian food or recoil at Asian faces or language. Those who have seen needless deaths because of the mistakes of others have a hard time trusting anyone in authority. They can't keep jobs unless they are in charge or have an understanding boss, most often a fellow veteran.

Those few veterans who get public attention are the ones whose extreme behavior brings on headlines and stiff prison sentences. Other veterans see this as “the squeaky wheel gets oiled,” and copy the behavior. They are desperate to have someone listen to their complaints and have their “day in court.” Few of them imagine, however, that it would be them rather than the government on trial that day.

The VA points to statistics that show that most claims are decided speedily and correctly and that most VA employees are honest and hardworking. But many legitimate claims are delayed or denied at the local level

**Veterans and their families are treated as second-class citizens under the current laws when they are condemned to ineffective legal representation and remedies in disability claims.**

selves? Don't you know that you have made us see ourselves as less than nothing, as niggers?

I apologize for using the “N word,” and I promise that you won't see it here again. It's the only word that even hints at the depth of the emotions involved. I have seen too many of us lose patience and hope. It is that deafening scream of the unsatisfied dead ringing in my ears that cannot be drowned out by anything less. I am willing to deal with any criticism because, whatever the cost, it's a small price to pay to focus the public's attention on this issue, and I could do no less for my comrades.

## G.I. Blues

Before addressing the legal and bureaucratic causes of veterans' complaints, it's necessary to understand the resulting veterans' sense of betrayal. We need to understand why so many veterans say that the VA is just waiting for them to die or that certain VA personnel are criminals who should be jailed or worse.

are seen by you may not be the same way you actually see them. Or your inaccurate perceptions resulted in behavior which caused inappropriate perceptions and behaviors in veterans.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the psychological term that is most often used to describe a wide variety of emotions and behaviors that afflict combat veterans or victims of abuse, assault or natural disasters. Very few of these survivors come away unscathed. The traumatic experience may provoke a psychotic episode or a complete mental breakdown. It can create lifelong depression or anxiety. It can accentuate a minor pre-existing mental disorder into a chronic and completely disabling illness. These things can happen immediately or decades later.

Veterans who watched their comrades die may be suffering from the classic “survivor guilt.” They may think that they could have prevented those deaths somehow or that the mere fact that they are alive is evidence of cowardice.

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## Fraggin'

*continued from page 4*

Arabian Sea where it would transfer to tankers headed for the Orient. Tajikistan and Pakistan were willing, but the Taliban said no.

If the Taliban had said yes to Unocal, would there have been war? George II has been accused of having no brains, but this was a no-brainer. The Taliban were not nice people. They treated women like cattle, they tore down famous statues, and for minor offenses they stoned people to death or cut off their limbs. They had Osama hidden in their mountains. They said no to Unocal. John Ashcroft said God was on our side. It was a win-win situation, so the chief said yes. There was war.

So what are the results of the war so far? Not many terrorists have been killed yet, but we've probably killed more innocent civilians than were lost at the Trade Towers. And that number could rise rapidly. Afghanistan is a country with a limited food supply coming off a couple of years of drought. Starvation was warded off by world relief agencies who now can't operate because of the

war.

Things aren't much better on the governmental level. This is a country with tribal feuds. It reminds one of Yugoslavia after Tito died. This Northern Alliance government the United States put in power has little chance of succeeding unless they come up with their own Tito—something that's not likely.

**RUMOR CONTROL:** *Rumor Central is investigating allegations that from 13 to 34 members of Al Qaeda, disguised as members of various Latin American death squads, received training at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia in the mid-Nineties.*

On the homefront, the pigs are at the trough. In the name of 9-11, Congress is dishing out the dough for corporate America. There was the famous \$15 billion for the airline industry while their laid-off employees got nothing. Boeing, biotech and drug companies, for-profit hospitals, and insurance companies are all getting their share. Vice President Cheney said that America has to prepare for a fifty-year war on terrorism. I guess he means that he expects us to tighten our belts for fifty years

so these corporations can defend us.

**RUMOR CONTROL:** *Persistent reports have come into Rumor Central that God did indeed bless America. Word came in from the Super Bowl, the Daytona 500 and from bumper sticker sales, so Rumor Central sent out more investigators. Sure enough, it was found that God has blessed America. Some examples: the Pentagon budget was increased; new police powers were given out; executives at Enron did have a golden parachute.*

The truth probably is that only a surgical strike in Afghanistan by an elite team with good intelligence would have done any good in this phase of the War on Terrorism. The truth is that the way the war was conducted in Afghanistan probably angered more people and helped create more terrorist foot soldiers. The truth is that good police work is needed to uncover terrorists and that some ongoing police work is good. The truth is that some of the police work that is now happening is fascistic and unnecessary (see the USA PATRIOT Act).

And perhaps the biggest truth is that 9-11 and most terrorist acts

against the United States would not happen if U.S. foreign policy was just. Osama bin Laden was once a U.S. ally. He wasn't concerned with the United States after the end of the Afghan-USSR war. Supposedly, he turned against the United States after we stationed (infidel) troops in his holy land of Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War and kept them there.

People who hate us in the Arab-Islamic world do not do so because they envy our way of life, as American commentators and politicians are so fond of saying. Hatred arises because we support repressive governments in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. They hate because we are responsible for the deaths of many Iraqi children, and because we supply Israel with the weapons to kill Palestinians. The truth is that as long as the United States maintains its aggressive, imperialist foreign policy, it will stir up much resentment, and within the many who resent will be a few who hate and will act on their hatred.



**BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND AUTHOR. HE'S A MEMBER OF VVAW'S CHICAGO CHAPTER.**

## Notes from the Boonies

*continued from page 4*

and '50s generations see things, there are only two kinds of people in this country: those who served in the military and those who didn't. The former are allowed to do or say almost anything, and the latter are supposed to keep quiet and make the coffee. Trust me, I'm in the VFW; I know what I'm talking about.)

So I wrote a little note to Jennifer, thanking her for having supported Joe. That was condescending; she was there and I wasn't. But she wrote me back

anyway, suggesting that I might be interested in joining this organization called Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I did, and so here I am, once again a few decades late and a few hundred piasters short. (I mean, if I couldn't find a VVAW chapter on one of the largest college campuses in the country, do I look to you like a guy who couldn't find his ass with both hands?)

On a more serious note, my much-belated membership in VVAW has meant a great deal to me. I have spent the last five years talking with area high school students about (as Marilyn Young correctly calls it) the American

Invasion of Vietnam. If I had not joined VVAW, I probably wouldn't be doing that. I have also met some really neat people, to include (in proper alphabetical order) Barry, Claudia, Jeff, Rev. Jim, and Lisa, from the Chicago and Champaign chapters. You also have to realize that I live in one of the most conservative counties in our galaxy. Too many of the people I live and work with honestly believe that (1) "Vietnam wasn't right, but as long as we were there we should have fought to win," and (2) "those people over there" — read: Third World -- "just don't value human life the way we do." I really need some

relief from this well-intentioned insanity, and VVAW provides that. A price cannot be put on that commodity.

Trying to put this all together, I don't know how I missed VVAW thirty years ago. But I did, and am occasionally angry with myself for not having made a better effort to find "us." Beyond that, I just feel that I let both of us down by that failure. We could have had one hell of a time together, although, given my absence, I'll never know what that experience may have turned out to be. But as one of the multiple Annies said at the close of the 30th anniversary VVAW reunion in Chicago: "Gimme an 'F' ... gimme a 'U' ... gimme a 'C' ... gimme a 'K' ... What's that spell?" (OK, so Barry was the only one in the room who didn't know the answer.)

You know, you just can't get stuff like that at the Tuscola Kiwanis Club.



**PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN TUSCOLA, IL, WHERE HE WORKS AS A PROBATION OFFICER. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE US ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.**



VVAW members march to protest the use of Agent Orange, Washington, D.C., 1981



## Questioning the Anti-Terrorist War in the Philippines

*continued from page 1*

military officials admit that the Abu Sayyaf is mainly a bandit gang involved in piracy, kidnapping and other forms of banditry. This part of Mindanao, like many areas of Southeast Asia, has a long history of piracy and banditry dating back centuries to the times of Spanish colonization in the 1600s. The Moro people do not believe that the Abu Sayyaf are *mujahideen* like the Taliban and do not support them. They have been reduced from six hundred three years ago to about sixty as a result of Philippine military operations.

There is evidence that the group is a creation of the Philippine army as a tool in its war against the rebel Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the 1990s (*Marites Vitug and Glenda Gloria, "Under the Crescent Moon"*). Investigators of the *Boston Globe* and Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* revealed the collusion between the Abu Sayyaf and certain military and civilian officials in what is known as the "Lamitan Incident." Last June the Philippine army had a chance to wipe out the entire leadership of the Abu Sayyaf. About 35 Abu Sayyaf members and their hostages were encircled by the Philippine army in a walled hospital and church compound in Lamitan on Basilan island. Intense fighting ensued and at least twelve soldiers and civilians were killed. The commanding officer called for backup from more than a thousand soldiers on the island that day. But some generals reversed the order. As a re-

sult the Abu Sayyaf leadership escaped through the back door of the hospital, bringing along with them most of their hostages, including Guillermo Sobero of California and Martin Burnham of Kansas. (They beheaded Sobero a few months later.) Eight hours after they escaped, reinforcements arrived.

But before the group left, they released three captives during a lull in the fighting: Reghis Romero, a millionaire construction magnate; his girlfriend; and an eight-year-old boy. A friend of Mr. Romero disclosed that \$500,000 was paid for Romero's release. The whistle-blower of the

**To summarize, U.S. military forces are not needed in the Philippines to destroy the Abu Sayyaf bandit group.**

fiasco, Father Cirilo Nacorda, parish priest of Lamitan, himself a former hostage of the Abu Sayyaf, believes that a group of army officers, Abu Sayyaf members and Basilan governor Wahab Akbar split the ransom money. Local people have no doubt about the ransom payment and the collusion between the Abu Sayyaf and the Philippine military.

The Arroyo government has quashed investigations of the incident. Some see this as a sign of the power of the military establishment and the helplessness of

Mrs. Arroyo, who became president through people power and the support of the military. In other words, she is beholden to the military.

Given this background, it appears that the Philippine military forces are fully capable of wiping out the Abu Sayyaf gang if they had the political will to do so. The presence of the gang, however, serves the purposes of the military and political establishment in the Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf is the goose with the golden egg for military officials. For President Arroyo it is the best way to keep the military establishment happy and to shore up her flagging presidency. She did this when she jumped on the anti-terrorism bandwagon of the Bush administration, offered the use of Philippine bases, accepted President

Asia. It should be able to organize an efficient "reconditioning and logistic support" network in the Philippines during the six-month joint operations against the Abu Sayyaf. This will allow U.S. forces to deploy efficiently between the Arabian Gulf and the western coast of the United States.

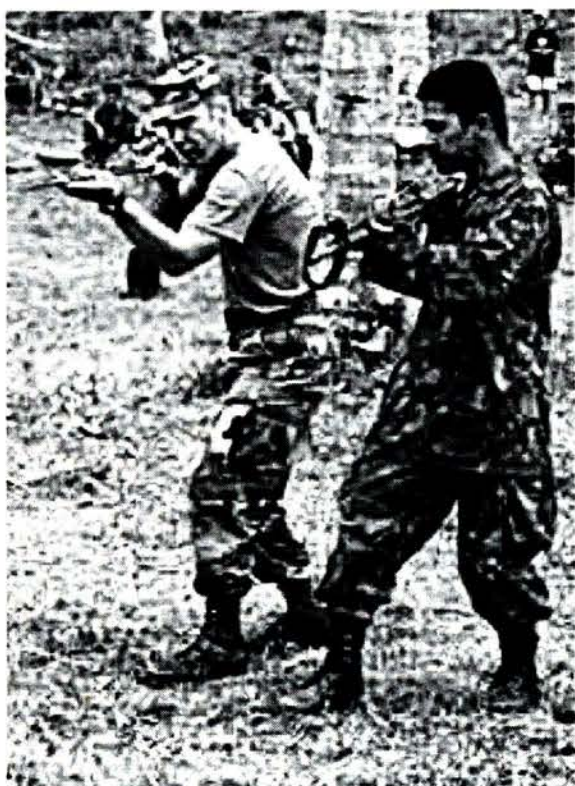
The presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines has met with protests from nationalist groups. Former Senator Wigberto Tañada has expressed alarm over the lack of transparency of the Philippine government about the reasons for inviting U.S. forces. He further claims that government officials have given inconsistent answers on whether U.S. forces are there for joint exercises or for direct participation in combat. According to him the invitation to U.S. forces to engage in direct combat is unconstitutional and goes against the legal parameters of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the U.S. and the Mutual Defense Treaty.

In Southeast Asia, many analysts dispute the claim by the Bush administration of a coordinated terrorist organization in the region linked to the Al Qaeda. There are growing popular movements in Southeast Asia, some of them with Islamic inspiration (Singapore and Malaysia), and a number of ethnic groups demanding self-determination (Indonesia). Most of these are poor peoples' movements. These can hardly be called part of an international terrorist network. Yet some governments in the region have used the anti-terrorist war as an excuse to clamp down on opposition to their policies.

To summarize, U.S. military forces are not needed in the Philippines to destroy the Abu Sayyaf bandit group. Their presence there will only be used by the Philippine military establishment and the Arroyo administration to further their own political objectives. The Bush administration is also using the Abu Sayyaf to expand its anti-terrorist war to Southeast Asia and in this way secure its military hold in the region.



DR. ORLANDO "DONG" TIZON IS A FILIPINO ACTIVIST AND MEMBER OF VVAW. HE CURRENTLY WORKS FOR THE TORTURE ABOLITION AND SURVIVORS SUPPORT COMMITTEE (TASSC), AN ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO HELPING END TORTURE AND TO AIDING SURVIVORS OF TORTURE.



*An American soldier training a Filipino soldier*

Bush's offer to eliminate the Abu Sayyaf gang, and got \$100 million in fresh military aid.

The Bush administration has its own motives for joining this war in Basilan Island. By going after the Abu Sayyaf, it can present to the international community a test case of expanding the anti-terrorist war and winning in a new front. That is, if the combined Philippine forces and U.S. Special Forces are able to wipe out this small band of criminals cleanly and quickly. The danger, however, is that the war could spread. It is possible that the Abu Sayyaf, adept and familiar with the territory could escape to other places. It is also possible that the war could spark clashes with the nearby forces of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is far stronger and better-organized than the Abu Sayyaf. Presently it has signed a peace treaty with the Philippine government. Meanwhile, for the past two years human rights monitors have reported an escalation of human rights abuses against the Moro people and growing numbers of displaced people in the Mindanao Sulu area.

The joint military operations with the Philippines also gives the United States the chance to beef up its defense role in Southeast



# Terrorism Funded by USA, A Colombian Friend of VVAW Murdered

BARRY ROMO

Known to the outside world only as "Witness #1," he testified to being trapped in the community of Santodomingo, in the department of Arauca, Colombia on December 13, 1998. The village was attacked from the air by Colombian armed forces using Huey helicopters and weapons, both provided by the United States. Unarmed grandparents and parents, children and grandchildren were killed and wounded. In all, seventeen were killed, including six children; twenty-five people were seriously wounded. Not hit himself, he loaded the seriously wounded on his truck to get medical aid. The helicopters followed and shot at the vehicles with machine guns.

He testified along with eight other Colombians at the Tribunal of Opinion at the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago. Four needed to keep their identities hidden — their names hidden, their faces hidden behind a screen, trying to tell the truth and still keep their lives.

I had traveled to Arauca to investigate the massacre. The Colombian government and military and the U.S. government claimed that the casualties were from a guerrilla landmine, but the victims said the bombing had come from the air.

It was obvious, from the number and placing of explosions and

casualties, and from the shrapnel we dug out of the homes, that it was made in the USA.

I meet and interviewed survivors, victims and human rights workers. Saw how the Colombian government and military treat their own people as the enemy, with curfew and operational orders — just like Vietnam.

There even were American airplanes in the area. They were working for the oil companies. But like Air America, they are private and have deniability.

On January 25, 2002 at 2:50 PM, Angel Riveros Chaparro, Mario Gonzalez Ruiz and Heliberto Delgado were waiting in front of the "Gato Negro" service station for a bus in Tame, Arauca Department.

Twelve armed men carrying rifles riding in two pickup trucks and on two motorcycles shot and killed Mario Gonzalez Ruiz and seriously wounded Angel Riveros Chaparro, who died the following day. They kidnapped Heliberto Delgado and then killed him outside of town. Tame is heavily occupied by the Colombian military and no one could have driven around with weapons without the consent of the military.

Angel was the president of the Municipal Association of Peasants in Tame. He was also "Witness #1." Five thousand peasants went on strike after the mur-



ders. I won't bring up terrorism and 9-11 and Afghanistan, the war on terrorism and Colombia, except to say that close to 5,000 were killed in Colombia last year and more than 90% of those deaths were caused by the government, the military and death squads, working together and separately. So proportionately, who are the evil ones?

Bush wants more troops in Colombia and is now calling it a "war on terror" — remember when it was a "war on drugs"? He wants \$98 million in emergency funds for the military. The same units that were in Santodomingo and Tame.

There must be no funds and no advisors. There must also be implementation of the various human rights laws and amendments to cut off aid. The other people who testified are in danger

and must be afforded protection.

In my apartment there is a photo of the Chicago tribunal's participants at a party afterward. Half the people are safe and their faces can be shown. Half are Colombian and theirs cannot be. Angel and some others are wearing VVAW baseball hats, which they loved.

The publicity of the tribunal, coming to the United States, being hidden behind a screen: these did not protect Angel. Only actions count.

Someday we will print that photo on the front page of *The Veteran*.



BARRY ROMO IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW AND A MEMBER OF VVAW'S CHICAGO CHAPTER.

## Returning to Vietnam in 2002

JOHN POOLE

A number of people asked me how I felt about going back to Vietnam after a 32-year interval. Most of the time I responded that I had a mix of feelings ranging from gratitude for awakening my humanitarian instincts to awkwardness about something unknown.

When I arrived in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), I noticed quonset huts and other military reminders near the airport. But the next day I was in Nha Trang, staying in a hotel across the street from the beach and feeling mostly like a tourist. For this trip, "tourist" would come closest to my basis for being there. There was no spot on the visa card for "making amends and healing" as a basis for visiting, and I was *not* on a

mission. The latter is characteristic of my traveling to other countries. I'm ostensibly out to confront injustice and align myself with the oppressed.

Being a tourist helped me to relax and enjoy meeting people. Quite a few Vietnamese people spoke enough English to allow me the opportunities to communicate with them. There were moments during conversations in which I apologized for what we did during the war. Their natural way of understanding felt very forgiving, and I didn't have to be in a formal setting for it to be official; it happened spontaneously.

From Nha Trang we went to Hoi An, a little south of Da Nang. Hoi An has a number of tourist

places, as well as tailor shops. But it was renting bicycles and riding a few miles to the beach that helped me feel a little more immersed in Vietnamese culture. All manner of vehicles ride in a lane and pass each other. The most striking sight in the street are the women who drive motor scooters. They wear hats, masks to protect nose and mouth, and long opera gloves to protect their arms. But what is most striking is their posture. Maybe the best attempt to describe it would be statuesque. They are as erect as any people I've ever observed.

It was at a restaurant in Hoi An, where I had my first Buddha experience. (I had not imagined that my belly would lead to a number of warm encounters.) The

waitress put her hand on my belly and said, "Happy Buddha, smiling Buddha." Ninety-nine per cent of the Vietnamese people I observed were thin, so a belly stands out much more prominently there.

On the way from Hoi An to Hue we stopped to tour Marble Mountain in Da Nang. We were fortunate enough to have a guide who, in addition to speaking English, was very knowledgeable and had a sense of humor. He showed us a picture of his father with U.S. Army personnel. His father was a language instructor for the U.S. Army. One of the caves within the mountain was used as a clinic during the war. Incoming mortars widened the openings at the top of

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# Where Do We Go From Here?

W. D. EHRHART

Like just about everyone else in America, I am still reeling from the events of September 11, the bloodiest day in American history. I am struggling to understand how our world has changed, and why, and how we are going to go on living in it. I do not believe there is anything good to be said about what happened on the morning of September 11. It was a horror the likes of which I have never seen before and dearly hope never to see again.

But I have been almost as horrified by what has happened in our country since then: the thousands of acts of hatred and violence directed at Arab-Americans since September 11; the flagrant, almost gleeful infringements on basic civil liberties; the massive bombing of Afghanistan resulting mostly only in the trading of one set of very bad rulers for another without resolving anything; all this and more, and apparently with the willing consent of huge numbers of my fellow Americans. I see and hear daily references to our war on terrorism, and I think of our war on drugs and our war on poverty and our war on crime *and wonder if this new war against an equally elusive and spectral enemy will have a happier outcome.*

I have heard few public officials or pundits wonder aloud why someone might hate this nation enough to do what was done on September 11 beyond self-serving and shallow explanations such as "these men hate freedom" or "you can't explain pure evil."

I expect those men were evil, or at least profoundly twisted. I don't imagine I would like to live in a world where they were in charge. But there are many ways to see the world and what happens in it. The great wonder to me is that such a small percentage of the world's population can dispose of

so much of the world's resources year after year for decades and decades and then be shocked to discover that we have enemies.

Imagine for a moment how the world must appear to the tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees, many of them as old as me — and I am 53 — who have never known any home but a crowded one-room cinder block shack in a crowded U.N. refugee camp. Imagine for a moment how the world must appear to the thousands of Bosnian Muslims who were displaced, brutalized, maimed and murdered for four long years while the West stood around and wrung its collective hands. Imagine for a moment how the world must appear to the tens of thousands of Iraqi mothers whose children have died of malnutrition and disease resulting from an economic embargo kept in place by the United States of America for more than a decade in order to punish a people whose only crime is their failure to muster the resources and wherewithal to overthrow the brutal dictator who rules them with a lethal fist.

It is hard to imagine these things, especially at a time when we ourselves are still grappling with our own grief and pain. But we would do well to give some consideration to the sufferings of others, and who is responsible for that suffering, because if we think we can somehow make ourselves secure from the kind of attack this nation sustained on September 11 by sheer force of arms and military might, we have not put enough thought into the problem. And to imagine that we are a wholly innocent nation wantonly attacked by cowardly madmen for no sane reason will lead us nowhere useful. Millions of people hate the United States of America, and at least some of them have good reason to do so.

It is not and will never be possible to find and kill them all, and the very effort will only create still more enemies.

So I think it is in our own best interests to ask ourselves why so many people hate us and what we might do about it. How many of us wear \$80, \$100, \$120 sneakers? Have we ever seriously wondered who made those sneakers and how much they were paid to do so? Count up the number of telephones and television sets and CD players and computers you have in your house. Most of us have lives filled to overflowing with things. The most popular cars in America are three-ton gas-guzzling monsters. We have become, in fact and in name, not citizens but consumers.

I heard two very remarkable things on the radio only a week after September 11, and within minutes of each other. First, a newscaster solemnly reported that 15,000 American sailors and Marines had put to sea to fight terrorism as if the terrorists are out there on the ocean, bobbing around in boats, perhaps rowing to America. Then, only a short while later, an economist said that the best way America can recover from the devastating attack against us is to go shopping. He said we should get out there and go to the mall, buy

things, spend money, get that old economy rolling again. Can you imagine how profoundly obscene that must sound to the many millions of people who cannot put clothes on their children's backs or bread in their children's bellies?

Historically and statistically speaking, most Americans have never had to face the horrors of war. September 11 changed all that. Now we are all combatants, or at least potential casualties, and all our high-tech wizardry is likely to be of little use against determined enemies with time on their

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## My View

JOHN ZUTZ

Repeat a lie often enough and people will begin to believe it. Adolph Hitler knew that. Others are practicing it today. The lie? That everything has changed since September 11.

But the change overseas hasn't been that large. The people who hated us on September 10 hated us September 10 the year before. They probably hated us

for the ten September 10s before that.

The big lie tells us they hate us for what we believe or what we say we stand for. The truth is they hate us for what we do. We are seen as bullies. We use the big stick more often than the soft speech.

The two biggest changes have been in the United States.

First, there's the changed perception of George W. Bush, who has morphed from a not-too-bright business failure into a Leader With Vision. The emotional reaction and the neo-patriotism engendered by the attack on the States have caused many Americans to follow blindly.

This red, white and blind lockstep has given us the second change: a country with signifi-

cantly fewer liberties. Attorney General Ashcroft — who swore to uphold the Constitution — calls this state of affairs the "new normalcy." We are advised to get used to it for the indefinite future, because we are "at war."

The result? People in prison

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# New Definitions of Reality

HORACE COLEMAN

Dedicated to the principle that made America "great":

You can fool some of the people some of the time, most of the people most of the time and enough of the people enough of the time to keep the game going.

People keep forgetting: this is a democracy. In a republic. Run by an oligarchy.

**Key definition:** Cynic — anyone better-acquainted with reality than you are.

**Key proposition:** Expediency rules the day ("second thoughts" or remorse set in way late at night, early in the morning or not at all).

**Ethnic Secret #1:** There are advantages to being black. No, I don't mean affirmative action. The only affirmative action I've ever gotten was five points on a Civil Service test for being a vet. Besides, I scored one of the best raw grades in the test-taking population and it was before Affirmative Action anyway.

A number of serious — not anecdotal — evaluations and studies of Affirmative Action show that the people who've gained the most from it have been white women, for reasons such as these:

- Their numbers and percentage in the work force and labor pool
- Their educational level, which generally is higher than that of minority populations as a whole
- Work experience prior to affirmative action
- Work-related or social relationships

But that knowledge and feeling isn't common. And, compared to American men, women's income is still not at parity. Unless you're someone like National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, you're liable to become disabused at a pretty early age of what many people assume is "conventional wisdom."

I mean, early in grade school (I'm talking about the fourth grade or so) I knew from personal observation and experience that the words "with liberty and justice for all" in the Pledge of Allegiance weren't intended to apply to me, my family, relatives, friends or neighbors. Or, to them and theirs. *C'est la vie, c'est la guerre* — one more step in growing up. "Growing up" continues until you breathe

your last.

Take the day I saw a story in the *New York Times* with a reference to the corporation I recently worked for and its CEO. They were cited as prime examples of an underperforming company and an overpaid chief executive. Then there was the multimillion dollar racial discrimination suit — just one of a cluster settled by household name and major corporations (Texaco among them).

And, that was before work at Boeing started (literally) going south — to Alabama and Texas — and the waves of layoffs that devastated segments of the Seattle area and put a dent in Southern California.

So the events of September 11, 2001, although shocking, really didn't surprise me. Which is certainly not to say the USA "deserved it" or "had it coming." As anyone who's ever really ticked someone off, played football, boxed or had a fight that lasted more than a minute knows, you can't be involved in throwing your weight or blows around (especially on a global basis) and not expect to get scratched or hit some.

Now we're nationally fearful and obsessed with physical safety. No matter what happens in our current "war," the terrorists have already "won" just by invading and shattering our reality (illusion) with a spectacular act of violence. America is no longer like a hotel or motel bathroom: *Sanitized For Your Convenience*. Deal with it — we never were safe, just oblivious. In 'Nam you couldn't let yourself be paralyzed by fear. You accepted and "controlled" it, proceeded with caution or recklessness (whichever worked for you at the time), and did what you had to do as best you could. That's everyone's secret — if your feet occasionally touch the ground.

**Ethnic Secret #2:** Anything that can happen to anyone else can happen to you. I realized that when I was twelve and saw a picture of a kid from Chicago on the cover of *Jet* magazine: lynched, 14-year-old Emmett Till. That happened in the same Mississippi where my grandfather had been lynched decades before. Safety is a relative, not absolute, term and condition.



Post 9/11 we have the "war on terrorism." Run by a guy who avoided 'Nam by getting into the Texas Air National Guard which, according to a *Boston Globe* story published during the presidential campaign, he managed to "escape and evade" for a year or so while he was supposed to be enrolled and available. Then there's Enron, the largest bankruptcy in American history and a scandal that's bound to spread like spilled ink before it gets mopped out of our consciousness. As if that wasn't enough, we've had to learn a new geometry term: "the evil axis." I think it's the shortest distance between Dallas and Washington.

**Ethnic Secret #3:** The plantation is the model for America.

That is, either you're an owner, in an affiliated enterprise, a customer or supplier of some sort, a paid or unpaid worker on one or in competition with one. Nowadays we call them companies or corporations instead of plantations.

In between working on my résumé and vita, I read an article called "Modern Fashion or Global Fascism?" (*Tikkun*, January/February 2002.) Written by former Senate Finance Committee counsel Jeff Gates, it gives these facts (and cites sources):

- The financial wealth of the top 1% of U.S. households now exceeds the combined household financial wealth of the bottom 95%.
- The long-term fiscal cost of the Bush II tax cut enacted in 2001 is more than double the long-term Social Security shortfall.
- The share of the nation's after-tax income received by the top 1% nearly doubled from 1979-1997. By 1998, the top-earning

1% had as much combined income as the 100 million Americans with the lowest earnings.

- The wealth of the *Forbes* 400 richest Americans grew an average \$1.44 billion each from 1997 to 2000, for an average daily increase in wealth of \$1,920,000 per person (\$240,000 per hour or 46,602 times the U.S. minimum wage).

When you're out of touch with reality, you get called names like "crazy," "uninformed," "deluded," or "out of it." Hey, I've been called some of that.

Then these factoids recently smacked me in the face:

- The 2000 census estimates there are eight million illegal immigrants in this country.
- A Harvard-based opinion maker, professor and lawyer said torture should be legalized for "special" needs and occasions ("Yes, it should be 'on the books,'" Alan M. Dershowitz, February 16, 2002, *Boston Globe*).
- In a *San Francisco Chronicle* online poll conducted February 18-19 2002, more people thought a third Bush would be elected president before an African American, a Jewish or Asian American or someone gay or lesbian. The poll's respondents, 46% of them, thought a woman was most likely to hold the office before any of the other choices.

Yeah, I know it was informal, unscientific and doesn't necessarily reflect national opinion. Still, seems like good handicapping to me. And unlike most elections, it didn't matter how your chad was hangin' and people could

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## My View

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indefinitely with no representation, no charges filed, no hope of a public hearing, no ability to confront their accusers, and no possibility of a jury of their peers. Law-abiding citizens are liable to be accused of aiding and abetting the enemy, randomly searched, bugged, or investigated for exercising their constitutional rights.

The reduction in liberties is supposedly balanced by the increased security. Another big lie. Some of us may feel safer, but of the hundreds detained, only one is actually being tried for committing a crime.

Furthermore, all the efforts and all the money spent on security have not made us one bit safer from terrorist attacks. All the increased security has managed to do is take scissors and nail files from grandmothers' purses. It couldn't stop a guy with C4 in his shoes. It wouldn't have stopped Tim McVeigh from bombing the Federal Building in Oklahoma.

The only people affected by metal detectors at the courthouse door are law-abiding citizens. Like

the Maginot Line and the Atlantic Wall, if an attacker can't go through, he'll go around.

Since bunkering up and hunkering down can't protect us, I suggest we do just the opposite by making our society more open. Show the world these attacks were pinpricks. Sure they hurt, but they didn't cripple us.

The World Trade Center was a symbol of capitalism, just as the Pentagon is the symbol of our military — that's why they were attacked. But the capitalist system is still going strong, and the military is still operating. The attacks only shut us down momentarily.

What needs to change is our undeclared, endless "war on terrorism."

What we've seen in Afghanistan is the war we wanted to fight in Vietnam, using U.S. air power and high-tech weapons. Sending small numbers of Special Ops advisors and CIA agents to coordinate local troops who pound the ground. Up to this point, it's been fairly successful. We've dislodged

the Taliban and disrupted Al Qaeda.

Our leaders want to continue this "war." Perhaps we'll go to Iraq, or Somalia, or Indonesia, or the Philippines ... or all of them. The White House has publicly stated that this "war" may last fifty years, and that we may carry it to as many as fifty countries.

Since nobody has managed to define what a terrorist is or what exactly constitutes a terrorist act, we can unilaterally declare any person who doesn't like us to be a terrorist, or any country that disagrees with us to be a terrorist country. There's a good reason so many people in the world hate us.

However, there is no guarantee that the strategy that seemed to work in Afghanistan will work anywhere else. It already failed in Vietnam.

That's why we need to step back before this becomes another Cold War or "war on drugs."

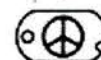
Some will say we won the Cold War. But it cost us years of productivity. The paranoia and schizophrenia in our government crippled us and blinded us to reality.

You remember the "war on drugs"; Richard Nixon declared it

in 1970. Every now and then we hear about its great successes — and it's been so successful there are no drugs in the United States today. In fact, the "war on drugs" has been so successful that even conservative senators and congressmen are beginning to think that legalization and treatment is a better answer than prohibition.

Why wait two or ten or twenty years to question the "war on terrorism"? Do it now. And get us off this security binge. I ask those who insist all this is temporary to remember the first practitioner of the Big Lie:

"The government will make use of these powers only insofar as they are essential for carrying out vitally necessary measures. ... The number of cases in which an internal necessity exists for having recourse to such a law is in itself a limited one." (*Adolf Hitler, in an address to the Reichstag on the occasion of the enactment of the Enabling Act, March 23, 1933.*)



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

## Barry Willdorf

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more time by saving their younger brothers and cousins and neighbors from what they experienced. I wanted to salute them and pay them a tribute, while writing a basically accurate account of what it was like to participate in this effort. Second, I wanted to document the crazy times we were living in then. We have a lot of nostalgia junk out there about hippies in headbands and bellbottoms, wasted on weed. Saying "dig it" and stuff like that. Spitting on soldiers returning home. But that's all Hollywood wants us to get. All form and no content. I want people to know that there were progressive, anti-war people who supported the troops and wanted them not to go and to come home safely.

I want people to know that some of us did what we could to help them when they needed help. Not just back-slapping, buy-you-a-beer, kind of support but we were there to do our best to get them the benefits and discharges that that they were entitled to. There are some folks out there today who have the GI bill, homes, education, health care, because I and some other committed people stood up and supported them. I consider our service to them to have been an honor and a privilege and I wanted to get that message across.



JEANNE FRIEDMAN, A VVAW MEMBER, WAS AT ONE TIME WEST COAST COORDINATOR FOR VVAW.

## Where Do We Go From Here

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side and nothing they are not willing to lose. Nor can we make ourselves more secure by taking fingernail clippers and crochet hooks away from airline passengers.

If the United States of America is ever to find real peace and security, we must start sharing with the rest of the world all the blessings and bounty this world has to offer. This will not be easy to do because it will mean that all of us will have to give up at least some of what we have, but it will be, in the end, easier to accomplish than any other option avail-

able to us. We need only look to the fate of the Greeks, the Romans, the Turks, or the Spanish for proof. We forget at our own peril that the sun never used to set on the British Empire.



W. D. EHRHART'S LATEST BOOK, *THE MADNESS OF IT ALL: ESSAYS ON WAR, LITERATURE AND AMERICAN LIFE*, WILL BE PUBLISHED LATER THIS YEAR BY MCFARLAND & CO., INC.



Kent State demo, 1977



## New Definitions of Reality

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only vote once.

I told my son when he was thinking about joining the military that "this country is well worth defending but a lot of its wars aren't worth fighting." He enlisted in the Air Force. Third consecutive generation in my family to do military service.

My younger daughter just finished her Americorps training and got her assignment: Mike Tyson's old Brooklyn neighborhood. Her e-mail of today said: "I'm going to be working in a public school tutoring and mentoring grades 1-6. I'll also be running an after-school program with my team in an apartment complex [project] we'll be living in."

**Ethnic Secret #4:** Despite past and current history, the overwhelming, vast majority of black folk love and support their country and don't even belong to a militia.

Meanwhile, I'm working on my version of Ambrose Bierce's "Devil's Dictionary":

**Capitalism.** "Monopoly" with real money. (As a kid you probably changed the rules to keep the game going and interesting. Same same now?) A state-sponsored Ponzi scheme that works as well as the original. That is, it periodically breaks down. It basically works the way cancer does: continuous sweet-smelling growth that can disfigure, cripple or kill. Periodically, people tinker with it

by poisoning, pruning or cutting it down.

When capitalism doesn't work well, you just die and start all over (like a video game with new lives but not as easily or automatically). Also called "downturn," "recession," "looking for a job," or "going broke." The endless recycling is called "hell," "opportunity," or "free enterprise," depending on your politics, viewpoint and religion.

**Capital crime.** Not having enough capital.

**Caste.** A grave society puts some people into before they're dead.

**Closure.** The American ability to forget unpleasant things without actually understanding, accepting or resolving them.

**Communism.** A brutal utopian fantasy. A bad economic and political system run by political hacks, the influential, fanatics and hangers-on for their benefit. In other words, basically, and ultimately, like all other systems.

**Day trading.** Doing your dirt in the light based on small changes in perceived values that disregard actual value; short-sighted petty theft.

**Death.** A thing that's not supposed to happen to Americans. If it does, it's "an accident" or "a tragedy" instead of inevitable.

**Democrat.** A member of a mob with feelings of moral superiority it can't enforce and aspirations to the bourgeoisie and power.

**Fascism.** A system of gov-

ernment and economics that's in tune with raw and basic human nature but is only good if you're at the top of it. In other words, pretty much like the rest of the systems or your local police.

**Flag.** A piece of cloth, often cheaply made in a foreign country, that has symbolic meaning in another country. Derived from principles and circumstances no one remembers, understands or practices. Colorful cloth with less practical use than a cleaning rag that can inspire wars, needless suffering and songs you can't sing well whose words you can't remember.

**Liberty & license.** Two different things that people confuse with each other, embracing the latter and avoiding the former. See *Rights & responsibilities*.

**Patriotism.** Flag-waving symbolic behavior done by people who hate paying taxes or dues, which they avoid whenever possible.

**Religious Right.** A self-selected and -anointed group who know God loves them best and would think like them — if He thought correctly and said "Amen!" with the right intonation, volume and conviction.

**Republican.** One of a group of organized anarchists who aspire, or actually belong, to an oligarchy that unnaturally expands exponentially while assuming God loves them best.

**Rights & responsibilities.** Two concepts people think are mutually exclusive (like love and marriage) and should never be used in the same phrase.

**Stock market.** A Ponzi

scheme based on paper issued and sold by companies whose worth is calculated by "expert" guessers and public whim. The first set of paper is redeemable for paper called money the government promises will be worth something when you want something real in exchange for it.

**Socialism.** A theoretically good political system that ignores human nature and economic reality and only works in small, homogeneous and relatively weak states.

**Stuff.** Things bought with money that "the new" and enjoyment wear off of faster than a honeymoon.

**Taxes.** What no one wants to pay while demanding (and expecting) all the services and benefits taxes pay for.

**The Way Things Spozed To Be.** A skewed distribution of money, happiness, power, approval and influence that favors you.

**Ethnic Secret #5:** On the last census, the first opportunity to do so, I checked the three boxes I'm entitled to. People and things are often — but not always — how you're used to looking at them.

Another war, people. Or, rather, another version of the same long struggle with the domestic Taliban and ol' massa. Lock and load.



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

## Letters to VVAW

I am a freelance writer doing research for a children's book on the Vietnam War, which will be published by Marshall Cavendish, New York, in 2003. The book will be a part of "American Voices," a series that tells the story of key events in U.S. history, through letters, editorials, diaries, and other documents of the times. I would like to include a leaflet, pamphlet, petition, or some other document distributed by VVAW during the Vietnam War years, accompanied by a brief discussion of your organization and mission. (A bit of personal history: my brother Jeff Schomp, who served in Vietnam from 1970-71, was a member and supporter of VVAW; also, I had some correspondence with Joe Miller of VVAW in 1999, when I

was researching and writing the book "Letters from the Homefront: The Vietnam War" — that book has recently been published, and included an acknowledgment of his helpfulness.)

I hope to hear from you, and would be happy to provide any further information on my current project.

Thanks,

Virginia Schomp  
<virichip@warwick.net>



Dear Comrades,

I was a draft resister in the Vietnam War, living as an exile in London. After meeting the VVAW members attending a conference in Paris as the time of the signing of the Paris accords in 1973, a group of resisters, vets and others in London formed the London chapter of VVAW.

Three years later I became a delegate to the Democratic convention, where I was nominated for vice president by Ron Kovic in order to speak about the need for amnesty for resisters, deserters and vets with less-than-honorable discharges. You may recall that

event, immortalized in the final scene of the film version of Kovic's autobiography.

VVAW was there that evening, sharing in a brief moment of triumph for the anti-war movement and the subsequent legal relief it brought. The unity of vets and war resisters was important in giving lie to the notion that the two were different, were at odds with each other, even disliked each other. The truth is that both groups of young people recognized that the war was wrong and acted out of true patriotic loyalty to the principles America stands for.

In solidarity,

Fritz Efaw





# In Memory of Chaim Shatan: the Human Being, the Organizer, the Artist

ARTHUR EGENDORF

[Reprinted from the Fall 2001 issue of *Traumatic Stress Notes*.]

In all that Chaim (Hy) Shatan (1924-2001) leaves behind, at least three faces shine through: the human being, the organizer/campaigner and the artist. Hy was always all three — and more.

Yes, everyone is human. But in Yiddish, Hy's mother tongue, he was a *mensch*, a term fraught with ethical import, the highest human achievement. Hy, the non-religious Jew, nevertheless met the ancient, Talmudic test: "To know how much goodness there is in a man, visit him at home." Hy leaves no greater living testament than his four offspring, their spouses and seven grandchildren, all close friends with one another and with their warm and generous mother and grandmother, Hy's wife, Norma.

Also testifying to Hy's *menschlichkeit* are his progeny in spirit — the many hundreds of patients, analysts and therapists-in-training who were fortunate enough to sit in the presence of this unusually patient, attentive, intuitively gifted man.

After college and medical school at McGill, finishing in the late 1940s, Hy became a practicing psychoanalyst in New York, training at the prestigious William Alanson White Institute, later

teaching and heading up the postdoctoral psychoanalytic clinic at New York University. But nothing in his resume captures what Jeffrey Jay has said: "He was so comfortable being a psychiatrist that he seldom acted like one."

I met Hy in 1970, in the first Vietnam veteran rap group — he organized the original cohort of 40 professional volunteers. Spending years of time in that effort, he helped make a place for people to explore what it might mean to transform their sufferings. He wrote about this topic in the *New York Times* and the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. Hy the organizer and campaigner then took off as never before. He hired a vet from the rap group to help, and lobbied the American Psychiatric Association to include a name and description in the official nomenclature to validate the reality of extreme, reactive suffering. We owe it to Hy's spearheading efforts that PTSD first appeared in the third edition of the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1980.

Hy also was an artist, a visionary and a prophet. Even late in life, Hy reread and discussed Shakespeare in formal courses. And in recent years, crippled with arthritis, he still managed to go to the theater and concerts. But most crucial, Hy used his gifts and

greatly developed skill to see into our individual and collective predicament. He believed great truths cut across intellectual divides, bridging science, the arts and all forms of genuine inquiry.

Hy saw PTSD as more than a reactive, dysfunctional psychophysical state. He wanted us to understand and respond as to a great call from our human depths — to the cry of anguish that signals, most of all, a moral disorder that afflicts us all. He wanted our healing mission as traumatologists ultimately to address that wider disorder. He wished for us, in our efforts to foster human resilience, to raise one of the most fundamental questions: How do we manage to make our "selves"?

Meditating for decades on that and related issues, Hy concluded that we swim in a cultural sea whose terrible, self-fulfilling prophecy is an oppositional logic, one that presupposes enemies. Unless awakened to this great pitfall, nothing is so defining of who we are as whom we stand against. In Hy's coinage, "enemization" is pushed to the extreme in combat training. But Hy began to think, then speak out and write that enemization, or our implicit tendency to make other human beings a hated "sub-species," underserving of life, pervades our social reality.



Hy saw a role for traumatologists as leaders, practicing and showing others how to practice a refusal to project evil onto others. Our work must transcend the age-old habit of making others the embodiment of propensities each of us is capable of. And in that effort, we not only assume a responsibility for the state of the world but also are granted a great privilege: to make our singular contributions, as co-creators of a culture that is truly hospitable to life.

Moral support, comments and suggestions provided by Norma Shatan, Dr. Gabrielle Shatan and Dr. Jeffrey Jay.



ARTHUR EGENDORF SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH THE 525TH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE GROUP, SAIGON, AND HE TESTIFIED AT THE WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION IN 1971.

## Returning to Vietnam in 2002

*continued from page 13*

the mountain.

Hue City proved to be very laid-back. It was also where we had our only experience with rain. There are a number of tourist sites in Hue. I visited a small area of the Citadel. We stayed in the tourist section of the city, sort of a "Backpackers' Row."

The last stop was Ho Chi Minh City. I visited both the Museum of the Revolution and the War Remnants Museum. To me, the latter was significantly better. Both the French and the U.S. invasions were featured in photos and material exhibits. A newer exhibit featured drawings of hopes for peace and reconciliation by young children.

The toughest part of the trip was hitting the profound jet lag on

returning to the States. It took two weeks to begin to feel in the flow of the pace here. My first sharing about the trip happened on the flight from San Francisco to Chicago with someone who had been stationed in Da Nang as a corpsman in 1970. He said that he would never go back. This made me realize that when deciding whether to return to Vietnam, it depends on who you are and what your experience was. I was very grateful for the opportunity to go back, and I would do it again.



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

## Paula Barry

I am saddened to report that Jan (Crumb) Barry's wife Paula passed away on January 9 after a long, painful battle with cancer.

Jan and Paula have been together for over thirty years, were married in 1975 and have two sons.

Paula was cremated and her ashes scattered on the Hudson River at her request.

David Cline



# James Edward Pechin (1947-2002)

JOE BANGERT

Jim Pechin, 54, a long-time leading Vietnam veterans' advocate, succumbed after a long battle with the effects of Agent Orange, hepatitis and diabetes on Sunday, February 26, 2002 at 3:20 a.m. in his hospital bed with his boots off in York, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Pechin was born and raised in Lafayette, Indiana. A graduate of Central Catholic High School, Mr. Pechin earned his bachelor's degree in business management from Indiana State University, and completed post-graduate studies at Lone Mountain College in San Francisco.

He was a U.S. Army war veteran who served fourteen months in Nha Trang, Vietnam as a helicopter machine gun door gunner. He was a lifelong friend to Steve Sherlock, who went to high school with Jim. Jim returned from Vietnam in 1969 and was a founding member of VVAW in Indiana.

Jim was a survivor of Operation Dewey Canyon III, where he and a thousand other Vietnam veterans seeking an immediate end to the war in Vietnam returned their medals in protest to Congress in April 1971. Along with his hippie minions from the University of Indiana at Bloomington, Jim set up a "people's kitchen" that fed the masses for both Dewey Canyon III and May Day 1971.

He became friends and comrades with thousands of fellow veterans who marched from all over the country to *bring our brothers home, now*.

Jim resided in northern California in the early 1970s and was instrumental in creating alternative business structures with human and equitable reward systems. He was a leading member of the Flower of the Dragon, who along with Jack McCloskey pioneered in obtaining treatment for heroin addicts flooding back from Vietnam and staying in the Bay Area. He later was a founding member of Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco.

Pechin later moved to Washington, DC, where he joined Bobby Muller in organizing, financing and founding both the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation as well as the Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., the first Congressionally-chartered organization of Vietnam-era veterans in the United States. He also acted as business manager for both organizations.

Jim was with the first group of Vietnam veterans to return to Vietnam in the early 1980s, and was one of only a handful of early advocates of full normalization of relations with Vietnam. A tireless advocate of counseling and compensation for his brother Viet-

nam veterans, his passing has left a very large gap within their ranks.

During the past four years Jim operated and managed the Veterans' Thrift Store in downtown York, Pennsylvania. He was a founding member of Aid to Southeast Asia (ASA), which continues to heal the wounds of war in Vietnam.

He is survived by his beloved mother, Mrs. Loretta Pechin; three sisters, Mrs. Sharla Gray, Mrs. Theresa Kline, and Mrs. Pam Van Laere; two nieces and a nephew; his godson, Bart Balyard; and thousands of Vietnam veterans whose lives he touched all across this land.

Ten Hut! Comrade Jim Pechin, we salute you. Brother, you were always there for us, and we will never, ever, forget you nor your contributions!

I personally will never forget the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Parade in the Windy City, which had us all smiling and partying. I also remember holding court with Jim on the roof of his apartment across the street from Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor along with SS. It was late at night, and VVAW had been celebrating its 25th anniversary at Howard University. Afterwards we were drinking cold beers, some whiskey perhaps, and taking a few tokens of bronchial dilators from

Uncle Ho's Victory Garden -- Hanoi Gold. Jim then pleaded with me to sing, *a capella*, the "Ballad of Uncle Ho" as well as "We will Liberate the South," in Vietnamese.

Jim was a lifelong Buddhist yippie reformed Cao Daist!

A lotus blossom has fallen!  
Rest in Peace, dear brother!  
I'm not afraid to say I loved you.

Hoa binh mai mai ("peace forever"), over and out.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Donations in memory of Jim Pechin may be sent to:**

Aid to Southeast Asia, Inc. (ASA)  
1316 4th St. SE, 2nd Floor  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

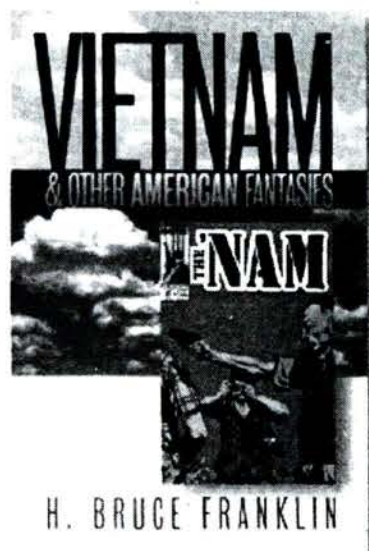
Phone 612-378-9491

Fax 612-378-9479

E-mail <sherlockasa@qwest.net>



JOE BANGERT SERVED WITH VMO-6 (MARINE OBSERVATION SQUADRON 6) IN QUANG TRI, VIETNAM, 1968-1969. BANGERT JOINED VVAW DURING THE SUMMER OF 1970 AND PARTICIPATED IN OPERATION RAW, WSI AND OPERATION DEWEY CANYON III IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



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Veterans Day parade in San Francisco, 1977.



# The Corner of the Dead: Ayacucho, Peru

LOUIS DE BENEDETTE

I met Guadalupe Ccallocunto Olano at a mass for peace in Lima, Peru in 1984. She was 24 and the mother of four small children. Her husband, Eladio, was missing, forcibly "disappeared" by the Peruvian military security forces in the Andean city of Ayacucho. Guadalupe was organizing relatives of the disappeared, and she helped found the association of the relatives of the disappeared in Ayacucho (ANFASEP). Later, she became a member of Service for Peace and Justice (SERPAJ), founded by Adolfo P. Esquivel, winner of the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize. SERPAJ was a nonviolent organization that sought to stop the disappearances and assassinations by military forces that were waging a war against the terrorist Maoist group Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path"). I liked Guadalupe from the moment I met her, and we became friends. She asked me to be the godfather of her children.

Guadalupe was forcibly disappeared from her home in Ayacucho by military and police security forces on June 10, 1990, solely for her human rights activism. Her case received international attention, including that of the U.S. ambassador to Peru and members of Congress. I assumed the financial support of her children and have sought justice for this martyr whose killers have not yet been found. Her body lies somewhere in the Corner of the Dead: the literal meaning of the Quechua Indian name *Ayacucho*.

I returned to Ayacucho this year to observe the work of a newly-formed truth commission. When I was there in 1984, the military was waging a war against the Shining Path and its leader

Abimael Guzman, who was eventually captured in 1992. The group is practically wiped out except for a small contingent in the jungle coca region. However, as Father Neptali Liceta told me, even if there was no Sendero, the army would invent one since they want to kill all the native people in the Andes. This seemed to have been the case in Vietnam and Honduras on the part of the U.S. government.

I visited Peru often during the 1990s to see my godchildren, and I was their sole financial support. Now they are older and maybe they will continue in their mother's direction; at least this is my hope. Until they returned to Ayacucho in 1997, they lived in Lima for their own protection. They, in addition to their grandmother and Guadalupe's sister, were witnesses to their mother's abduction. In 2000, both President Alberto Fujimori and Vladimir Montesinos, the notorious security chief and assassin, were deposed following the Barrios Altos massacre. On the surface, things are now calm in Ayacucho.

I call Ayacucho "the killing fields," but this is not entirely accurate. Instead of bodies lying on top of the ground, the bodies of over 20,000 disappeared natives are lying in thousands of clandestine graves scattered throughout the department of Ayacucho and the emergency zone. More than 60% of these disappearances are attributed to the military and the police.

Looking for dead bodies is like looking for landmines. Most of the suspected terrorist natives were innocent; they were brought to military or police barracks



Louis and Alvaro at march in Ayacucho.

where they were tortured and killed. Their bodies may have been taken to another distant barracks and secretly buried. Reports state that there are crematoriums in these army barracks. It has also been reported that the army used American manuals from the Vietnam War: pacification manuals containing torture and persuasion techniques.

The Peruvian army trained at the School of the Americas (SOA) and used the notorious manuals teaching torture, assassination, and "disappearance." Now Colombian soldiers are taught the same, and soon Nicaraguan soldiers will attend the SOA. It all leads to the defense of capitalism and America's hold on the region of Latin America. Vladimir Montesinos, who controlled the security forces during the Fujimori regime, was a graduate of the SOA. I wonder if some soldier from Peru who attended the SOA training might have killed my friend Guadalupe.

Guadalupe must have gone through hell. For the twenty years between 1980 and 2000, the people of Ayacucho lived in terror of the military and the Shining Path. I met people everywhere who had a loved one disappeared or killed. Guadalupe loved her people, and she gave her life seeking the truth. She wanted those responsible punished. Without justice, the violence will return.

I went back to Ayacucho this year and stayed in her home, recalling the eyewitness accounts of her abduction on June 10, 1990. Fifteen hooded men wearing army boots and carrying military arms

entered her room and terrorized the children. She was taken out into the street — dressed only in her pajamas — where other military and police groups met her. She has never been seen again, and we do not know where her body is or how she died. She is listed as one of the 30,000 "forced disappeared" of Peru.

Ambassador Anthony Quainton, who was in Peru and who had a deep interest in Guadalupe's case, visited General Fernandez-Davila in Ayacucho on December 11, 1990. As stated in the declassified embassy documents, Quainton pointedly asked the general about the Ccallocunto case. The general responded that his men are "not angels," and he never answered in a direct manner. Quainton believed that Guadalupe was killed by the military because she was a member of a base community thought to be communist.

SERPAJ was entirely closed down after Guadalupe's disappearance and has never reopened. Her abduction took place on the morning of the election when the city was filled with troops and during a curfew. No terrorist could have entered the city, and Guadalupe was not killed by terrorists. She intended to vote in the elections and then take her children to SERPAJ in Lima, where she had opened a sewing shop for relatives of the disappeared in exile. She was recuperating from a severe case of tuberculosis. Military forces always take out the leaders like Guadalupe.

There is a calm in Ayacucho, but the native people do not trust the military. The new president, Alejandro Toledo, is a Harvard graduate and is running into problems with the people seeking jobs.



March by relatives of the disappeared in Ayacucho, Jan 25, 2002.

*continued on next page*



# International Criminal Court Imminent

CARL NYBERG

When the 60th country ratifies the International Criminal Court (ICC) Treaty, the world will have a permanent institution to try perpetrators of genocide, major war crimes and crimes against humanity when nations with jurisdiction either cannot or will not prosecute these crimes. The 60th ratification is expected to occur between April and June of 2002. Unlike past tribunals such as Nuremberg, Tokyo, Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the ICC will have potentially global jurisdiction.

What would the ICC mean to the Vietnam War and the larger Southeast Asia conflict? Would former U.S. senator Bob Kerrey have been eligible for prosecution? What would the ICC mean for Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge genocide?

To prosecute a war crime before the ICC, the prosecutor must show that the crime was committed as part of a plan or policy, or was otherwise widespread. This not only protects soldiers who are implementing policy from being scapegoats, but also pressures the prosecutors to move up the chain of command to the people with the power to make policy. To prosecute Kerrey the prosecutor would have to prove that any war crimes committed by Kerrey were part of

a plan or policy.

Recently the United Nations scrapped a plan to create a tribunal to hold Khmer Rouge leaders accountable. Because the Khmer

United States all had reason to want the United Nations to fail in negotiating a tribunal for the Cambodian genocide.

President Clinton signed the

selves?

A coalition of global justice organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Feminist Majority, United Nations Association, the Methodist Church, and Campaign for United Nations Reform, has created an advocacy website <[www.USAforICC.org](http://www.USAforICC.org)> to allow American ICC supporters to contact Congress, other public officials and media outlets in support of the ICC. You are invited to use it to get more information about the Court and to contact your members of Congress.



**Why should the United States be able to exempt itself from scrutiny by the Court if other countries can't exempt themselves?**

Rouge deliberately targeted lawyers and other intellectuals, the Cambodian judiciary remains in shambles. The United Nations offered to support the Cambodian judiciary, but the parties could never agree on the specifics. If the ICC had jurisdiction over the crimes — and it won't have jurisdiction for crimes committed before the Court is created — there would be no debating the details of creating the Court. The Court would already exist. Since Hun Sen, Cambodia's leader, was a member of the Khmer Rouge and the United States and China supported the Khmer Rouge in conflicts with Vietnam, one could infer Hun Sen, China and the

ICC Treaty on the last day a country could sign the treaty without ratifying it. Clinton recommended that President Bush not submit the ICC Treaty for ratification by the U.S. Senate. He described the treaty as "flawed." The technical issues identified by the United States had been addressed by the time of Clinton's statement. The only remaining "flaw" was that the United States couldn't exempt itself from the jurisdiction of the Court. What good would a court be to prosecute genocide if a government could exempt itself from prosecution? Why should the United States be able to exempt itself from scrutiny by the Court if other countries can't exempt them-

CARL NYBERG WAS AN ACTIVE DUTY NAVY OFFICER FROM 1989 TO 1996. IN 1993 HE SERVED AS A UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPER IN CAMBODIA. HE CURRENTLY WORKS FOR CAMPAIGN FOR UNITED NATIONS REFORM <[WWW.CUNR.ORG](http://WWW.CUNR.ORG)>. HE GRADUATED FROM THE U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY IN 1989, WAS A NAVY RECRUITING COMMAND WHISTLEBLOWER IN 1996 AND WAS THE REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE U.S. CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES IN 1997, WHEN HE FIRST JOINED VVAW.

## The Corner of the Dead: Ayacucho, Peru

*continued from previous page*

President Bush visited Peru at the end of March, and this trip is suspicious. Colombia is in a civil war, and Bush would like a U.S. military base in Peru.

Ayacucho never was a strategic area, but it is a symbol. It was the seat of the Incan empire, and later the last battlefield in the victory that permanently ousted the Spanish. I believe that Ayacucho will go down in history as the hope for a new Peru, once

justice is rendered to the disappeared and murdered. The USA abandoned Peru and has ignored the human rights abuses there for years. We have innocent people to mourn there, like those of Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and so many other places. As Americans, our resistance to our own government continues in the best non-violent tradition. It is our government that is violent.

The Peruvian Truth and Rec-

onciliation Commission began its investigations last year, but relatives of the disappeared and members of ANFASEP marched in the streets. They were protesting the commission and its lack of desire for justice. I was among the demonstrators, as was my godson, Alvaro. The relatives are now in a state of waiting, and if they are not satisfied, they will start another campaign within three or four months. This commission has no power of law and cannot send people to trial. It has limited funds and lacks the people power to investigate so many cases. Currently, the commission is seeking declarations from the relatives and opening up secret graves. One such grave in Chuchi, Ayacucho had eight bodies, all shot in the head. Eyewitnesses came forth and said the military was responsible. There are thousands of such graves. I have hopes that the relatives of the disappeared will never be quiet, and I hope I can return to Peru to support them. Anyone interested in more information or in

donating money to the relatives' campaign can contact me.

Guadalupe's case is currently being reviewed by the Peruvian government, since it was sent to them by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has some clout. However, this may only produce an apology to the relatives along with a sum of money. I want those responsible to be tried and punished. This means a movement, but that is what the relatives of the many disappeared want.

Guadalupe struggled for all, and the night before she was abducted she had called Lima to report two more cases of disappeared persons. Guadalupe was a woman of peace and justice. Nothing short of peace and justice would honor her life and her death at age 31. Guadalupe will be with us forever.



LOUIS DE BENEDETTE IS A MEMBER OF THE CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER OF VVAW.



*Louis and Guadalupe at their first meeting in 1984.*



# There Was No Music Soundtrack in Vietnam

REVIEW BY PAUL COX

## *We Were Soldiers*

Directed by Randall Wallace

Written by Joseph L. Galloway and Harold G. Moore (book)

Starring Mel Gibson, Madeline Stowe, Greg Kinnear, and Sam Elliot

Mel Gibson's new flick, "We Were Soldiers," completely rewrites the historical record in order to fit in with the "new patriotism" that Hollywood thinks grips America. Many reviewers call it a heroic film about heroic men, and it is that. Mick Lasalle (*SF Chronicle*) called it one of the best war films of the last twenty years, and he may be right — of course, that's not saying much. But why did producer/director/screenwriter Randal Wallace ("Braveheart," "Pearl Harbor") think it necessary to lie about the actual battle? Only one reviewer, Ken Turan of the *LA Times*, panned it, pointing out that the film is simple-minded and devoid of historical context. But why play up the lie about the actual battle?

The book on which this stinker of a movie was based, "We Were Soldiers Once ... And Young," was written by the battalion commander (Lt. Col. Hal Moore) and a journalist (Joe Galloway) who was on hand for most of the LZ X-Ray portion of the battle. While the book itself is

simpleminded and devoid of historical context, it is, at least, brutally clear on what went down. Why did Moore and Galloway tolerate and even celebrate the lie about the actual battle?

has the temerity to end on a victorious note after only a quarter of the American fatalities had been inflicted.

Why did they do this? Wallace could easily have ended

film is a real pasture pastry. As insulting as it is to Vietnam veterans, the fundamental disservice of a movie like this is to our children. It pushes the fantasy that war is a proper endeavor for young men, and that military force is an effective and inevitable instrument of projecting America's power. This movie psychologically prepares boys and young men (and, increasingly, young women) for any war the old men next decide they must fight.

Between ultra-violent video games, shoot-'em-up movies, and a media that varnishes the news and sprays cologne on the rotting carnage of war, our children don't have a chance. The techniques of propaganda disguised as entertainment are perhaps more mature than during, say, World War II, but they are still lies.

Tell Paramount films that their bullshit stinks. E-mail them at <info@pde.paramount.com> or write them at Paramount Pictures Corporation, Los Angeles, California. You could suggest that they rename this movie. How about: "We Were Bait Once ... and Young"? Or maybe: "Big Fat Liar"? That name may be taken, however.



PAUL COX SERVED AS A MARINE IN VIETNAM FROM 1969 TO 1970 AND IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.

**But many veterans of the Vietnam War have well-developed bullshit detectors. Our detectors tell us this film is a real pasture pastry.**

What was the lie? The movie completely changes the end of the story. In the movie, after Colonel Moore (Mel Gibson) and his men of the 1st Battalion/7th Cavalry (1/7) kill all the North Vietnamese in the neighborhood, they depart the field of battle as battered but victorious heroes, leaving nothing behind but a pile of dead North Vietnamese. In reality, 1/7 was relieved by a column of troops from the 2nd Battalion/7th Cavalry (2/7) that two days later was ambushed while moving to LZ Albany. The official count of American casualties from 1/7 was 49 dead and 124 wounded, and the count from 2/7 was 155 dead and 123 wounded. Thus the movie

the movie as he began it. The movie begins with a short segment of a deadly ambush on a French column in a nearby valley ten years earlier; it could and should have ended with at least a passing reference to the dying that happened after Mel Gibson's character left the battlefield. The audience might have left the theater with a very different impression, and a more accurate understanding of the historical truth. But apparently Mr. Wallace was more interested in a little flag-waving and wanted to send the audience home with a patriotic buzz. But many veterans of the Vietnam War have well-developed bullshit detectors. Our detectors tell us this

## Only Those Who Have Died Will Ever See the End of War

REVIEW BY BOB RIGGLE

## *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*

By Mark Bowden (Signet, 2002)

## *Black Hawk Down*

Directed by Ridley Scott

Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and Ridley Scott

Written by Ken Nolan and Steve Zaillian

Starring Josh Hartnett, Tom Sizemore, Ewan McGregor, Sam Shepard, and William Fichtner.

If you're ready for close to two hours out of two hours and 24 minutes of sheer chaos, death, destruction, fear, anger, rage, and absolute madness, then this movie is for you. Of course, the book comes nowhere near as intense, but ain't it always that way?

"Black Hawk Down" is

based on a true story about a group of Special Operations forces in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993. This group consisted primarily of U. S. Rangers, some Navy Seals, a few USAF combat control technicians, and the Deltas, AKA D-Boys/Operators. The mission: to capture some major lieutenants of Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid.

What was supposed to be 37 to 60 minutes became nearly 18 hours of madness. As we all have seen in our military careers, the best-laid plans for a successful mission can and often do go wrong. Despite similar, totally successful missions in the past, this one couldn't seem to get anything going its way. Part of the problem was the communications system. There were three or four

tiers of communication, from spy planes high above the fight area, down to the JOC (Joint Ops), down to the ground troops, who somehow were supposed to have the entire picture. Go USA. Was this the only major thing wrong? No!

The opening shot of this movie is a quote by Plato, the title of this review. I knew right away it wasn't going to be pretty. Ridley Scott did a fantastic job of showing the intensity of the situation. There were some special effects, but nothing really spectacular. We've all seen war movies and seen the mangled bodies. However, the scene with the one ranger with his entire lower torso blown off seemed realistic, as did the scene showing the man who accepted an unexploded RPG round through his midsection. In

the movie, they were mainly freaked out about getting him out of the vehicle, because it was still hot. They then proceeded to flop him around like a sack of turnips. The book treated him more gently.

With, I'm sure, more PCness, the Somalis were referred to as "Sammies" and "Skinies" in the movie much less often than they were in the book. The disdain of the D-Boys toward the Rangers was also less than presented in the book. The D-Boys thought the Rangers were too young, too regular Army, and too ill-trained. Maybe so. This attitude also carried over to the 10th Mountain Division. Even the Rangers thought they took things too

*continued on next page*



# Afghanistan Veteran Once Removed

REVIEW BY DAVE CURRY

## *Afghanistan: A Russian Soldier's Story*

By Vladislav Tamarov (*Ten Speed Press, 2001*)

The aftermath of 9-11 saw the return to print of the 1992 photoessay "Afghanistan: A Soviet Vietnam." In it the author, Vladislav Tamarov, recounts his experience as a combat soldier in Afghanistan from 1984 to 1986. Tamarov's words and photographs provide one young man's taste of war. Together the narrative and the illustrations produce a totality that exceeds the sum of the two media.

Having grown up in Leningrad, Tamarov was drafted into military service in 1984 at age eighteen. After three months of training in parachuting (a military specialty that he would never use again), he was stationed in Afghanistan serving as a minesweeper (a military specialty in which he received on-the-job training). The parachute training was a ritual for serving in the commandos: the Blue Berets. Minesweeping was essential for staying alive in Afghanistan. Tamarov's selection as a minesweeper was simply that an officer "with a smiling face and sad eyes" pointed him out and said, "A ha! I see a minesweeper."

In ten days, Tamarov was on

a combat mission. As the author notes, "In Afghanistan, one of the most respected professions among the soldiers was that of mine-sweeper." A photograph of the first mine found and disarmed by Tamarov ("An English anti-transport mine, an MK- 7") is provided. "Some twenty meters away ... I found a second mine, and a short distance away a third mine. ... These were Italian mines, 'TS6-1s'. ... These were the first mines I found and disarmed." As noted earlier, he didn't learn how to do this in boot camp; he learned to do it on the spot. He tells how once he was asked if a minesweeper was "the one who lays the mines." He reportedly answered, "No, he's the one who gets blown away by them."

Tamarov recalls that in Afghanistan in the mid-1980s there were mines "everywhere": many different kinds of mines from many different countries. Before the Soviet soldiers returned home, they supplemented the mines that they didn't have to disarm with their own mines for which only they knew the location. The factions of Mujahadeen have continued in the years since to plant mines where they felt they needed them. One can only imagine what it's like to maneuver in the Afghanistan of 2002.

The first printing of the book in 1992, with the subtitle "A So-

viet Vietnam," is supported by comparisons of Tamarov's encounter with war to those of U.S. Vietnam veterans. Obvious are the short-timer calendars, the alienation of Soviet Afghan veterans (referred to as *Afghantsi*) from friends and family upon returning home, and the hospitals filled with veterans disabled physically and mentally by the war. Tamarov credits much of his and other *Afghantsi* healing to interaction with Vietnam veterans from the United States.

There are some differences noted between service in Vietnam and service in Afghanistan. Tamarov's reference to "terribly secret" veterans' hospitals in Russia may not be as different as he thinks from the terribly forgotten veterans' hospitals in the United States. The secrecy of casualty rates and the blackout in the Soviet press about the nature of the war in Afghanistan reported by Tamarov don't compare to the televising of the Vietnam War in the States and the public knowledge of the identities of casualties. American support for the Mujahadeen played a special role for the Soviets fighting in Afghanistan. The Mujahadeen were armed with American stingers and M-16s. Mujahadeen were routinely paid well for each Soviet soldier proven killed. Tamarov notes that the Soviet and later the

Russian governments have officially declared their involvement in Afghanistan to have been a "mistake." No one actually in power has ever officially declared Vietnam a mistake.

Most involved concede that Afghanistan is as timeless as the massive column near Kabul built by Alexander the Great and photographed by Tamarov. Tamarov quotes Alexander: "One can occupy Afghanistan, but one cannot vanquish her." The similarities and differences to Vietnam that resulted in the 1992 printing may now be overshadowed with a newfound value of Tamarov's knowledge. The current U.S. war in Afghanistan is being carried out with very little firsthand coverage by the American press. How different can the experience of combat in Afghanistan fifteen years ago be from combat there today? This may be the only firsthand account of combat in Afghanistan we'll get until our own new vets begin returning.



DAVID CURRY IS A STAFF MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF VVAW, AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, AND AUTHOR OF *SUNSHINE PATRIOTS: PUNISHMENT AND THE VIETNAM OFFENDER* AND CO-AUTHOR OF *CONFRONTING GANGS: CRIME AND COMMUNITY*.

## Only Those Who Have Died

*continued from page 22*

lightly. Being Airborne myself, all I can say is: "Fucking Legs."

Okay. On to the good stuff! The collateral damage was so much minimized during the movie — almost nonexistent — that it's almost like we were the good guys. Not so in the book. Come on, that many rounds, sent off in any direction from a force of 120-150 troops, into thousands of rioters and militia, aren't going to hit something, innocent or otherwise? There came a point during this mission-turned-chaos when these young, elite bucks began to wonder why they were there. Thoughts of betrayal began to make sense to them. U.S. Ranger Sergeant Mike Goodale was wounded in action and sure he was about to die:

He thought about what a ter-

rible thing it was to turn over responsibility for his life, his very existence, to the U.S. government, and because of it he might be breathing his last breath in this shit back room, on this back street dirt floor, in Mogadishu-Fucking-Somalia.

He reflected on how he really wanted to go to war. How he could be or live parts of those war movies he had watched in the innocent years. Suddenly, he resigned himself to the fact that he could die, and now. "People really get killed."

There was an attitude in the book not expressed in the movie. These kids were video game freaks; they just imagined these people were actually shooting at them, actually trying to kill them.

How dare they?! We belong to the strongest, most powerful nation on earth — how dare you try to kill me?! Welcome to war, dudes.



BOB RIGGLE IS THE COORDINATOR FOR VVAW'S MILWAUKEE CHAPTER.





# Vietnam Journal: Willimantic — 11.10.00

MARC LEVY

The bus ride from New York's frenetic Port Authority to sleepy Willimantic took four sleepless hours and cost twenty-nine dollars. The next day a small college would host a conference on Vietnam, known elsewhere as the war against the Americans.

Arriving early, I attended a small gathering at Curbstone Press, the name a perfect eponym, the squat building's wood plank facade smooth as bone.

Outside, beneath an autumn moon, two American combat writers swayed and chatted. I waved hello, walked forward to great Kodiak hugs and breathy greetings. "Let's go inside," one man said. We stagger-stepped into the grungy, low ceilinged, ramshackle house, musty with grime and love.

Under the cold glare of fluorescent lights, a dozen greying men cheerfully conversed while scooping large portions of glutinous moussaka or starchy quiche onto thick paper plates. Two cannonball-shaped chocolate fudge pies sat curiously untouched.

"Another beer?" A corpulent ex-Marine heavy-combat vet asked. "More wine? Hi, and how are ya?" The boisterous Americans spoke diligently of baseball, real estate, current events. "Can you believe that son of a bitch almost tossed a no hitter? Son of a fuckin' bitch." Two ARVN officers, when asked, hinted at harrowing escapes, then changed the subject.

For no apparent reason that I could see, one man, then the next, dragged heavy steel chairs across a threadbare rug; spreading out

evenly, they formed a loose-knit circle. Three wives joined in; two others stood back. How it began I do not recall: round and round, taking turns, each man brought forth the most hilarious, obscene, tasteless jokes I had ever heard. And with each foul, accelerant punchline, the men wildly slapped their thighs, punched violent air, pounded their chests, butchered the room with riotous laughter. Even the women shrieked and cackled.

Best was the "ta ta" joke. Two men in on the gag reeled off the wondrous lines in perfect measure, the phrase spoken in soft, innocent tones, almost childlike, with eyebrows arched slightly, the voice inclined outward at the second syllable.

*Q. How do you say idiot in Vietnamese?*

*A. Ta ta.*

*Q. How do you say two idiots in Vietnamese?*

*A. Ta ta ta ta.*

*Q. How do you say two hundred million idiots in Vietnamese?*

*A. (Sung to "The Star Spangled Banner") Ta ta ta ta ta ta ...*

With each new guest, the obscene beck and call was duly repeated. The Americans, hands smacked red, cheeks gone crimson, roared with ominous pleasure.

A distinguished Vietnamese writer laughed loudest that night. His jollity recalled Mr. Mau, met years past in Michigan. Surviving escape by sea, he poured forth

horrid tales of women raped, men bayoneted, children thrown headlong to chill, watery graves. All the while an inflexible grin commanded his shrieking face.

The next day, in a pleasant auditorium, the conference went well. Each guest read from his work; there were several informative panels. An elder female journalist, tall and handsome and impeccably well-spoken, presented anecdotes from her war experience; some were not pleasant. Upon completion, shifting in her seat as might a four-star general, she boldly pronounced, "I'm done, now. Are there questions?" A portly, cantankerous vet, wearing blue denim overalls, his head freighted with a Vietnam baseball cap dotted with cloisonné pins, stood up and shuffled forward.

"I was in the Seabees in '66," he said. "Up near the DMZ. We fought the Communists cause we was sent there. The way you was talking, you sounded just like Hanoi Jane. She was anti-American, she was. And that bitch talked to us GIs every night on the radio. Talking that communist propaganda shit." He paused, hands pressed to hips. "You... you sound just like her, just like that Hanoi Jane." Folding his arms across his chest, he sniveled, "Ain't you got no regard for disabled vets? Ain't you proud for what America stands for?"

His shrill words made for knee-deep tension in sleepy Willimantic, once, they say, thread capitol of the world, until thread went South and the town went quiet. Several American combat writers seated in the audience turned around and glared. The war correspondent said, "I recognize you. We've spoken before. Every soldier has stories. And there are thousands. Aren't there, sir? Hundreds of thousands." She paused, majestic in equanimity. "I never carried a weapon. I hated war. Apparently, Sir, you didn't."

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The following week I told the "ta ta" joke to Dr. Allan Foster. His left arm torn off one day, gut shot the next, the chaplain had pronounced last rites over his limp body at the battle of Dak To. More than once Dr. Foster has blithely stated, "I have no issues with Vietnam. I have no anger toward the



Marc Levy on patrol in Song Be, 1969.

Vietnamese." Dr. Foster counsels ex-combatants who remain deeply troubled.

"You think that's funny?" he said. "Am supposed to laugh? I find it highly offensive and disrespectful. You should be ashamed of yourself. You and your funny friends."

"I didn't laugh," I told him. "It hurt too much. But look how they mock us: their language, our music ..." "Oh, bullshit," he said, cutting me off before I could finish.

We argued. I walked out. Dr. Foster didn't get it. Civilians, combatants, everyone caught up in war's chaos and caterwaul comprise one great harmonic slaughter. Over time, its winners and losers, gunned and ground down, scattered to dust or windblown leaves, become a suckling infants cry, a peaceable sleep; until it starts all over again.



MARC LEVY SERVED WITH THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA IN 1970. HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING *THE BEST AMERICAN EROTICA 2000*, *STORIES FROM THE INFIRMARY*, AND *WILL WORK FOR PEACE*. A VIDEO OF HIS WAR-RELATED PROSE AND PHOTOGRAPHS, *THE REAL DEAL*, HAS RECEIVED CRITICAL ACCLAIM AND IS DISTRIBUTED BY THE CINEMA GUILD. SEE MORE OF HIS WORK ONLINE AT: <WWW.VOICESOFEVILLAGE.COM/REALDEAL.HTM>.



Marc Levy (left) patching up a bamboo cut in Song Be, 1969.



## Veteran as Nigger

*continued from page 10*

and are then overturned after years of appeals. Veterans see this as proof that the denials were illegal and demand disciplinary or criminal actions against those whose decisions were reversed. The VA simply sees these as mistakes and will do no more than say, "Oops, sorry." Veterans see this as the arrogance of those who think that they are above the law. This perceived lack of accountability outrages veterans.

I have had to talk insanely irate victims of this abuse out of violence against the VA employees who denied or delayed their disability claims. The threats were, in reality, just hot air, but I could swear that I sometimes saw steam coming out of their ears as they were ranting.

Then I have to talk to veterans who were made homeless and hopeless by such VA actions into continuing to fight to live. Many veterans just give up because they no longer feel that society appreciates their sacrifices and have now come to see themselves as nothing more than a burden to society. They won't rob anyone because they would rather die than use violence to survive and their personal honor is the only thing they have left.

Some are angered when they see their battlefield heroics exploited to attract cannon fodder for the politicians' latest war or guinea pigs for the nuclear or chemical industries. When they wake up from nightmares of blood combat, veterans can no longer take comfort in the thought that the deaths that they witnessed or caused were worth the cost or justified by anything more than survival. I have seen veterans lose hope and try to kill themselves using drugs, fast cars or police return-fire to do it. Many try to kill perceived enemies, strangers or their own poverty-stricken families. Many succeed.

### The Legal Minefield

Before you dismiss or trivialize these problems, allow me a chance to persuade you how serious this problem is for us as a nation. While we all see media stories on veterans' problems regularly, only a fraction of the complaints are reported. There is no TV or radio show devoted to this issue. Statistically, veterans are more likely to be unemployed,

be homeless, have a serious mental illness, or sue the U.S. government. To understand why this is so, you need to understand the system of complex VA rules, U.S. court decisions, efforts of veterans' groups and the reality of how it all works.

Two things have set the limits of the legal remedies available to veterans. First, the concept of "sovereign immunity" basically means that the U.S. government decides who can sue it. Many veterans feel that the government has misused this to protect private companies operating under government contract. Then, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Feres vs. U.S.* prohibits veterans from suing the government. To make up for this, Congress passed laws that were supposed to insure that the VA disability system is "friendly and non-adversarial." That's not the reality that we live and die with.

Most veterans' complaints concern the military's refusal to change discharges and VA denials that their disability is "service-connected" or that their disabilities make them totally disabled. Most of these denials say that not enough evidence to prove the claim was submitted. Veterans disagree not only with the conclusion but also with the process. Winning these claims can be very significant when it comes to getting medical care, compensation or benefits. A totally disabled veteran gets \$750 per month. If the disability is considered service-connected, the veteran gets \$2000 per month.

Although it often takes longer, the Chicago VA Regional Office (VARO) says that, with their backlog of claims, it takes them ninety days to make a decision once evidence is submitted, which may take years to find. If a VARO denies a claim you can appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). The BVA now says that it will take them eighteen months to work through their backlog and make a decision. Until recently, appeals to the BVA took five years. Until 1988, BVA denials could be appealed in the U.S. Court of Appeals, but only if you got a lawyer.

After years of complaints and hearings, Congress acknowledged that claimants for VA benefits are in an "adversarial" relationship

with the VA and created the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) in 1988. This is the only U.S. Court where appellants aren't required to have a lawyer. Over half of these appeals are begun without representation, but enough find lawyers so that less than half are unrepresented by the time that the CAVC makes a decision. Even though most claims without representation lose at the CAVC, enough unrepresented veterans win, so other veterans are encouraged to appeal without legal representation.

Lawyers can be paid no more than \$10 to represent claimants for VA benefits, under a law passed to protect Civil War veterans from unscrupulous lawyers. This limit is lifted if the case is appealed in the CAVC, and lawyers can get a percentage, but only 15%, rather than the usual 33% for non-VA claims. But new evidence, which is often necessary to win the claim, cannot be added to the case at that point. So veterans have to pay lawyers to be told that they can't win, or they can readily find lawyers who are glad to take a percentage of easy wins.

Veteran service organizations, such as the American Legion, have veteran service officers (VSOs) who provide free, non-attorney representation. This is supposed to insure that veterans get representation equal to that which lawyers would provide, but training and competence varies, and the only cases they take to the CAVC are those that set precedents. In addition, all states have their own Department of Veterans Affairs, and many counties have veterans' service commissions, with service officers who help veterans with complex rules and paperwork, but many don't represent veterans at the VA.

These agencies are organized and work together in a variety of ways. The American Legion, like some national groups, gives the responsibility for hiring VSOs to their state affiliates. Some national veterans' groups, most notably the Disabled American Veterans, retain control of their VSOs at the national level. As a way of assisting these groups, some states pay the salaries of the VSOs accredited by national groups and working in the VAROs representing veterans and writing appeals.

The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), for example, maintains a statewide

system of field offices to help veterans with VA paperwork and procedures, but doesn't represent veterans at the VA. Most of the counties have a veterans' commission which employs a service officer for the same purpose and with the same restrictions. The IDVA supports those VSOs who represent veterans by paying the salary (with state employee benefits) of a VSO in each of the big national groups' offices at the Chicago VA regional offices. The only exception is the American Legion — it appears that the state doesn't trust the Legion to do this work.

With that in mind, I can now bring up the fact, without it sounding entirely like sour grapes, that the VA had the American Legion fire me, one of their own veteran service officers, for complaining too much. The VA said that my memos to them on behalf of veterans were too "antagonistic." The facts surrounding this and the American Legion's personnel file used for my termination are what I am now making public as evidence that these problems have reached a crisis.

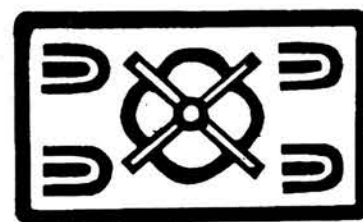
### The Bureaucratic Snakepit

Even when the law and evidence supports a veteran's claim, it can be denied or delayed by some nameless bureaucrat at the VARO. We VSOs working there are supposed to prevent that from happening or get it reversed if it happens. In order to ensure that the VA handles all claims correctly, we are given direct access to the veteran's claim files and the VARO personnel making the decisions. During my time at the Chicago VARO I saw so many bad decisions and dealt with VA personnel that were so out of touch with reality that I must conclude that they are simply crazy.

Every day, some VA employee complains about a VSO because of the very nature of our jobs.



RAY PARRISH IS A MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO CHAPTER OF VVAW.





## With Apologies to Lincoln and JFK

On those warm Southeast Asian nights  
we loved the colors of the firefights.  
"The better angels of our nature" might  
alert us to something not quite right  
beyond perimeter, bracketed, out of sight.

Ordered not to think of distant carnage,  
told not to feel what was real:  
rumors, tremors, tracers and C-rats,  
attitudes of lifers, my soul's on the line.  
Mantra: "It don't mean nothin."  
(10 days and a wake-up.)

But the colors blew our minds!  
It's unholy to love this stuff, right?  
We ask not what we did for our country  
but what our country  
did to us.

Mike Gehl

## Army/Navy Surplus

when I got out  
it seemed that  
every  
long haired  
hippy peace freak  
wore part of a uniform

I was confused by this  
having spent the last four  
years inside of one  
so I asked: I was told

it was in protest  
that only left me more confused

a satire  
I didn't see the irony

or simply  
because they are so functional

but, understanding the function  
of the uniform is what had me so  
bewildered

Gregory Ross, 1979

## Who Deserves Pay Raises?

*continued from page 28*

military can indeed support decent and progressive policy — I would have entered the war against Hitler in 1939 and supported our operations in Somalia — but it also has been used badly and clumsily during the Cold War and post-Cold War years, to protect American "interests" overseas (read: MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS), the Vietnam War being only one of many such examples. Under certain circumstances the military can be a grave danger to both constitutional government and people in other countries and in our own. So can any police force that serves the Establishment.

The whole point is that our civilian policy must be progressive in order to keep the appropriate checks on the military. Please, let's not swallow superpatriotic jargon to question the "Americanism" of those who may genuinely question the need for pay raises in the services. Remember that the word "patriot" was invented by the English revolutionaries of the 1640s — to describe themselves! One person's patriotism is another's treason; and the only government worth support-

ing is one that allows full and open freedom of belief, expression, and movement to persons of all points of view. It's true that I am always rather suspicious of government pay raises in general,

**It's laughable to think that our American pseudo-conservatives should ever be able to manage money. Because they've always had money, they think it grows on trees. (Actually it seems to grow on "Bushes"!)**

especially in a time of high deficits and voodoo economics, and I doubt that officers and senior enlisted personnel need a pay raise. They've received many big raises over the past 25 years. The lower ranks are quite another matter. I have no objection to pay raises for the junior enlisted ratings, but in order to pay for them our first order of business should be to

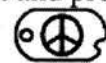
### ABOLISH THE BUSH TAX BREAKS TO THE SUPER RICH!

It's laughable to think that our American pseudo-conservatives should ever be able to manage money. Because they've always had money, they think it grows on trees. (Actually it seems to grow on "Bushes"!)

trying desperately to preserve our more-than-200-year-old Constitution and Bill of Rights against the Bush administration's jingoist "patriots" who are actually proto-fascists. Beware an open-ended "war on terrorism" without clear goals and with no legal checks to runaway power. Beware invented differences between "terrorists" and "prisoners of war" and destructive

secret tribunals. Beware rhetoric that implies that there can EVER be an "end" to terrorism. Whoever makes such an absurd claim knows nothing about history or human nature. Remember FDR? "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Wise advice.

I detest this administration for many reasons, but especially for its eagerness to lock people up, in some cases without proper trial. There are still genuinely courageous souls in this country, although (sadly) fewer than at any time I can remember in almost 66 years. It is much easier, safer and lazier to turn into one of those timid persons who sing "God Bless America," bow to authority, salute the flag regardless of what it stands for, and prate on about holy fetuses, mom and apple pie. It ill-serves the innocent victims of the tragedy of September 11 to use their memory to encourage American fascism. Many of them, if they were alive, would be the first to tell us that only constant doubt and protest will keep us free!



SANDRA J. FULTON HAS BEEN A  
MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1969 AND  
REACTIVATED IN 2001.



Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

VVAW Membership  
P.O. 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

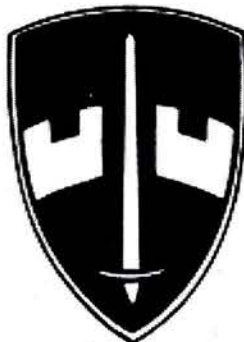
Membership in VVAW is open to all people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The annual membership fee is \$20.00 (not required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

U.S. Military Assistance Command (MACV) [official design by the institute of Heraldry, U.S. 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, P.O. Box 408594, Chicago, IL 60640
- 773-327-5756
- vvaw@prairienet.org
- www.vvaw.org



# RECOLLECTIONS

## Someone Else's Recollection

DAVE CURRY

I've published recollections of my own in *The Veteran*. This time I'm sharing someone else's recollection.

The setting seems important to me. There's an old-fashioned barbershop near my home and my work. By old-fashioned, I mean a shop with a barber pole outside, where only males get their hair cut, with a small stack of magazines on a small table. Occasionally a mom brings her sons in or a wife helps an infirm husband in. There are four barber chairs but only one barber, the owner Don. According to him, he would have already retired except for the bite that the recession has taken out of his IRA. There's usually a line of four or five men waiting for Don's attention. Conversation is soft and scarce. Because of the shop's proximity to my home and work, my strategy is to drive by every few days until I see a shorter line through the storefront window. **This day I had been by too many times when the lines were long, so I had brought a book and a determination to wait. But my luck was**

good. There was only one other customer — already getting his hair cut.

I happily slid into a seat to endure what would be a comparatively brief wait. Don and I exchanged a couple of how-you-doin's, and I opened my book. Between Don and the man in his chair, there was silence. Don's customer wore a sullen glare and an angry stare.

In a rare expression of curiosity, Don asked me what I was reading. I told him it was a Soviet soldier's account of his tour of duty in Afghanistan. I added that it was very interesting. The quiet resumed, and then was broken by the man in the barber chair. "I've been to Afghanistan," he said.

My reaction was an almost childlike "Really?" I honestly wanted to hear from someone who had been in Afghanistan.

He continued in an angry but calm voice. "I was there two times. Once in 1986 and again in '87. I was there to train Afghans to kill Russian soldier boys."

"What was it like?" I asked.

But he might have continued without my question. He still had that distant look but he was talking steadily and tightly now. "I was part of a team. We taught the Afghans how to use state-of-the-art weapons. We were instructed to do our best to respect Afghani culture and behavior.

"We were expected to dress like them and to eat what they ate. That was the worst part for me: the food. Or maybe it was the smell. The first night we were there, we were served a soup with goat eyes in it. And it stank. The next time we got back to the ship we stowed away anything that was edible to take back with us."

For some reason, I interjected. "I've noticed that other countries have unique smells usually associated with different foods."

Don informed the angry man that "Dave served in Vietnam." I said Vietnam had smells that I'd never smelled anywhere else. He said, "I smelled Vietnam, too. And you know what Vietnam and Afghanistan smelled like. They

smelled like shit."

I was ready to return to the silence, but in a few moments he spoke again. "The last time I was there we trained a new group for us . . . The Taliban." With that, I realized that the target for his anger and hate was himself and what he'd been asked to do for his country.

Another customer showed up, and then another. The angry man didn't speak again. His haircut was finished. He paid Ron and took his recollection with him to a truck parked outside. As I sat back in the barber chair, Don was saying, "He makes regular deliveries to the store next door. Never heard him talk so much. He's retired from some kind of naval service." The type of unit isn't a difficult guess.



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## Who Deserves Pay Raises?

SANDRA J. FULTON

This is my commentary on some of the shrill right-wing responses to those few journalists who are questioning the need for military pay raises. I'm a Navy veteran (1957-1968). When I was commissioned ensign in 1957 and sent from Newport to NAS North Island, Coronado, California, the military was genuinely underpaid. If I recall correctly, I got a grand total of \$3,200 in salary my first year in the Navy, from May through December, pooling together my OCSA (seaman apprentice) and ensign salaries, but because it was so paltry it was tax free and I didn't need to file 1957 income tax. In most places where I was stationed, women officers had to live "ashore," and to make life affordable you needed at least one roommate. BAQ was a whopping \$65 a month in those days, although rentals in upscale Coronado started at about \$175 a month. There was an enlisted

women's barracks but women officers were forced to rent outside the base since there were no bachelor officers' quarters for women at the Naval air station. In fact, my office building didn't even have a ladies' room! We finally got a Port-A-John for our building — but nothing else improved. During my eleven years' service, women were stuck commanding LMDs (Large Mahogany — or Metal — Desks) and therefore could not obtain flight pay, submarine pay, or hazardous duty pay. I was the first American woman to undergo full-vacuum training in the spacesuit, along with the jet ejection seat and partial pressure mask, each of which was hazardous. Somehow women officers got by, and it taught me to be fiscally prudent.

When I resigned in 1968, no longer being able to stomach the Vietnam War, I was living in expensive New York City and was a

lieutenant (O3) in charge of all Navy women's recruiting, except nurses, for the Third Naval District. Although my salary of \$9,000 a year before taxes doesn't sound like much, it must have been more than adequate since I was living without a roommate and salting away \$500 a month into savings. I had a big nest egg in the bank by December, 1968, when I was finally let go.

In the service I knew a lot of fine people I was proud to call colleagues, from senior officers I worked for and admired, to friends I palled around with — including two women officers who became founders of NOW. I knew plenty of bright, ambitious and wonderful enlisted men and women looking for ways to improve their lives and faithfully serve their country. At the same time certain officers and enlisted were merely time-servers and a few were downright dangerous — racist, war-happy,

many of them despising the Bill of Rights and our American way of life. If my years of service taught me never to have a "short-timer's attitude" in any job, a minority of service people are a negative influence on their branch of the military and/or on American society. This is not disillusioning — merely a realistic assessment of human nature. It's no different in private life.

All the build-up is just to warn all of us never to salute and jump through hoops whenever someone writes glowing prose about *Our Boys (and/or Girls) in Uniform*. Those of us who have served are no better or worse than civilians. You want bravery? Go thank a fireman. Firemen protect you and me, and lay their lives on the line every day of the year. The

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