



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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Living with Lies

DAVE CURRY, JOE MILLER AND BARRY ROMO

Two years have passed since 9/11 transformed our lives and our nation. Two years have passed in which the Bush presidency has revealed itself to be a very real threat to our freedom and a threat to the peace and welfare of all peoples wherever they live on the planet. In these times — in every day of our lives — we have become a people immersed in lies. The lies come so big and so often that it's hard to believe that we will ever be able to see beyond them.

Lie: The invasion of Iraq was justified. The connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda still does not exist. The weapons of mass destruction still haven't been found even though U.S. forces have access to the entire region through conquest. The imminent danger posed by nuclear weapons was fabricated. The complications of this tragic prefabrication are being played out with British Prime Minister Tony Blair as a major villain in his country.

Lie: The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are victories. The occupation of both countries faces

growing military opposition. Conditions deteriorate with one or two combat soldiers and larger numbers of indigenous civilians dying each day. Recently former senator Max Cleland, a Vietnam veteran and former VA director, spoke for many of us when he said, "Welcome to Vietnam, Mr. President. Sorry you didn't go when you had the chance."

Lie: The Bush tax cut has put the economy on the road to recovery. The nation has gone from a record surplus to a deficit and growing national debt. The greatest portion of the Bush tax cut benefited only the most wealthy of Bush's constituents. Unemployment is approaching levels not seen in decades. Efforts are underway to uniformly reduce overtime for supervisory personnel. The request for 100,000 new volunteers seems to be a viable strategy, but many of us know recruitment in hard times to be an "economic draft." Now the economy is faced with the next \$87 billion that Bush has requested

continued on page 8



Second VVAW takeover of the Statue of Liberty (1976)

George W. Bush Reaches a New Low in Support of the Nation's Veterans

DAVE CURRY, JOE MILLER AND BARRY ROMO

George Bush is not a veteran, and he is not concerned about our needs. When he's not pretending to be a jet pilot, Bush pretends to be just another veteran. At the American Legion National Convention, before he began his speech, Bush called attention to a veteran from "his old legion post." The message was a reach for solidarity. "We're all vets here."

In the speech that followed, Bush laid claim to "the largest discretionary increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs ever requested by a president." Bush also claimed that under his leadership the VA has made "major progress in reducing the backlog of veterans' disability claims and the number of veterans waiting for health care. And (we will)

continue to work to make sure those backlogs are eliminated."

Maybe this is an outright lie or maybe reducing "backlogs" and "lists" is simply a matter of reducing benefits, facilities, and eligibility. No benefits, no facilities, no eligibility, therefore no lists, no backlogs. And of course there must be administrative costs associated with all this streamlining.

Under current leadership, the administration intends to drop more than half a million veterans from medical eligibility by 2005. At the same time, House Republicans have passed a White House proposal to charge veterans enrollment fees of \$250 a year and double the amount they now pay for prescription drugs. This is at a

time when it already takes an average of six months to get an appointment at a VA medical center.

VA secretary Anthony Principi has said: "This is not about

closing hospitals. This is about transforming the VA health care system into a patient-focused health care system that adapts to medicine in the 21st century. ...

continued on page 8



PO Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640
www.vvaw.org
vvaw@vvaw.org

From the National Office

JOE MILLER AND BARRY ROMO

Members, Friends and Supporters of Vietnam Veterans Against the War,

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2003 issue of *The Veteran*.

Much has happened in the world and in the United States since our previous issue, and we hope that the articles you will read here help to provide some context and analysis on which to base your continued activism against the new American empire. We should not allow the struggle for veterans, peace and justice to be quashed or submerged in a culture of fear and cynicism.

On May 1, our "Great Leader," Dubya the Deserter, announced the end of "major" hostilities in Iraq. He was all dressed up for Halloween, pretending to be a military aviator — just one of the troops. [See John Zutz on the "Elite Aviator" doll in this issue.] Well, we could all see through the charade, and it is certain that the folks on board the USS Lincoln did not really appreciate being kept at sea just so their "Commander-in-Chief" could have his photo op. Since Dubya's announcement, more U.S. troops

have been killed in Iraq than were killed between March 20 and May 1, with more than 300 dead as of this writing. Also, we do not get much news about the wounded. What is the actual extent of U.S. casualties in this "war of liberation"? Every day we hear of lower morale among the troops, and more criticism of policy from those in the field as well as from former military leaders. As a recent article on Salon.com argued, "George Bush's once-rosy relationship with the military is turning sour." This situation has been reflected in the growth of VVAW. We are still getting more applications for membership and more active members who are willing to function as VVAW Contacts in their areas.

Military families have also joined with the opposition. This past summer saw the formation of a coalition of families, veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists and others in the "Bring Them Home Now" movement. VVAW has joined with other veterans' groups in support of this movement, and we expect to see more and more activity around this

effort. To keep up to date on these activities, consult their website at www.bringthemhomenow.org. Those of you who do not have access to the Internet can contact them by mail at P.O. Box 91233, Raleigh, NC, 27675.

Finally, VVAW Contacts are the public face of our organization. We do not have paid staff who can travel around the country to organize our members. Most of us in the National Office have full-time jobs that make this impossible. So, those individuals whose names appear on the opposite page must be the front line of our organization, must clearly represent VVAW in whatever way they can, as often as they can. VVAW has a distinct history in the veterans' peace and justice movement, as the longest-running organization of this type. Our work began against our war in 1967, and we have not quit, thanks to the dedication of members and supporters who have volunteered their time and money to keep us going. And with each new military adventure of the United States, we gain new and younger members who see in VVAW something they

do not find in other groups. As reflected in this issue's two front-page articles, our analysis is consistently radical and anti-imperialist, not in a knee-jerk, unthinking way, but in a way that encourages social justice activism among the broadest numbers possible. The VVAW insignia gets attention, and our presentations in high schools and colleges have impact.

We encourage all VVAW members, and especially those who have volunteered to be Contacts, to make themselves known in their communities as VVAW spokespeople. We have a history to be proud of, a history that still has lessons to offer in the struggles to bring about peace and social justice in our country and worldwide. Let's get to it!



JOE MILLER AND BARRY ROMO ARE
NATIONAL COORDINATORS OF VVAW.

Visit our revamped
website at
www.vvaw.org

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

- Send us your article via email or post. Plain text in the body of an email message is preferred; check with us before emailing attachments.
- To submit an article, email vvaw@vvaw.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

Editorial Collective

Barry Romo
Joe Miller
Jeff Machota - layout
Lisa Boucher - editing

Thanks to Jeff Danziger, Vietnam veteran and political cartoonist, for his generous contributions to this issue. Thanks also to Billy Curmano for "Oxy, the Smart Bomb", Robert Gronko, John Zutz and Paul Saint-Armand for their photos.

VVAW Merchandise



Mail order and check to:
VVAW
PO Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

- VVAW T-Shirt (L, XL, XXL) - \$10.00 _____
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- Shipping (\$4.00 for first item, \$2 for each item after, excluding buttons & bumper stickers) _____

Total Enclosed _____

Ship to:
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City, State, Zip _____

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

National Contact List

Below is a list of VVAW coordinators, national staff and contacts.

For email addresses go to our website at www.vvaw.org

If you need a speaker for an event or class visit or interview, please contact the person nearest you.

If there is nobody in your area, contact the National Office at (773) 276-4189 or email vvaw@vvaw.org.

NATIONAL COORDINATORS

Barry Romo
(773) 276-4189

Pete Zastrow
(847) 864-3975

Joe Miller
(217) 328-2444

David Cline
(201) 876-0430

John Zutz
(414) 372-0749

NATIONAL STAFF

Bill Branson
David Curry
Jeff Machota
Lisa Boucher

CONTACTS

Northwest AR

Dwayne Knox
(870) 428-5597

Long Beach, CA

Horace Coleman
(562) 438-2818

Northern CA

David Ewing
(415) 781-8182

Southern CA

Leland Lubinsky
(909) 796-6565

Central Coast, CA

Lane Anderson
(805) 564-2698

Brighton, CO

Charles Elliston
(303) 654-1754

Tallahassee, FL

Tom Baxter
(850) 893-7390

St. Petersburg, FL

Jim Willingham
(727) 341-1957

Athens, GA

Elton Manzione
(706) 369-0546

Chicago, IL

Barry Romo
(773) 276-4189

Champaign-Urbana, IL

Joe Miller
(217) 328-2444

Oak Park, IL

Bill Davis
(708) 386-1413

Rockford, IL

Stanley Campbell
(815) 964-7111

Tuscola, IL

Paul Wisovaty
(217) 253-2157

Richmond, IN

Chuck Yates
(765) 966-3221

Maryland/DC

Patrick McCann
(301) 324-8798

Winthrop, MA

Bill Leary
(617) 846-8938

Jackson, MI

Arnold Stieber
(734) 475-0740

Minnesota

Billy Curmano
(507) 864-2716

Mpls./St Paul, MN

John Anderson
(651) 485-8019

St. Louis, MO

David Curry
(314) 516-5042

New England

Jerry Lembcke
(408) 793-3050

Albuquerque, NM

Bob Anderson
(505) 858-0882

Las Cruces, NM

David Boje
(505) 532-1693

Northwest NM

Joseph Knight
(505) 330-7713

New York

Ben Chitty
(718) 826-1789

Albany, NY

Walter F. Wouk
(518) 287-1129

Cold Spring, NY

David Eisenhower
(514) 265-3495

Nyack, NY

Jim Murphy
(845) 358-5709

Woodstock, NY

Dayl Wise
(718) 231-0616
(845) 679-2161

White Plains, NY

Mike Gillen
(914) 948-8983

Staten Island, NY

Ramon Rodriguez
(718) 447-0049

Olean, NY

Barry Miller
(716) 373-7019

New Jersey

David Cline
(201) 876-0430

Princeton, NJ

Annie Hirschman
(609) 430-0440

Jersey Shore, NJ

Gerald Gioglio
geraldgioglio@go.com

Columbus, OH

Mark Hartford
mzh@columbus.rr.com

Oklahoma

William P. (Bill) Homans
(405) 377-3877

Pennsylvania, PA

Stephen Sinsley
pa_vvaw@yahoo.com

Emmaus, PA

David Shelly
(610) 967-2066

Philadelphia, PA

Jon Bjornson
(215) 438-8883

Chattanooga, TN

Fritz Efaw
(423) 425-4688

Killeen, TX

Mike Roberts
(888) 575-7833

San Antonio, TX

Tom Wetzler
(210) 533-4467

San Antonio, TX

Harry W. Haines
(210) 822-7645

Virginia

Leigh Hauter
(703) 754-4005

Seattle, WA

Mike Dedrick
(206) 328-5477

Milwaukee, WI

Bob Riggle
(414) 347-0109

Milwaukee, WI

Dave Kettenhofen
(414) 481-4614

Northern WI

Jay Tobin
(715) 832-1989



Operation Dire Distress, March 21, 2003, Washington, DC

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

It is so easy to criticize the Bush administration's policy on Iraq. Anti-war folks and objective newspeople alike have plenty to talk and write about. The reasons for starting the war were all bogus. They misused or made up intelligence. They lied and deceived and claimed the other guy said it. Weapons of mass destruction seem not to exist. Al-Qaeda and 9/11 were not connected to Iraq. They were stupid enough to tell easily-traceable lies about these things. Now it is obvious to most that they had no postwar plans.

Because criticism of the Bush policy is so easy, there is not much analysis of why this all happened in the first place. What I think happened is that you had oil interests moving into the White House, headed by Bush and Cheney. Then you had believers in the preemptive war doctrine, represented by people like Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz. There was a marriage of the two groups in an atmosphere of unabashed religious fervor that is a mirror image of that of the Muslims who would fly a plane into a building because sixteen virgins wait on the other side. Going to war in Iraq was perfect for these two groups. Here was a country that's very important for the oil industry and run by someone who was evil and used to have weapons that are the reason for preemptive wars. Don't sweat the details. God is on our side. It was the Perfect Storm.

I recently did jury time. The case involved was small-claims: \$8,000 for a fender bender. In his opening statement, the lawyer for the plaintiff saw fit to explain to us common citizens how the judi-

cial system works and how wonderful it is. (Later in the jury room, one juror said, "My Cousin Vinny," and everyone who had seen the movie said, "Yes!") Shakespeare he wasn't, even though he may have thought so. The speech was over the top, but what got me was the part where he said that our troops over in Iraq were fighting there so that we over here could have this wonderful jury system.

Leaving aside the question of how wonderful or fair our legal system is, he was saying something said by a lot of airheads and accepted by many without thinking. Our troops are over there (or wherever) fighting for the jury system and all of our other rights. Usually it is all lumped together: "Our boys are fighting over there so we can have freedom here."

Sorry to say this, but all the brothers and sisters who fought and died in Iraq as well as in Vietnam, the Gulf, Grenada, Korea and so on, had no effect on our freedom. We lost in Vietnam and didn't lose our freedom. We could have lost all the rest, and we still would have what rights are guaranteed under the Bill of Rights.

You might make a case that World War II meant something since we were attacked by Japan, which had a major-league army and navy. It turned out that Japan had no military plans east of Hawaii except for some balloon bombs dropped in an Oregon forest. However, the government let it be known that Japanese-Americans were receiving sound and light signals from the Japanese navy off the California coast. This had about as much validity as the Tonkin Gulf incident, but the gov-

ernment claimed it was true in order to justify interring all Japanese-Americans. For the rest of the Americans, it made the Japanese danger appear more real. But in reality, Japan wasn't going to take away anybody's freedom or rights here at home.

So, the next time you hear someone talking about our boys defending freedom or fighting over there so we can be free and have all our rights here, consider that maybe that hasn't happened for the last 140 years. The only threat to what freedoms are available are each generation's Ashcrofts.

Have we won in Iraq yet?

"Freedom" is one of those words and concepts that gets misused for political purposes. Another one is "support our troops." The common usage of that phrase has something to do with supporting the right to conduct this war. Anti-war people usually counter with the idea that the best support would be to bring them home. That may be true, but in this era of short wars and intransigent leaders, it's like talking apples and oranges.

When someone asks me if I support the troops, I usually ask for a definition of what that means. You might get an answer sort of like sending over good vibrations or the more common idea of wishing that they get home safe and sound, or don't spit on them when they get back. There is no concreteness to the concept. It's another of the flags waved by the patriots.

It is unfortunate that the troop supporters who sent the troops over are the same people who use their power to cut the budget of

the VA, which is what these troops have to rely upon for the medical and mental care they will need — also known as support. Real support.

Let's declare victory and come home.

"Terrorists." The common usage of this word refers to the obvious: people who fly planes into buildings; people who commit deadly sneak attacks on non-combatants; people who unleash chemical and biological weapons. If the Bush administration and some of these right-wingers with easy media access have their way, soon it will be that anyone who opposes the president on a war or security issue will be a "terrorist." If you not only oppose the war, but actually go to a demonstration, under Patriot Act II, this might be interpreted as being support of terrorism and therefore an act of terrorism.

I went to two or three demonstrations opposing the war back when it started. I, along with thousands, even illegally shut down Lake Shore Drive. I guess that makes me a terrorist. I feel so bad. I thought I was good. So I'm preparing for when they knock down my door and come after me. Like the priest in "The Exorcist" holding his cross out before the devil, I'm going to shove a yellow ribbon out in front of me and yell, "I support the troops! I support the troops!"

Have we won in Afghanistan yet?



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

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

It was the late, great Groucho Marx who said, "I wouldn't want to belong to any organization that would have me as a member." Fortunately, VVAW is a little more liberal with its membership criteria; Joe Miller would sign up a werewolf if he could come up with twenty bucks and shave his palms before a chapter meeting. But on a new twist to that standard, I belong to one area organization which is real close to kicking me out. As someone other than Groucho once observed, therein hangs a tale.

The Korean Wars Veterans National Museum and Library Association, based in Tuscola, Illinois, has been working for four years to raise money to build a museum right here in Douglas County. They have a board of directors of about fifteen really nice guys, all Korean War vets from around Illinois, and for the past couple of years I've been the board treasurer. I should say that the only reason that I've been involved at all — being the only non-Korean War vet among the officers — is that they need some-

one local to co-sign the checks. Since I have a hard time saying no to anyone, I agreed to perform this unpaid function. I show up at the quarterly meetings, sign the checks, and generally keep my mouth shut, as befits someone who doesn't really know shit about the Korean War.

Pretty boring story so far, right? Stay with me. A couple of years ago, right after the No Gun Ri story broke, I wrote letters to the editors of both the Tuscola and Champaign-Urbana newspapers, saying about what you should

expect I'd say: we did it, we refuse to acknowledge it fifty years later, and not only is the Great Wizard of Oz in Washington lying about it, he's even scapegoating our Korean War vets in the process. (The Wiz, by the way, was Bill Clinton, not Junior, although I strongly suspect that the latter isn't about to print a retraction anytime soon.)

Well, I just found out that someone has reproduced one of my letters on her website. And

continued on page 15

My View

JOHN ZUTZ

I went through some changes while writing this article. I wanted to write about the new G.W. Bush action figure being sold by KB Toys for \$39.99. Here's what the website advertises:

BBI proudly introduces the latest issue in its Elite Force series of authentic military 12-inch figures, President George W. Bush in naval aviator flight suit. Exacting in detail and fully equipped with authentic gear, this limited-edition action figure is a meticulous 1:6 scale recreation of the Commander-in-Chief's appearance during his historic Aircraft Carrier landing. On May 1, 2003, President Bush landed on the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) in the Pacific Ocean, and officially declared the end to major combat in Iraq. While at the controls of an S-3B Viking aircraft from the "Blue Sea Wolves" of Sea Control Squadron Three Five (VS-35), designated "Navy 1," he overflew the carrier before handing it over to the pilot for landing. Attired in full naval aviator flight equipment, the President then took the salute on the deck of the carrier.

This fully poseable figure features a realistic head sculpt, fully detailed cloth flight suit, helmet with oxygen mask, survival vest, g-pants, parachute harness and much more. The realism and exacting attention to detail demanded by today's 12-inch action figure enthusiast are met and exceeded with this action figure. This incredibly detailed figure is a fitting addition to the collection of those interested in U.S. history,

military memorabilia and toy action figures.

www.kbtoys.com/genProduct.html/PID/2431939/ctid/17/ls/default

I was going to write about how calling it an action figure is about as accurate as calling Dummya heroic. I was going to comment on the flurry of email this doll caused on the VVAW lists.

I wanted to mention the friend who commented that the doll should talk, and that it should say, "I'm not a war hero, but I play one on TV." Or the person who wondered if it were wound up would it go AWOL? I was going to go on to use pithy satire to designate fictitious dolls for Cheney, Rumsfeld and all the other chickenhawks.

I was beaten to the punch by Media Whores Online's fake ad, which features G.W. in a cheerleader's skirt:

We proudly introduce the latest issue in our Elite Force series of authentic and historically accurate 12-inch figures, George W. Bush in Phillips Andover Head Cheerleader uniform. Exacting in detail and fully equipped with authentic gear including pom-poms and megaphone, this limited-edition action figure is a meticulous 1:6 scale recreation of the Cheerleader-in-Chief leading his squad in cheering the Andover Varsity Boys' Volleyball Team on to a championship victory. A peppy Bush participated in a death defying 6-man pyramid stunt, then thrilled the crowd with a series of court-side cartwheels.

On the other hand, truth is stranger than fiction. Never underestimate the power of the free market. The following items are for sale as you read this article. Don't wait, volumes are limited.

- The farting George Bush doll: pull his finger, surprise! He'll fart, say seven wacky phrases, and in the tradition of this great president there is a fart song! \$19.89. **www.prankplace.com/fbush.htm**

- George "Dubya" Bush, a true action hero, the first release from Talking Presidents. This collectible doll is 12.5 inches tall and comes in a patriotic display box. Press the button on George's back to hear him say 17 powerful and patriotic phrases! (Subject to change.)

George W. Bush delivers actual speech sound bites including: "I was not elected to serve one party, but to serve one nation," "We're working hard to put food in your family," "The presidency is more than an honor, it is more than an office, it is a charge to keep and I will give it my all," "I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging the struggle for freedom and security for the American people."

George W. Bush is the 43rd President of the United States. Formerly the 46th Governor of the state of Texas, President Bush has earned a reputation as a compassionate conservative who shapes policy based on the principles of limited government, personal responsibility, strong families and local control. \$29.99 (Bill

Clinton figure also available).

www.talkingpresidents.com/products-af-bush.shtml

- George Bush Jr., War Pig: T-shirts, baseball jerseys, clocks, mugs, and so on.

www.cafeshops.com/bushasawarpig

- This comical President George W. Bush bobble head will always nod in agreement to whatever you have to say. \$15.95.

www.earfloss.com/gifts/cat252/2850058.htm

- Get the George Bush talking action figure plus so much more. The George Bush bobble head doll, the George Bush jack in the box, the George W. Bush and family paper dolls (8 dolls, 26 costumes, \$5.95), a Bush star lapel pin (looks just like a real Texas Ranger badge, \$7.95), and even a bobble head lapel pin, \$5.95.

www.americastore.com/georgewbush.html

For anyone who thinks these items indicate Bush's popularity please read the Guardian article which states that the Osama bin Laden doll outsells the Tony Blair doll:

www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1284,685463,00.html



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

Cheney's Pals at Halliburton etc. Get Hundreds of Millions in Iraq No-bid Contracts



TRIBUNE MEDIA www.danzigercartoons.com June 22 2003 1689

VVAW Homecoming in Milwaukee

DAVE COLLINS

It was the evening of August 16, 2003. The day before had been momentous: the last government bond issued to pay for the Vietnam war finally had matured. Milwaukee VVAW was hosting a "mortgage-burning party" at the Tasting Room, home to quite a few VVAW events over the years. So how does a guy from the Hill Country of Texas end up in a West Side pub celebrating finally having paid off a stupid, evil mistake?

It had been almost 30 years since I was in the company of a roomful of VVAW brothers and sisters. I ended up in that pub surrounded by good fellowship — and really great blues — in much the same way a lot of vets are coming back to their peace and social justice roots. The devil made me do it. Or devils — the chickenhawks and their handlers and feeders from the neocon right. The process for me started with the stolen election, but it did not flower until the early days of the Afghanistan invasion. By January, for the first time in 30 years, I found myself in the middle of an Austin main drag with thousands of other peace activists.

The night of the 16th was

warm, by Milwaukee standards anyway. So was the welcome I experienced. I had undoubtedly met some of the folks in the room years ago, but none of us could be certain. While my VVAW Oklahoma-based activism and contact had largely ended by '74, many of the guys in the room had remained, if not active, at least in contact. Several, I learned, had continued to devote much of their time and energy to the organization and issues that had united us before.

It became obvious, as the evening went on, that there were others in the room whose story was a bit like mine. The welcome home they received was also warm and genuine. One of those guys was not just coming back after many years but from quite a distance. Jim Willingham, traveling from Florida, had been able to arrange a vacation in his wife's home town the same weekend as the party. As we were all greeting Jim, he pulled his old, faded, original VVAW button from his pocket. He told us that he had carried that with him through all the years. It was part of his mobile shrine: mementos that had helped him through some tough times.

What a great story!

The talk of old times and new was trumped when the band started. This Texan was delighted to learn how well the blues had continued on up river from Chicago. Steve Cohen and Jim Liban are indeed outstanding bluesmen, whether covering classics or offering original tunes. Seems these guys' history is interwoven with VVAW as well. I was told how they would join the chapter for sleepover gatherings with campfire music late into the night.

I had to leave the party before the next act could get started, and regret that I do. The multi-talented Lisa Boucher, Matt Stewart and Dean Karres were just about to take the stage for a taste of Irish and tunes of other folk as I left the pub.

There is great tragedy in what brings many of us back together at this time. Many I have talked with voice a regret that I can sure identify with: "Damn, we gotta teach the same lessons again!" War sucks. Foreign policy is for adults. Supporting troops in war is not the same as supporting policy. War sucks.

Well, the very necessary sil-



John "Party Animal" Lindquist

ver lining to this quite dark cloud is the warmth and support I felt in that little pub in Milwaukee. Sincere and deep thanks to the guys that held the base for us to come home to. Let's all hope we can make short work of this clear and present danger to our freedom and to the safety of people around the globe. That will really be a reason for a party!



DAVE COLLINS IS A VIETNAM VET AND A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM TEXAS.

The Horribles Parade

MARC LEVY

July 4, 2003. We are in the Gloucester, Massachusetts parade today. An unusual twelve-person contingent in a sea of patriotic gore. Hundreds of small, rippling American flags are waved by throngs of hardworking blue-collar residents joined by an endless stream of gagging tourists. The beery, swaying crowds swell with pride and puffed-up courage. How many have seen real combat?

Every so often as we march down the boulevard, John, our fearless leader (who resigned his Marine Corps commission in '66), dispenses the peace sign with beatific calm. I stand on the right side of the VETERANS FOR PEACE banner we carry. Behind us, Paul, in real life an academic with high credentials, is dressed up as Ben Franklin and rings a stern bell, while behind him two VFP members grip an American flag burnished with the slogan REPEAL THE PATRIOT ACT. And behind them other people carry rigid signs stating all the losses gained since Lord Ashcroft

usurped the Constitution and Bill of Rights. We walk slow and solemn like witches resurrected to remind the innocent of their dead.

From time to time someone in the passing crowd calls my name. There's Maureen from the housing authority, who gave me grief until I withdrew the application. There's Willy, a local rock musician heard on the radio twice in one hour. There's Sammy, another First Cav medic, also shocked out; his eyebrows arc from his head as he waves hello. There's my good pal the town vets' representative who dutifully salutes, pledges, and leads prayer at DAV meetings we both enjoy but who must certainly know what's going down. (He hoists a merry beer in our direction as we pass by.) There's Lee, on the national board of Veterans For Peace, hanging out with his kids, his big red truck parked in a lot. Someone yells, "Hey, First Cav!" I'm wearing a fatigue shirt with a big Cav patch and a Combat Medic badge.

There are faces and more



faces as we march down Gloucester's hot, winding streets. Almost everyone is happy. Almost everyone is cheering, though there are a few whiners along the way. They scowl at our ACLU emblems, at the message we carry. But we are veterans. We are the real deal. We are Johnny Got His Gun. We are Johnny Appleseeds planting truth, uprooting lies — and they know it.

On and on we march. Behind

and way up front are brass bands, calypso bands, rock bands, strutting boy scout troops, convoys of waxy vintage cars, young nubile beauty queens, high-handed politicians who polish air with well-greased palms. There are civil war reenactors with fake muskets; a team of sweaty horses who drop occasional loads of patriotic poo.

continued on next page

Vieques Celebrates Navy's Departure

DAVID CLINE

May 1, 2003 marked the beginning of a new era for the people of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. On that date all land under military control was officially transferred from the Department of the Navy to the Department of the Interior, ending 62 years of bombing and shelling as the main military training site, the crown jewel of the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Fleet.

I traveled to Vieques for the celebration with a six-person Veterans For Peace delegation. For more than three years, we have worked together with Puerto Rican veterans and community groups on this cause, and we wanted to share in the joy of this important victory.

The Celebration For Peace For Vieques began on the evening of Wednesday, April 30 and continued throughout the weekend. The main stage was located at the former main gate of Camp Garcia across the street from the Peace and Justice Camp, which has maintained a constant presence there since the death of security guard David Sanes in April 1999. His death by errant bombs reignited a mass civil disobedience movement that swept Vieques and all of Puerto Rico as well as many communities in the United States.

The stage was decorated with a huge banner showing a hand holding the Puerto Rican and Vieques municipal flags releasing a dove of peace. On the night of April 30 thousands gathered, waiting for midnight to celebrate the Navy's departure. Speakers talked about the struggle and the sacrifices made by so many (over 4000 were arrested and jailed in the civil disobedience campaign) and, as the clock approached midnight, the excitement grew.

At midnight, flares were shot into the air and the crowd surged toward the gate, once the dividing line that Viequeses couldn't cross. The gate came crashing

down and people with wire cutters began taking down the fences. People waving Puerto Rican flags climbed on top of the guard post, a cinder block building that had once been the base for military police operations. Soon others pulled out sledgehammers and began demolishing the guard post, a symbol of the despised military occupation.

Members of Vieques Horsemen for Peace rode up through the once off-limits land, shooting flares and Roman candles skyward and shouting victory slogans. Several abandoned Navy vehicles were discovered, overturned and set afire. At this point, Puerto Rican police were ordered to "restore order" and although there were no violent confrontations or arrests, the police had to retreat several times as the overwhelming crowd threw water to cool them down.

The following day this incident was played up by the news media, with one Spanish-language paper running a cover photo of a burning vehicle and the headline "They Burned The Peace." Ms. Sila Calderon, the Commonwealth governor, denounced the events as the work of unnamed outside forces and demanded an investigation and arrests.

The truth is that the majority of people who tore down the gate and guardhouse and burned the vehicles were local residents celebrating their liberation. It is ironic that when Germans tore down the Berlin Wall, it was hailed as an act for freedom; when American tanks pulled down Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad, it was billed as "liberation"; yet when Viequeses celebrated the end of over 60 years of continuous U.S. military bombing by tearing down symbols of that oppressive presence, it was called criminal vandalism.

Throughout the remainder of the weekend, celebrations took

place at the liberated former base entrance. Vendors' stalls lined the road like a country fair with rallies and presentations taking place each day and concerts each evening featuring traditional, bomba, salsa, reggae, rock and rap music. One day there was a grand march from the town square in Isabel Segundo. On another, Ecumenical services were held to commemorate the victory of peace. On Sunday, veterans held a ceremony.

I was asked to go with those who had placed a large white cross on the bombing range after the death of David Sanes (in April 1999, in the first act of civil disobedience) to the bombing range — now silent but still contaminated and littered with unexploded bombs — and help put up another cross commemorating the victory.

A number of memorial services took place for those who had died from military toxins and others who lost their lives in this struggle. At a municipal cemetery, we prayed at the grave of David Sanes with his sister Myrta.

Another was for Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, a Vietnam veteran who had been arrested in earlier protests and was murdered at a federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida in 1979. I met his widow and daughter along with other family members and presented them with a *Veterans for Peace for Vieques* button in honor of him, and then participated in a service at Esperanza (Hope) beach where a bronze bust of Angel looks out over the water. People shared thoughts of him amid shouts of "Presente!" Flowers were strewn on the water in his memory.

The Navy's departure is just the first big step in a continuing struggle on Vieques. The Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (CRDV) has long advocated a program of "4 Ds" — Demilitarization, Devolu-

tion (return of the land), Decontamination and Development (a sustainable economy for the benefit of the people).

Some of the former military land is now open in the form of a wildlife preserve and public beaches, but many people still have land claims against the Navy, and two-thirds of the island remain in the possession of the U.S. Department of the Interior, not the government or people of Puerto Rico.

The cleanup of the land and restoration of a safe environment will remain a major focus of concern and activism. A recent study by the Department of Health found a 27% greater cancer rate on Vieques as well as elevated levels of asthma, diabetes and hypertension compared with the rest of Puerto Rico.

The bombing ranges are still littered with unexploded ordnance and are heavily polluted from many years of the buildup of RDX (cyclonite) explosive residue from conventional bombs as well as quantities of napalm and depleted uranium that were also used there.

The Victory for Peace for Vieques is something to cherish, especially in these dark times of war and repression both at home and abroad. Vieques shows that a determined and united people using mass civil disobedience can overcome even the most powerful of forces. We must continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Vieques in the battles that lay ahead. VIVA VIEQUES LIBRE!



DAVID CLINE IS THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF VETERANS FOR PEACE AND A COORDINATOR OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE BOTH ON VIEQUES, PR AND IN WASHINGTON, DC. HE IS A DISABLED VIETNAM VETERAN AND LIVES IN JERSEY CITY, NEW JERSEY.

The Horribles Parade

continued from previous page

"Watch out! Watch out!" an elderly woman screams as we near a clump.

For three solid miles we march in step behind a jolly float sponsoring the Armed Forces. The float is slow and cumbersome and plays sentimental music that the cheering crowds adore. They love the big color photos of flags and

soldiers and swooping jets going round and round on a makeshift carousel. They gush and chant *America! America! America!* — not knowing we are next in line. And when they see us marching silent and erect they are momentarily dumbstruck. It is clear that deep, deep in the landscape of their beer-swept American psy-

ches they too know something is not right. And they know that we know, and the irony makes us big.

The parade finishes at eight, and we are thirsty and tired after two hours of marching. It is time for food. It is time to relax. We have done our share and then some. The next day we learn that Veterans For Peace, with its dimstore placards made from string and sticks, was awarded third place

for civic pride. It gives one hope that Mr. Ashcroft and his surly camp will soon be repealed. *U.S. OUT OF AMERICA! Hip, hip, U.S. OUT OF THE USA!*



MARC LEVY IS A VIETNAM VET AND A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM MASSACHUSETTS.

Living with Lies

continued from page 1

to continue his wars and contract his corporate friends to rebuild the devastation he has wrought.

Lie: Homeland Security has made us all more safe. In the weeks after 9/11, U.S. citizens experienced sympathy from peoples of other nations. Now, after two conquests and two occupations, the sympathy for U.S. citizens has been transformed into hatred, perhaps at a level never before attained. The ranks of those who would make Americans the victims of violence have increased. Bush's Homeland Security program staggers along ineffectively. Funding for increased security has not been received by the local law enforcement and firefighting agencies charged with providing the protection. At the same time, all of us experience increased risk of repression from state violence under the Patriot Act and Patriot Act II. Anti-Patriot Act laws have already been passed in at least three states (including very Republican Alaska) and a growing number of municipalities. Attorney General Ashcroft has instructed U.S. attorneys to ignore the process of plea-bargaining (now 96% of all

cases) and go for maximum penalties in every case. The result will be more expense for more trials and more prison construction.

Lie: The Bush administration respects and provides for the health needs of the nation's veterans. Bush has promised record-setting budgets for Veterans Affairs. At least 18 large inpatient hospitals each serving thousands of veterans have been marked for closing or conversion to outpatient facilities. Bush's VA secretary Anthony Principi has claimed to have already cut services for a half million veterans. A pending change in the definition of service-connected health problems is under consideration. This change will stop future claims for conditions not directly connected with injury in combat, such as those of the atomic veterans, Agent Orange victims, PTSD sufferers, and those experiencing the mysterious Gulf War I and II syndromes and diseases. Over half of the 697,000 veterans of Gulf War I are ill with 200,000 claims not processed. The National Director of the Disabled American Veterans has charged that the Republi-

cans have "declared war" on disabled American veterans.

Lie: The Bush administration supports active duty servicemen and women. "He lied. They died." This is the ultimate truth for our men and women on active duty. Many of the combat personnel and support forces for the invasion were reservists and National Guard. Many were motivated by the little extra money for their families to get by on. But most served out of a commitment to being the needed human resources should our country be attacked or invaded. Preemptively invading another country that was not a tangible threat was not on their personal agenda or the nation's agenda when they enlisted. The proposed changes in eligibility could have the hardest impact on these future veterans, many of whom are already suffering from the mysterious "Gulf War pneumonia." Most of us now know that depleted uranium (DU) bullets and even the spent shell casings are radioactive. Future health problems related to DU ammunition are inestimable. As some Vietnam vets have suggested, we may have been better off in Vietnam compared to those now serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The latter do not know when their tours of

duty are up. And with many logistical services such as chow "outsourced," even food and water isn't dependably delivered. Hospitalized soldiers are being charged for their hospital meals. One soldier who died from Gulf War pneumonia was "medically retired" from the Army shortly after he fell into a coma. This limited the DOD's responsibilities to him and his family.

Truth: Repeating the truth in the face of so many lies can be a frustrating experience. The experiences of veterans and their families are a strong tonic against Bush's lies. We all have to continue repeating the truth, especially the most important one. The only way to really support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the veterans-to-be, is to **bring them home now.** Then we must push for the resources to begin to heal the survivors among this new generation of veterans.



DAVE CURRY WAS AN ARMY CAPTAIN IN COUNTERINTELLIGENCE IN VIETNAM. JOE MILLER WAS AN ENLISTED MAN WITH THE NAVAL SECURITY GROUP JUST PRIOR TO THE TONKIN GULF INCIDENT. BARRY ROMO WAS AN INFANTRY LIEUTENANT IN VIETNAM. ALL ARE MEMBERS OF VVAW'S NATIONAL OFFICE.

Bush Reaches a New Low

continued from page 1

Sometimes, leaders have to make difficult decisions."

The mechanism for reducing veterans' benefits and services has an ironic name: Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services, or CARES. Under the CARES plan, an unspecified number of VA hospitals will be closed or transformed into outpatient clinics. The VA plans to provide the specific list of hospitals for closing in December 2003.

According to the *New York Daily News*, closing one hospital in Manhattan will deny access to VA medical care for thousands of veterans with no other options. The VA is not the only federal agency wielding the budget ax on veterans' health benefits. Earlier this year, Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Roswell released a list of 18 VA hospitals to be converted from 24-hour medical facilities to 8-hour-a-day outpatient clinics.

A meeting of representatives of traditional veterans' organizations at the Capitol Hill headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars concluded that "the praise

for troops by the president, other top administration officials and Republican congressional leaders is 'ringing hollow' because they have broken promises to veterans and active-duty soldiers about benefits and services." The *Army Times* has labeled Bush administration praise and promises for veterans and active duty troops "nothing but lip service." "We strongly believe that Congress and the administration have to do better by veterans," said Dennis M. Cullinan, legislative director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Republicans have proposed new legislation that will limit what constitutes a service-connected health problem. Representative Lane Evans of Illinois, the ranking democrat on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, has pointed out that the new legislation would have denied benefits to the atomic veterans and the victims of Agent Orange. In reaction to the proposed legislation, the Disabled American Veterans in a press release have accused Congress of "declaring war against disabled veterans" and showing "callous contempt for the sacri-

fices of America's defenders."

The American Gulf War Veterans Association doesn't want the public to lose sight of the fact that nearly half of the 697,000 Gulf War I veterans are now ill. While over 200,000 of those serving in the first Gulf War have requested disability for "mysterious illnesses," they have received no adequate diagnosis or treatment from either the Department of Defense (DOD) or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For the Association, "repeated lack of diagnosis unfortunately translates into lack of treatment, and lack of compensation for the veteran."

Treatment of veterans of the current Gulf War has bordered on the macabre. Warnings from military experts about the dangers to health of depleted uranium armor-piercing ordnance are getting attention in the press but not at the VA or DOD. There is no shortage of new mysterious illnesses similar to those found among Gulf War I vets turning up among those who are serving in Gulf War II. Several cases have figured prominently in the media. Army Sgt. Vanessa Turner barely escaped

death from a "mysterious" ailment only to have to fight for medical treatment from the VA. "It's easier to stay a soldier and be in harm's way than to come home and get care," said Turner, a six-year army veteran. In September, she was still waiting for an appointment to see a doctor at a Boston VA hospital in mid-October. According to his parents, Josh Neusche became ill with a mystery illness on 6/26/03, entered a coma on 7/01/03, and was "medically retired" from the Army that day. The retirement classification allowed the DOD to deny any obligation for assisting his family to see him before he died on 7/12/03.

Through their foreign policy, the Bush administration has made all of these new veterans. Will they treat these new veterans with the same disdain they have demonstrated toward the rest of us veterans since taking office? How can we expect anything else?



DAVE CURRY, JOE MILLER AND BARRY ROMO ARE MEMBERS OF VVAW'S NATIONAL OFFICE.

Military Families and Vets Speak Out

DAVE COLLINS

Saturday, August 23 was a typical central Texas summer day in Crawford (population 705, excluding the "Western White House"); temperatures ranged into the high 90s. What took place was, however, far from typical. A small group of dedicated activists from Austin, Dallas, Bastrop and other Texas towns traveled to the Peace House in Crawford to cement local efforts of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) with veterans' groups, most prominently Veterans For Peace.

The event was the brainchild of Candace Robison, the determined local voice of MFSO. The Peace House, a unique institution in Crawford dedicated to providing a local venue for journalists (particularly foreign) and activists, quickly stepped in to provide a center of gravity.

The day began with a press conference in the Peace House garden. Karl Rove screwed up. Though this event had been well-publicized, the Bushies returned on Friday from their arduous campaign, press corps in tow. You know, there really isn't anything to do in Crawford. So over twenty attentive journalists showed up, both print and TV types. Reuters was represented. So were network affiliates — even Fox. Each of seven organizations delivered prepared comments, largely on the common theme of the day: "Support Our Troops — Bring Them Home."

Following a Peace House buffet were several different activities. Someone presented a slide show from a recent trip to Iraq. Many journalists stayed for interviews with individuals. Of course, there was a whole lot of "net-

working."

The main event was to be a rally at Crawford's park, located about a half mile away. By now the group had grown to about 150 people. In true activist tradition, we milled around a good bit until, through the influence of gravity of purpose, we more or less formed up for our march.

Among the many things that Peace House has done very well in Crawford has been to establish outstanding relations with the police. In evidence throughout the day, in an honestly friendly small-town sort of way, what looked like the entire force turned out to close down Main Street and block traffic on side streets, clearing our way for a loop through downtown and to the park.

VFP led the march with a U.S. flag-draped coffin. I joined to show the VVAW colors in solidarity. Out of respect for MFSO, we all agreed to forego the local VFP practice of two coffins, one with the U.S. flag and another with the Iraq flag.

As we arrived at the park we were greeted by the tunes of a local musician. After one organizer gave a rundown of the agenda, the rally was underway. The media, still lacking a good distraction, stayed with us in good numbers.

The agenda started with hardcore foreign policy. Dr. Bob Jensen (UT, Austin) and Rahul Mahajan (Peace Action) each offered thoughts regarding the imperialist agenda represented by the occupation of Iraq. Dr. Jensen emphasized that bringing troops home was simply a first step in attacking the problem of a misguided, neoconservative foreign

policy. Mr. Mahajan cautioned that just bringing a halt to the horror that is Iraq would likely be a long, hard effort.

Candace came next. She is married to a 20-year army officer, a lieutenant in a reserve unit deployed to Iraq. She long had strong doubts about the war, but her gung-ho husband saw it as necessary and as his duty, she said. Candace became an activist when the letters and rare phone conversations with her husband became dominated by topics such as lack of mission, constant danger, poor supplies, lack of equipment and rapidly-eroding morale and faith in leadership.

Joe McFatter of the Dallas chapter of VFP followed. Joe spoke a bit about VFP as an organization, its history, membership and goals. He turned quickly, however, to his core message: bad war, bad policy, bad planning, bad outcomes. Bring them home now. Internationalize the occupation and bring them home, now.

Back to MFSO. A very determined, diminutive woman wearing a T-shirt reading "United States Military Academy — Been There, Done That" confidently took the microphone and let loose with the speech of the day. Intellectually, eloquently and logically, she devastated the rationale, strategy and prosecution of the war. She explained that she was a West Point graduate who, after two overseas assignments, had to take a medical discharge due to a service-related injury. Her West Point graduate husband is in Iraq. Her message echoed that of the day's "Bring 'em Home" adding an important clarification: alive.

The grandmother of a young

PFC in Iraq begged tearfully for his return. She thinks his respiratory condition is making him really sick in the heat. The audience was visibly moved by her heartfelt plea. What is less clear is how many connected the dots with the information that followed.

Dick Underwood, a prominent Austin VFP member, spoke on the issue of depleted uranium (DU). Space does not allow treatment of that terrifying topic. The most conservative estimates, by independent and knowledgeable sources, point to over 200,000 Gulf War I veterans seriously disabled by DU exposure. Although there are many other possible explanations, the tearful grandmother's grandson may also be exhibiting early symptoms of DU poisoning.

A few more words with a couple of journalists about veterans' benefits and this sunbaked old vet called it a day.

In addition to an opportunity to connect with others in the movement and spend a bit of productive time in the shadow of the Western White House, I had a third mission that day. It is time to build connections between the MFSO and veterans, particularly Vietnam and Korea vets. When the troops do start to come home, there will be few to whom they can turn for understanding. We need to begin getting that support network in place. Saturday will hopefully prove to have been a step in that direction. Candace said it was, and she is one determined lady. ☺

DAVE COLLINS IS A VIETNAM VET AND A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM TEXAS.



Stories of VVAW

KURT HILGENDORF (REVIEWER)

The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

By Andrew E. Hunt

(New York University Press, 1999)

Within the past several years, several books documenting the history of VVAW have been published. Of these, Andrew Hunt's "The Turning" may be one of the most accessible. Over the course of a long afternoon, a reader can cover engaging accounts of VVAW's founding and patchwork early development, the preparation and execution of Operation RAW, the mixed results of the Winter Soldier investigation, VVAW's dramatic growth after Operation Dewey Canyon III, the 1972 Republican National Convention, the trial of the Gainesville Eight, and the group's decline after the "official end" of American involvement. Hunt's extensive interviewing of VVAW members, and notably his inclusion of interviews with people outside national leadership, provides rich and personal accounts of crucial events and campaigns. This book is a good read for both those new to the stories of VVAW and longtime members and supporters.

Hunt's analysis of VVAW's major triumphs, internal struggles, and process of development is

perhaps the strongest part of "The Turning." He handles events like the 1968 Democratic National Convention and its impact on VVAW with stark honesty:

The veterans left Chicago feeling depressed and powerless. Several dedicated VVAW activists simply disappeared following the convention and never resurfaced. McCarthy's defeat in Chicago killed the hopes of veterans and dashed their faith in electoral politics.

In the process he lays the groundwork for the radicalization process VVAW would undergo several years later. While speaking of Operation Dewey Canyon III, Hunt writes:

The evolution of Dewey Canyon III paralleled that of VVAW. Veterans initially participated in conventional forms of resistance. However, disillusionment set in quickly, and most of the VVAWers consciously chose to adopt more confrontational tactics. Such overt defiance thrust VVAW into the national spotlight, as the image of men hurling medals was etched into the national conscience.

In the process of his analysis, Hunt richly quotes VVAW members, letting the voices of the organization come to the forefront through detailed firsthand accounts and analysis.

Hunt is also effective at uncovering and addressing oft-overlooked parts of VVAW's history. Early in "The Turning," Hunt writes of Jeff Sharlet's contribution of the newspaper *Vietnam GI* and the impact of his untimely death from cancer. Later in the book, Hunt addresses VVAW's efforts to become a broad-based multi-issue organization, especially with regard to addressing the rampant racism and sexism both in American society and within the organization. He writes of the Lifeline to Cairo and VVAW's role in supporting the African American community in the small Illinois river town; he also describes the struggle to recruit veterans of color to the organization. Hunt's discussion of women in VVAW is notably engaging. Rather than simply chastising the group for its early rejection of women members, he outlines VVAW's progression toward a more egalitarian organizational structure:

There were no pat answers to the gender conflicts in VVAW, but the status of women would continue to improve in the organization. Combating sexism later became a significant objective in VVAW's statement of purpose.

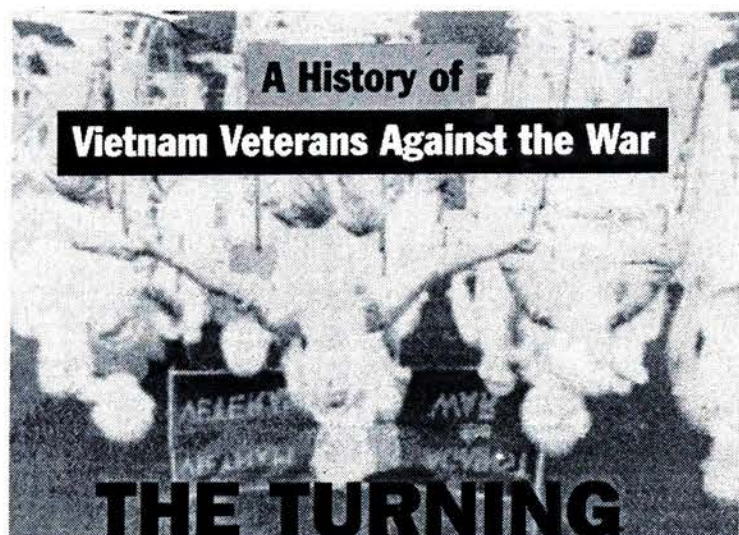
Despite Hunt's engaging and in-depth history, there are glaring omissions. Hunt essentially ends the organization's history in the mid-1970s. A detailed description of the impact of government surveillance on the organization and primary-source accounts of the Gainesville Eight trial are welcome inclusions. Interestingly, he writes about VVAW's "cyclical" growth after American military interventions in Central America and Gulf War I, something the organization has experienced again during the Bush II regime. However, Hunt says relatively little on two of VVAW's most important

legacies: the creation of post-Vietnam syndrome rap groups and the Agent Orange lawsuits. While he covers the history of rap groups, Hunt avoids an in-depth discussion on this groundbreaking research or its subsequent impact on the study and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. As for Agent Orange, Hunt makes only passing references to the lawsuit and says virtually nothing about the organization's subsequent rejuvenation. Hunt also mishandles the history of the creation of VVAW/AI as a bogus ultraleft "hologram" of VVAW. Nowhere does he mention that group's creation in order to directly siphon off support and usurp the history of the legitimate organization. And for an author who had consistently included the voices of a diverse group of the organization's members, Hunt in the last chapter chooses only to focus on leadership, thereby mitigating the contributions of VVAW rank-and-file.

Despite these criticisms of "The Turning," Hunt's book makes a valuable contribution to the literature on VVAW through its accessible style and thoroughness in detail and analysis. I would especially recommend it to students studying Vietnam vets or people who have just become acquainted with VVAW. In conjunction with Richard Stacewicz's "Winter Soldiers" (unfortunately out of print), Hunt's book provides an excellent look into the vitally important history and legacy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.



KURT HILGENDORF IS A MEMBER OF THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CHAPTER OF VVAW AND IS CURRENTLY "ON SABBATICAL" AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY STUDYING TO BECOME A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER.



Annie Bailey speaks out against the Agent Orange settlement (Chicago, 1984)

Still a Force for Peace

JERRY LEMBCKE (REVIEWER)

The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War By Andrew E. Hunt

(New York University Press, 1999)

In my course on public memory and the Vietnam War, I sometimes begin by asking students if they have heard of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Few say they have. Their image of Vietnam veterans is more likely derived from Hollywood films portraying veterans as sad-sack trauma cases, sexual predators, or bare-chested mercenaries returned to jungle warfare. "The Turning" is a straightforward and crisply-written narrative that reasserts the historical record that thousands of men came home from Vietnam empowered and politicized and ready to join the anti-war movement. In it, author Andrew Hunt gives us the best account we have of VVAW, one of the most remarkable expressions of resistance to war in all of history.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began as a six-man speakers bureau in New York City in 1967 and began to grow when the small group announced its existence with a full-page ad in the November 19 *New York Times*. In January 1968 the fledgling organization helped launch the first anti-war newspaper for soldiers, *Vietnam GI*, and a month later, with membership growing, it moved into offices on Fifth Avenue. By the time the last U.S. troops came home from Vietnam in 1973, VVAW had become a

full-fledged national organization with 20,000 members and branch offices in several states.

The stories of what VVAW accomplished along the way and the adversities it overcame make up the core chapters of "The Turning." The appearance of VVAW at the very time when fatigue was taking its toll on other anti-war organizations made it a godsend to the movement. Its leaders brought a new level of maturity and self-confidence to the movement and, with the credentials of "having been there," they had the political cachet that other activists had already spent. When VVAW leader John Kerry implored a congressional committee to end the war in 1971, they listened. In cities and towns across the country, VVAW members and followers merged their fresh energy and new ideas for how to "bring the war home" with existing efforts to educate the American people about the war. Veterans formed guerilla theater troops to reenact combat operations at sites along roads, in parks, and on college campuses. Mock war-crimes trials were organized to document veterans' testimonies about the use of illegal military tactics in Vietnam. In April 1971, thousands of veterans converged on Washington, D.C. for an encampment to protest the war. Dubbed "Operation Dewey Canyon III," this limited incursion into the nation's capital ended with hundreds of veterans angrily returning the medals they had been awarded for service in Vietnam.

But the heady stories of the war-against-the-war are only one part of the story told by Hunt.

From day one, VVAW was under surveillance by the FBI and it was the constant target of the bureau's COINTELPRO campaign to disrupt it and other movement organizations. VVAW leaders were alert to efforts by the FBI and the administration of President Richard Nixon to discredit VVAW as a phony organization whose members were not really veterans, and their guard was always out for agents provocateurs sponsored by the FBI or local police. In the months leading up to the 1972 Republican Party convention in Miami Beach, VVAW was infiltrated by agent William Lemmer who tried to provoke members to engage in violent actions and later falsely testified to a VVAW conspiracy to assault the convention.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War was also burdened by internal disagreements and splits. Tensions within the organization arose in 1968 over whether to support Eugene McCarthy's bid for the Democratic Party's nomination for president. The moderates in VVAW favored the pursuit of peace in Vietnam through the electoral process, while the radicals inclined toward politics in the streets. Two years later, the same issue resurfaced when some members wanted to hold a war-crimes trial in Washington, where it would catch the attention of legislators, while others preferred Detroit as a site because there the event would get the attention of working-class Americans. As the war wound down, moderates like John Kerry, who had annoyed other leaders by his reluctance to do the organizational grunt work

needed around the national office, stepped off the VVAW bus to political or academic careers while militants like Joe Urgo, who was the first Vietnam veteran to return to Hanoi as an anti-war activist, left to begin a new organization, VVAW/Anti-Imperialist. The author presents VVAW struggles in what appears to be a fair and even-handed way, using biographical sketches of leaders like Urgo, Barry Romo, Jan Barry, Scott Camil, and John O'Connor, to keep the human dimension of the organization before us.

In the end, Hunt captures what might be the most remarkable feature of the VVAW story: it hasn't ended. The only Sixties-generation anti-war organization that lived to see the new century, VVAW is still a force for peace. Its obituary yet to be written, as Hunt notes, VVAW marked its 35th anniversary by taking out another full-page ad, this one in the November 11, 2002 *Nation* magazine, opposing the looming war against Iraq.



JERRY LEMBCKE IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE AND THE AUTHOR OF "THE SPITTING IMAGE: MYTH, MEMORY, AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM" (NYU PRESS) AND "CNN'S TAILWIND TALE: INSIDE VIETNAM'S LAST GREAT MYTH" (ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUB. CO.). THIS REVIEW IS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM *HUMANITY & SOCIETY* VOL. 26, NO. 2.

Good News: Jessica Lynch is Getting Better. Bad News: Oh, who cares what the bad news is...



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Memorial Day in Chicago

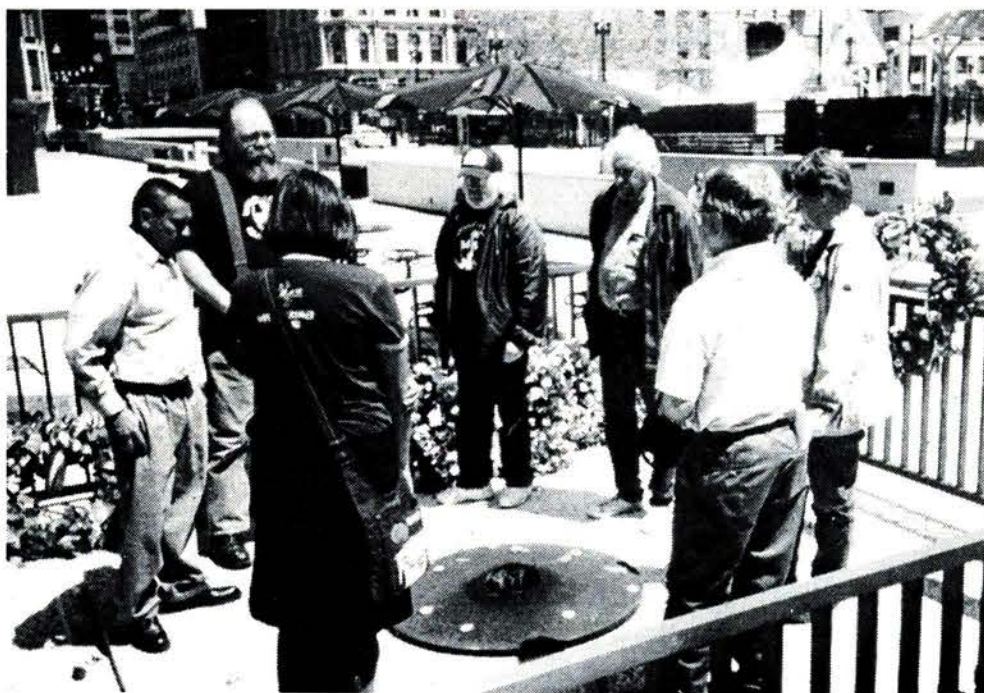
JANET CURRY

Seven powerful speakers took the podium at the Eternal Flame Memorial on Memorial Day 2003 and locked in the attention of the multigenerational crowd. If, as World War I-era writer Randolph Bourne said, "War is the health of the state," the health of VVAW proved again this day to be the thoroughgoing accuracy of its critical vision and the worldwide embrace of its perspective on what unites so many seemingly diverse struggles, from Colombia to Iraq; from a U.S. Army intelligence analyst seeking conscientious objector status to Gulf War I and II vets, Iraqis and Afghan refugees suffering from U.S. uranium munitions exposure; from nineteenth century women of the Confederacy honoring Union dead to the anti-war activism of John Dos Passos, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, I.F. Stone, and Martin Luther King; from fighter pilots to Army dump truck drivers (you had to be there for this one); and from the late Mayor Harold Washington's full support of vets to Take Back the Night at the UIUC campus to the reclamation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fountain in Chicago — there was hard-won truth and solidarity for body and soul.

Meg Miner, Gulf War I-era technology sergeant from the Air Force and currently an archivist at Illinois Wesleyan College, began the program with an account from Army Intelligence analyst Diedra Cobb. [Read it on the next page. —Ed.] Cobb levels the searing

complaint that vital information was far too hard to come by — even for those, like herself, with top security clearances — for her to form reasonable assessments of the so-called enemy in Gulf War II, so much so that the Army's seven stated values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage lead her now to refuse to participate in this war and in the wider "blind conformity" that allows it to continue. Cobb now pursues conscientious objector status. Miner urged us to make our voices heard, write to public office holders (elected and otherwise), question the motives of TV news "experts," get out the vote and do whatever else we can to break the silence.

Doug Rokke, Vietnam through Gulf War I vet, Ph.D. in physics and technology education, and now a major in the Reserves, had been assigned to train soldiers in nuclear, biological and chemical warfare response in Gulf War I. Rokke stated that in December 1990, when General Schwarzkopf made the conscious decision to blow up Iraq's chemical and biological weapons capabilities in place, we knew exactly what they had because **we gave it to them**. Though illegal by U.N. standards, the United States had made a conscious decision to use uranium munitions, and it was



Memorial Day speakers gather at the Eternal Flame (Chicago, 2003)

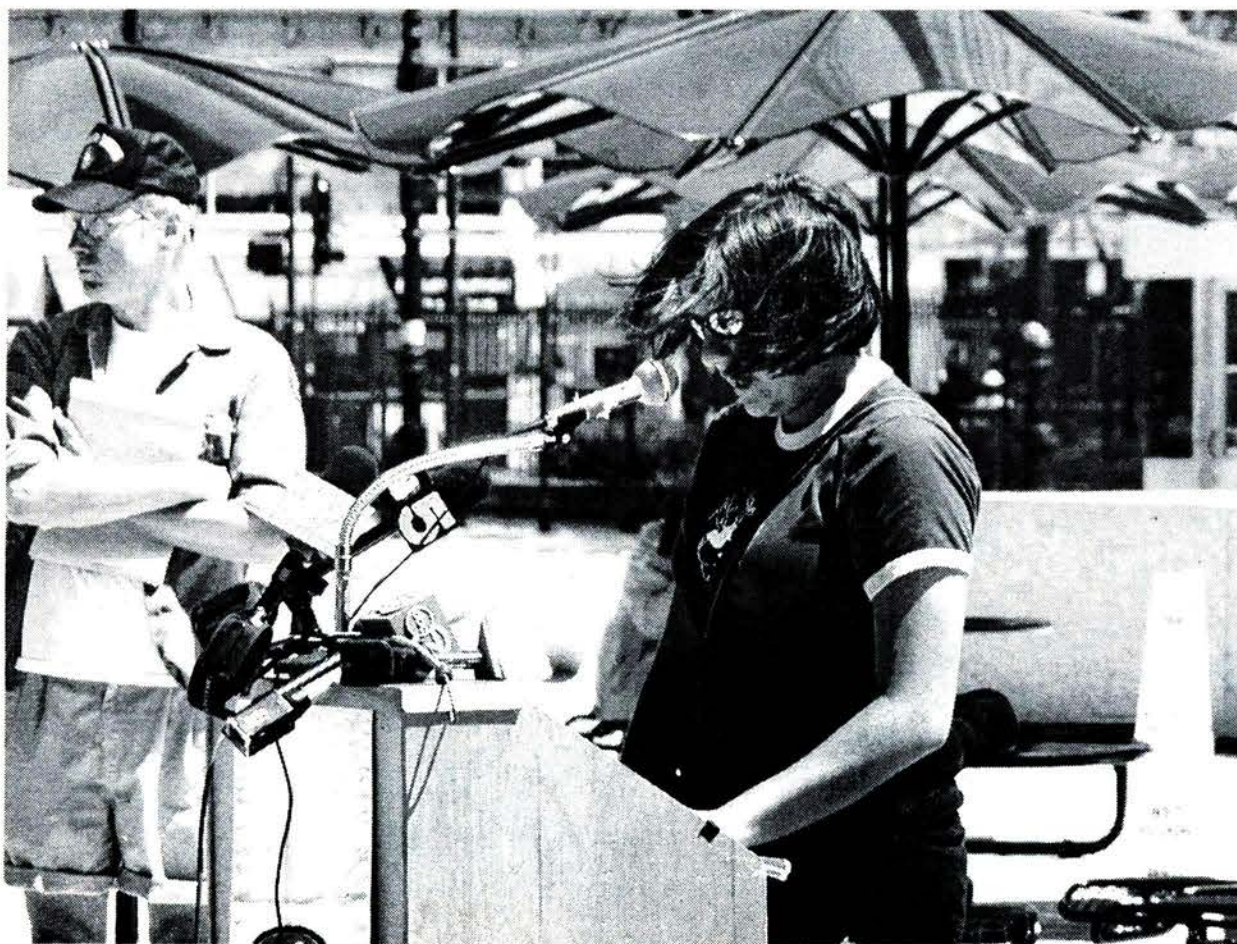
this mess that Rokke was ordered by Schwarzkopf to clean up in February 1991. He is still trying. Far from the official total casualty count of 767 U.S. deaths in Gulf I, Rokke reported that casualties were "horrific": over 10,000 dead and over 221,000 on permanent disability according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. As with Agent Orange in Vietnam, radiation casualties continue many years after a war, so these Gulf I numbers will continue to grow. While those with responsibility issued a warning that uranium munitions should not be used again in Gulf II, they were. According to a recent BBC report, Afghan refugees are showing up with uranium poisoning, and since the U.S. Department of Defense has acknowledged in congressional testimony that mandatory pre-deployment physicals were not conducted for Gulf II

vets, it becomes more difficult to sort out how to process their care for malaria, respiratory and intestinal problems.

As a warrior, Rokke knows the effectiveness of weapons, but he warned that the technology of war has produced devastation for which we can no longer provide medical care. Like his namesake, General Douglas MacArthur, Rokke stands for duty, honor, and country; but unlike the general, he will never fade away from the "battlefield of political denials" until all vets have the medical care they deserve.

Jen Tayabji, director of the Illinois Disciples Foundation on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus, also took up the message of casualty rates that far exceed popular media claims. As of this date, over 100 U.S. soldiers are dead, along with 2,500 Iraqi soldiers and 1,250 Iraqi civilians, with thousands more wounded; and this is added to the deaths of 250 adults per day and 5,000 young children per month resulting from U.S. sanctions against the people of Iraq since Gulf I. The \$95 billion tab (so far), with the highest deficit in history, is being paid by the Bush administration by slashing education and health care and closing VA hospitals. Fear is widespread during this time, not simply of terrorists abroad, but of the U.S. government as it rounds up immigrants and discriminates against Muslims.

John Zutz, Vietnam vet, VVAW national officer and Milwaukee Chapter member, compared numbers as well. After being AWOL for six days in Viet-



Jen Tayabji speaks at VVAW Memorial Day event (Chicago, 2003)

continued on page 14

A Military Resister's Words on Memorial Day

Never before have I seen such beautiful, tender people turn to such desperate measures to make something of themselves in this "No Child Left Behind" society. But then again I have been in this world but 21 years, and what do I know? I write to you all, addressing you as people who have come together in opposition to a disgustingly inhumane, destructive and pervasive force. Keep your people ignorant, but make them feel important by taking ownership of that ignorance, and you can guide them in the direction of your desires. The United States of America has mastered this: a full-fledged organizational dictatorship of superpower proportions. Our U.S. of A. free, but censored, mass media does not teach us about this, and thus America is able to continue on its path unrecognized and praised as being THE prime example of democracy.

A democratic nation, as defined by the Encarta World English Dictionary, is a country with a government that has been elected freely and equally by all its citizens. I write to you today from the Education Center at Aberdeen Proving Ground and ask, "Was President George W. Bush equally elected by all of this nation's citizens? And how can an ignorant society truly make a free electorate vote?" I ask this because I too am ignorant. Many ask, how could I have entered the military and not known the magnitude of what it meant? And I ponder ... when a bird is sheltered and at last released to fly, how is it to know the



Meg Miner reads Diedra Cobb's statement on Memorial Day (Chicago, 2003)

meaning behind all that it will encounter? I write to you to say that I joined the Army thinking that I was, quite possibly, upholding some of the mightiest of ideals for the greatest, most powerful country on this earth. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage: these are the seven Army values, values that I wanted to be able to say that I cherished and possessed. But still they ask, how could I have not seen it? Spare the rod and save the child, I would have answered. There had to be some good that would come of the carnage, in the end.

But this is where I made my

mistake, because in war, there is no end. We are still in Germany, we are still in Korea, we are still in Bosnia, hell, we're still in America. The list goes on and on and the only things that are determined are who will stay and who will go, who will live and who will die, who will rule and who will serve. I did not know that peace cannot come from war because war never ends. And now when bombarded with questions about why I joined, what I thought this would be and "Are you serious?" Yes! I scream yes! And my soul pours out the answers that I wish my brain could formulate in my head, so that my lips could

begin to utter this tragedy that is happening before my eyes, but that is so hard to get others, who are blind as I was, to see. In life, awakening to beauty and tragedy is a natural progression.

We, my friends of the United States, do not live in a democracy; we live in a republic. Remember the Pledge of Allegiance? "I pledge allegiance to the flag and the REPUBLIC for which it stands." Republic: a state or other political unit with a form of government in which the supreme power is in the hands of representatives elected by the people. We, the patriotically unknowing of the United States of America elect these people to make decisions in the name of the people. And when the people rise up and shout and thrash about screaming, "No more, not in our name," they laugh and denounce us before those who are blind as traitors.

The world is changing as it always will, and Mother Nature, with all her sweet beauty, will put an end to all this nonsense. She will say, "Hush, child," and we will fall helplessly into her arms.

... Almost daily I hear the weapons they test at this post explode and feel the foundation of the building that I am standing in rattle its metal innards, and I realize that the wait I must endure through this conscientious objector process is nothing compared to the terror that our weapons will inflict



continued on page 14

Memorial Day in Chicago

continued from page 12

nam, Zutz was fined \$150 and had to make up the six days' work; for another, more privileged AWOL case, this time for a year, the consequence was being made commander in chief. [See this issue's "My View" for yet another consequence for the privileged AWOLer. —Ed.] Citing the original Memorial Day after the Civil War, Zutz called for us to undergo a day of mourning, but with a deep recognition of the loss on both sides.

Luis Aldofo Cardona spoke of the bloody consequences of the United States's Plan Columbia: many thousands dead at the hands

of neoliberal policies together with multinationals like Coca-Cola, which is carrying out its own dirty war against its own workers and union members. Collective agreements and benefits once won are now trashed, and thus a boycott of all Coca-Cola products is underway, with the support of high schools, universities, churches and human rights organizations around the world. Cardona asked for our participation.

Filmmaker Denis Mueller recalled the Memorial Day article written by World War II vet and historian Howard Zinn that led to the cancellation of Zinn's column

at the *Boston Globe* in June 1976. What if we celebrated Memorial Day in this country not with the traditional car-crash body count and betrayal of the war dead by hypocritical politicians and war contractors, but looked instead to the tradition of Dos Passos, Thoreau, Twain, Stone and King? That is, we need a different recognition of the day: one with honor.

David Curry, Vietnam vet and secretary/treasurer on the late Mayor Harold Washington's Welcome Home Parade committee, called up the memory of this greatest Chicago mayor. "No one should ever challenge a vet's right to be against war," urged Mayor Washington, who himself had fought in World War II in an engi-

neering battalion in the Pacific, and won, with his unit, the Meritorious Service award.

Paul Wisovaty [Vietnam vet and a regular Veteran columnist; see "Notes From the Boonies" — Ed.] concluded the presentations with the reminder that we can support the troops without supporting reckless wars of imperialism, and the speakers laid VVAW buttons down around the Eternal Flame.



JANET B. CURRY IS A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA AND A VVAW EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBER.



Doug Rokke speaks on Memorial Day (Chicago, 2003)

Letter from Diedra

continued from page 13

upon the people that they are, and too often, are "accidentally" targeting, and so this is why I must continue.

As an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army, I throw down my arms and refuse to plot against the so-called enemy. I have no grand political knowledge of our grand political plan. With access to classified information provided only on a need-to-know basis (even for those, such as myself, with a Top Secret security clearance), information which is constantly shifting here and there, and what you once thought was no longer is two seconds later, a distant illusion. How can the American people claim to know anything? The only knowledge that I have, as I participated in this operation, is of a grand psychological scam. Uncle Sam pays off his military welfare killers and gives them big titles so that they can feel important about themselves, while CNN and other big-business media sources pro-

vide justification to the people by showing riveting and shocking pictures with captions that establish America's moral pillars. I declare I will wash my hands of this filthy moral and humanitarian tragedy once and for all. My eyes are awake now, thank you Mr. President. The Army never did a better job of instilling those seven values in a qualified and anxious soldier. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage are the values that have guided me through this process.

I now talk to those who have felt a much larger rattle from weapons ten times the size of the weapons that are tested here on this post; and to those who were demolished before they could ever feel the rattle; and to those who survived the injuries, both physical and mental, from those great big horrid rattles — my objection is in your name, my people of Afghanistan, Vietnam, Vieques,

New York, Colombia, Bosnia and ... the list is too long to even begin to touch on all those that are to be included. The world is to be included.

It's as though I've been born again and I'm standing here looking at the world with these great big eyes and so many beautiful faces are staring back at me. And I see so many being infected with so much hate and greed and blind conformity; one following right after another in a daze, in a trance, in such a terribly deep trance; it's overwhelming, my heart bleeds. And I sit here in limbo telling the world MY story, which is our story, so that those who may have even a snippet of curiosity about why so many people are screaming "Not in our name!" may have some inspiration. Or possibly those who have a passion for peace that needs to be revived by realizing that you do make a difference because it is the small parts that make up the whole, and oh what a

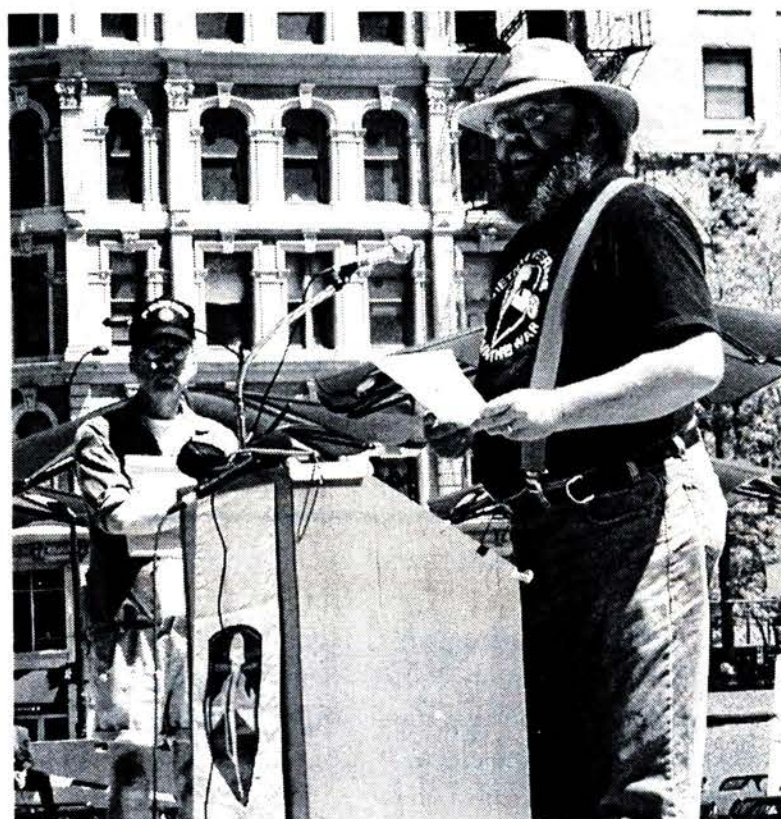
powerful energy that whole exudes when one chooses peace and love and compassion!

After thousands of years of war,
And we are still too blind to see,
That all we are accomplishing,
Is the death of you and me.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." — Gandhi

Peace is the answer

Diedra Cobb
203D MI BN
4727 Deer Creek Loop
APG, MD 21005
underfoe@hotmail.com



John Zutz speaks on Memorial Day (Chicago, 2003)

Notes from the Boonies

continued from page 4

right under the reproduction of my letter is the statement, "This man is actually serving as treasurer of the local museum board." This is followed by the observation that I obviously have little respect for Korean War vets. I have to say that I am not pleased by this accusation.

I certainly bear no ill will toward my fellow vets from Korea, to include those who served at No Gun Ri. (My unit, the 3/5 Armored Cav, did some things in 'Nam that I'm not real proud of either.) But it wasn't the PFCs and sergeants and lieutenants I was going after. As John Kim put it in his Fall 2002 book review in *The Veteran*, "The No Gun Ri slaughter was a deliberate result of a refugee control policy of the U.S. 8th Army and MacArthur's Far East Command." John added that the U.S. Army's conclusion (January 2001), following what it said with a straight face was a thorough investigation of the incident, was that "U.S. commanders did not issue oral or written orders to shoot and kill civilians in the vicinity of No Gun Ri." My recollection is that the Army also conceded that "an unknown number of civilians were killed at No Gun Ri." Well, you've probably fig-

ured out the problem by now. The Army admits we zapped a very large number of civilians at No Gun Ri, but is totally at a loss to explain how that happened. The only possible inference, based upon the Army's twin conclusions (bunch of civilians dead; no orders from HQ), would have to be that the enlisted guys and lieutenants just went nuts and did it on their own. Damn sad story. You send a bunch of guys from the boonies into a war zone, without good West Point training, and that kind of stuff happens. As John notes in his book review, Slick Willie "offered his 'regret,' but no apology." (I guess an apology would imply that we did something wrong.)

As I'm sure you figured out before you read this, what we got is My Lai one war and eighteen years earlier. Nobody above the rank of captain knew nothin' about nothin'. I guess that's one of the perks of getting to issue orders from Division HQ. It's hard to hear the screams of the dying over the jukebox at the officers' club.

Unfortunately, my fellow vets in the Korean War Veterans Association are unlikely to look at it this way. I suppose I can

understand that they're unwilling to admit that their government committed war crimes. (Actually, I can't.) But what I really cannot understand is their inability to see that their own government, in its "thorough investigation" of the events at No Gun Ri, sold them down the river.

If you're wondering how anyone could justify the slaughter of two to four hundred women, children and old men who posed no threat to U.S. forces, be warned that the pro-war guys have an explanation. There were reports that some North Korean soldiers disguised themselves as civilians in an attempt to make their way south, and that those North Koreans were among the civilians at No Gun Ri. The argument is that it was necessary to take out a few hundred civilians in the interests of taking out the North Koreans. (As some of my 'Nam peers liked to say, "Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out.") I hope that I don't sound like too much of a bleeding heart if I suggest that that is an insane argument. As John Kim pointed out in his article, weren't we supposed to be there to **protect** civilians? Of course, we might turn that scenario around. If a number of ROK troops did the same thing in an effort to make their way north, and the North Koreans used that as justification to do what we did at No Gun Ri ... well, this

requires little elaboration. (I'm not even sure why I'm wasting your time with this paragraph.) Finally, if that explanation could be given any spin of legitimacy, then why didn't the Army jump on it and admit giving the orders? As Yossarian learned in "Catch-22," if you're caught doing something disgraceful, and for which you should apologize, the practical thing to do is to **brag** about it. It's also the cheaper and easier way to go: no fussy reparations issues to deal with, no grieving widows and such to whom to send form letters expressing your "regret." Or, I guess you could take the middle ground, which of course is what the Army did. They simply don't know what happened.

So here I sit, waiting for my pink slip from the Korean War Museum Association sometime this week (or, waiting for a bunch of 70-year-old guys to come after me with pitchforks and chase me to the top of a windmill) I honestly do feel bad about it, but it could be worse. I could be one of those people who believes that the United States government is never wrong.



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



Paul Wisovaty emcees on Memorial Day (Chicago, 2003)



Dave Curry at the VVAW Memorial Day event (Chicago, 2003)



Denis Mueller on Memorial Day (Chicago, 2003)

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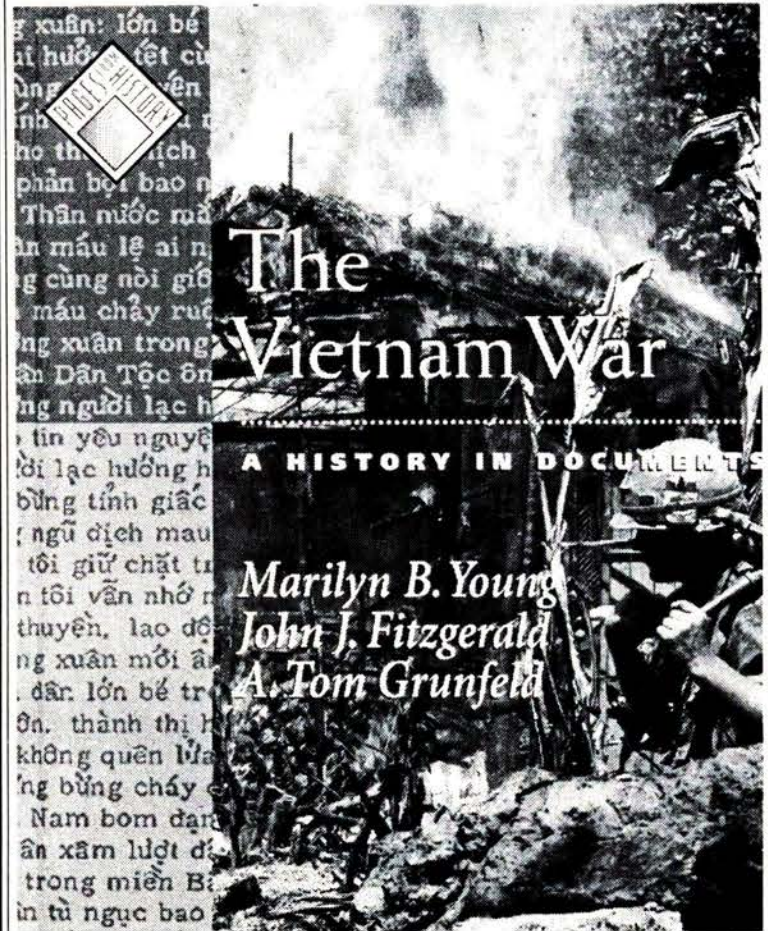
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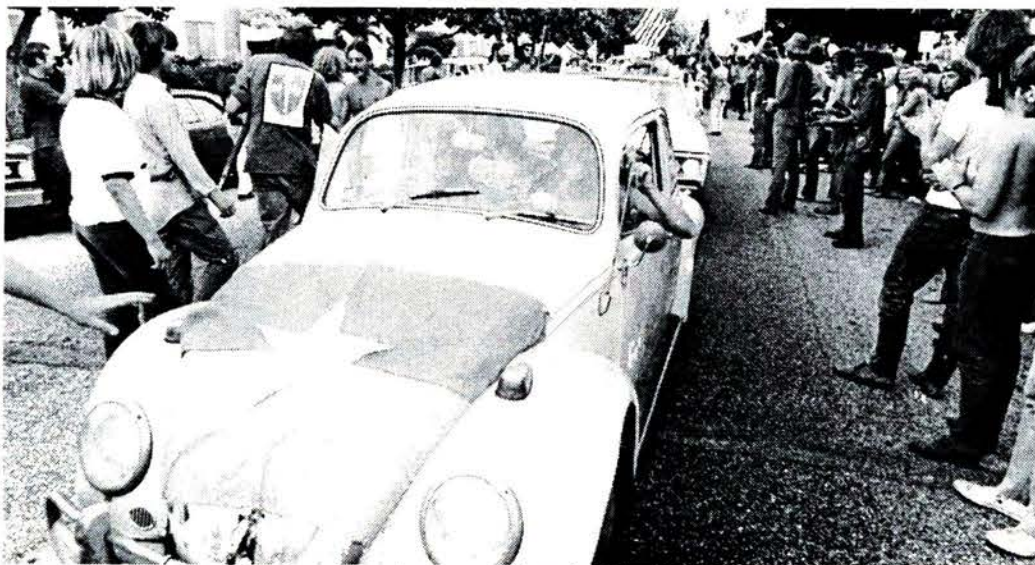
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VVAW Agent Orange demo (Washington, DC, 1982)



The Last Patrol convoy arrives in Miami Beach (1972)

War Really Is Hell

BILL LEARY

An old soldier once said that "war is hell." The trouble is that most people haven't got a clue just how true that is. People who have never been in a war can only imagine what it is like and usually rely on Hollywood for their conceptions. And with noticeably rare exceptions, Hollywood doesn't come close to getting it right. If you have been in a "shoot or be shot" situation you know what can happen to your mental outlook. The first thing you learn when you are on the front line is fear. Then you get all the offshoots of that, such as paranoia, distrust and resentment. After a while you either go completely bonkers or you develop methods of shutting out or justifying your actions. First you get trigger-happy, then you become dispassionate and cold, even calculating.

Every war has produced war crimes and atrocities, but those that commit these actions are not fully at fault for their actions. It is well known that fear leads to irrational decisions. The true fault for these actions belongs in the laps

of those that put the soldiers in their situation. Any time a country sends its soldiers into a hostile situation there will be uncivilized crimes committed. War is not a civilized act, and it is very difficult — if not impossible — to act civilized in an uncivilized situation. If a country is going to use force, it had better be only after very considerable thought, and the decision should not be made by those who have never been part of it and have no chance of being put in harm's way. War should never be decided by a think-tank jockey arguing the pros and cons of ideology, or by any member of the privileged class that has never been in a combat situation and will not have to risk sacrificing his or her own loved ones.

As has been stated earlier, all wars create atrocities and crimes against humanity: just how many and to what degree is determined by the numbers involved, the length of the conflict and the desperation of those involved. These atrocities have a double effect. The victims of the atrocities are

the first and obvious victims, but the perpetrators also suffer later from the guilt and remorse that eventually comes after their removal from the situation. A soldier doing guard duty who hears or sees something in the dark that seems threatening shoots first and asks questions later, thinking: *it is better them than me, better to be safe than sorry*. When you realize that you just shot and killed an old man, woman or child, you must put it out of your mind to be able to continue functioning, but you can only do so for a short while. Sooner or later you have to deal with the guilt you must feel if you are human at all. This is where the PTSD comes in and the violence or depression it can trigger. That leads to the classic example of the vet in the bell tower with a rifle picking off people on the street, or the seemingly-incurable alcoholic or drug addict that spends the rest of his life on the edge of society or in a jail or hospital.

These are the things you don't usually see in Hollywood's accounts. These are the things

most people who have never been there don't think about, but they are very real and this is the price we must pay for going to war. This is by no means the entire price tag, either. The other costs are too numerous to mention without writing an entire book.

If you do not, and will not, have to pay the price for war, then you have no right to insist on it, let alone be any part of the decision making process. No one has the right to ask others to pay for their war. The president, vice president, his cabinet and Congress — the vast majority having never served, nor any of their children — do not have the right to ask others to pay the price for war, just as the United States does not have any right to go to the United Nations and ask them to help pay for our war.



BILL LEARY IS A VVAW CONTACT IN WINTHROP, MASSACHUSETTS.



Someone Else's Sons and Daughters

DOUGLAS NELSON

Why are we Americans not outraged at the situation in which our government has placed our servicemen and women? Is it because they are someone else's sons and daughters? Did we learn nothing from the Vietnam experience?

We have put our young people and our military professionals in harm's way based on flawed intelligence, and, perhaps, outright lies. The time-tested principle that war should be undertaken only as a last resort was ignored. Against the advice of our friends in the world, we and Brit-

ain went in alone, foregoing the credibility we would have had with the United Nations taking this action. We apparently have no real plan for restoring clean water, electrical power and basic law and order in Iraq. Our soldiers and Marines must hold on until we figure it out.

To add to the insult to our servicemen and women, we find that they are subject to disciplinary action for expressing their frustration to the press. To tell these young people they are "fighting for freedom" while denying them

the right of free speech is ludicrous. Soldiers expressed their feelings freely in the Civil War, both world wars, and in Vietnam. My own questioning of our policies in Vietnam probably cost me a promotion, a price I was willing to pay. Never, however, was I disciplined or harassed for my views. It is the soldier's right to gripe and express frustration. He or she is not less of a soldier for doing so. To be a soldier is not to give up one's rights as a citizen.

Like us in Vietnam, these people did everything our gov-

ernment asked them to do and did it well. America owes them respect, honor, and full affirmation of their rights as American citizens. To give them less is disgraceful.

Heed well, America. Your son or daughter will be next.



DOUGLAS NELSON WAS WITH THE 371ST RADIO RESEARCH COMPANY IN VIETNAM IN 1968. HE IS RETIRED FROM A CIVIL SERVICE CAREER IN THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY.

Mysterious Ways

SUSAN O'NEILL

I was an Army nurse thirty-plus years ago, stationed at a succession of three hospitals in Vietnam. In 1999, I went back with my husband Paul, also a Vietnam vet, as part of a bicycle tour called Discover Viet Nam.

We began the southern piece of our trip in Hue. It was familiar territory for me; my first duty assignment in 1969 had been the 22nd Surg in nearby Phu Bai. Back then, I had spent my weekly day off from the hospital at an orphanage in the Hue neighborhood of Kim Long. It had been a sad, teeming place, a desperate repository run by Vietnamese nuns from a French missionary order. When I came back, I was certain it must be long gone — flattened by bombs or, perhaps, made unnecessary with the end of the war. Still, I wanted to go walk the area it had occupied, to conjure up the ghost of the place I remembered so vividly after all these years.

Kim Long was a fair distance from our hotel, the Saigon Morin, so Paul and I hired two cyclo drivers to ferry us there. As we rode, I found that Long, my driver, spoke good English because he had served as an ARVN soldier with U.S. troops at Da Nang and Chu Lai.

We jogged and lurched over the broken street into the poor suburb that was Kim Long, past shacks with children squatting in dirt dooryards, past makeshift

stores selling silk paintings and cigarettes in dusty glass cases. Past a tiny market and a hospital and, at last, to a big, blue-painted metal gate.

Long reached through a small square cut in the front and unfastened a chain; the gate swung open.

Inside, laughing children darted about a tidy courtyard. A dog wandered by, lively and well-fed, unlike the cowed and threadbare specimens prowling the streets outside. A small monkey chattered in a wooden cage that hung from a tree branch. It was a school, perhaps, or some kind of co-operative housing. Everything looked new, clean. There were bright blue slides, climbing bars, a pink plastic ball.

Whatever it was, this was not my orphanage. My orphanage had sad, peeling walls and hoards of Amerasian children in church charity clothing. In my orphanage, a handful of white-habited nuns had held hundreds of precarious lives together against impossible odds. I'd fed babies there who were little more than dry flesh over living skeletons. In that place, toys had never lasted; if they got them, the children had quickly broken them because they didn't understand what toys were for.

No, this was definitely something else.

I snapped a picture of the main building — the only one that looked familiar — and turned to

leave.

Paul spotted a nun, a tiny Vietnamese woman in white; he flagged her down and tried to tell her, in loud pidgin-speak, why we were here. She watched him blankly for a moment, then asked if we spoke French. Alas, we didn't.

Long had been standing by in silence; he stepped forward and told the nun that I'd been here thirty years ago. She brightened, and corralled us into a small room, insisting that we sit — *assez, assez!* — at a table. She summoned a second sister and produced small cups of homemade yogurt and little glasses, into which she poured a caramel-colored brew. It tasted like sherry.

Through the intrepid Long, the sisters told me that this was, indeed, my orphanage. The buildings I had known in 1969 were gone, except for the nuns' home and the large main house, which was now a hospital for paralytic children. I glanced outside at the kids playing in the sunlight. It was not just the buildings that had changed; it was the very feel of the place. It was as if a long-held breath had been released; there was the feel of love, food, learning and play, of time for so much more than survival. The nuns looked rested; they beamed with a quiet joy at their charges.

There are still many orphans, said Sister. The government does

not give support. Her missionary order begs help from overseas — from France, Australia, the United States, Canada ...

... From us. Not a word was spoken directly, but we were being shaken down — graciously, gently, subtly. Spiritually. Paul and I were sipping wine at 10 a.m. with two cyclo drivers and a pair of nuns, and those nuns were — I have no doubt at all — thinking what all the nuns I had ever known always thought: *God Works in Mysterious Ways*.

As Long snapped pictures of us in a yard full of gorgeous, vibrant children, I told myself then that, if I ever managed to sell my book, I would donate some of my profits to this place.

And I sold the book; so I keep my promise.

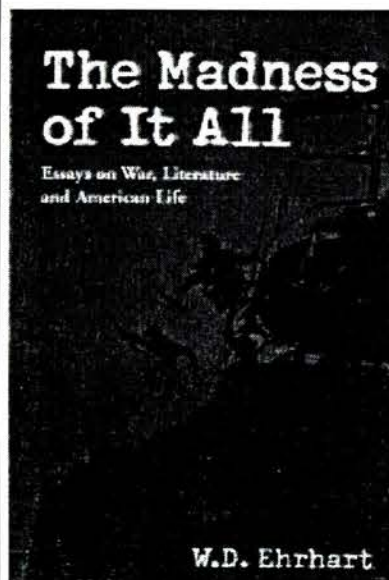
What choice do I have? I gave up Catholicism long ago, but I'm still pretty sure you can't welsh on a deal made with nuns wielding wine, who have an inside track on the mysterious workings of God.



SUSAN O'NEILL IS THE AUTHOR OF "DON'T MEAN NOTHING: SHORT STORIES OF VIET NAM" (BALLANTINE BOOKS 2001). SHE LIVES IN EASTERN MASSACHUSETTS WITH HER HUSBAND OF 32 YEARS. SHE IS CURRENTLY FINISHING A NOVEL. VISIT HER ON THE WEB AT SUSANONEILL.US.

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KENNETH HERMANN (REVIEWER)

Jarhead

By Anthony Swofford
(Scribner, 2003)

The memoir "Jarhead" by Anthony Swofford was way up on bestseller lists this spring due to perfect timing. The author served as a Marine combatant during Bush the 41st's splendid little war in Iraq, as Rudyard Kipling would have described it. The title refers to the typical Marine's haircut. Swoffie (as he is affectionately called by his comrades-in-arms) jumps around in time through about the first two-thirds of the book and then concludes with a description of the horrific battles.

I was drafted into the Army during the war in Vietnam, and I remember well the demasculinizing and humiliating experiences of basic training, but about the worst thing I remember being called by a drill instructor was "shithead." Perhaps due to the availability of hardcore pornography, Swoffie experiences much rougher language. The DIs referred to hands as "dickskinners" and mouths as "cum-receptacles." But Marines think anyone in the other branches of the armed forces is a pussy. After one of the recruits pisses in his pants due to fear, the DI says, "You had an orgasm, is that it? You think I'm so sexy you jizzed in your trousers?" (Perhaps

Swoffie should apply for a job to a maker of porno movies as a scriptwriter.) This would surely be considered sexual harrasment in any other occupation, as though people in the military are not entitled to the rights of ordinary Americans. Your unbiased opinion, Justice Thomas?

But the purpose of all this abuse is to cause the men to bond with each other through common goals and shared misery. Just before they are sent to liberate Kuwait, one of them even suggest they hug each other and tell each other they love them. One of the real reasons for the "don't ask, don't tell" compromise is that the same-sex military environment is erotically charged enough as it is without anyone being overtly "out."

The overworked euphemism "collateral damage" has been much tossed around lately, but it should be applied to other damages besides deaths and injuries to civilians. Many of the demented homeless men seen in the streets of our big cities are veterans of the war in Vietnam. Both Timothy McVeigh and the mentoring sniper in the Washington, DC area were veterans of our armed forces. What occupation as a civilian are you prepared for when your primary experience is learning how to kill?

For me the high point of the whole book comes about halfway through, in a chapter less than two pages long. Swoffie finds himself on a boardwalk in San Diego, a city in which many ex-Marines live. He seems to be able to identify them by appearance and manner. He describes men with poor grammar and stupid looks on their faces and an "overweight wife from his hometown of Bumfuck." The short chapter reeks with class consciousness but not snobbery, because the author includes himself among the unfortunate ones, although very few of his fellow ex-Marines had the talent to be professional writers. Perhaps the author should have explained more clearly the way in which he fits into this category.

In another chapter Swoffie and his buddies get together in Greenville, Michigan to attend a funeral. The deceased hit a patch of black ice while "at least hungover and possibly drunk." The former grunts go on a drinking binge that lasts longer than Ray Milland's in "The Lost Weekend," although no one ends up in a hospital. They blame his death on the fact that he was not allowed to re-enlist and had to drive thirty miles to work in miserable weather in an economically depressed town. If you can tolerate military discipline for twenty years you

are entitled to a reasonably generous pension, but there is no guarantee that the brass will accept you for re-enlistment.

Swoffie is unambiguously hetero. When he volunteered at age 17 his parents' consent was required. They did not like the idea but grudgingly consented after having the recruiter over to dinner. Then he went outside with the recruiter, who then told him about the exotic sexual experiences to be had (such as threesomes) in other countries like the Philippines and Panama. Up until then Swoffie reports that "he had sex three times and been the recipient of five blow jobs and fourteen hand jobs." But how did the intense male bonding affect his sexuality? This he does not address. I wondered while reading this absorbing memoir whether some of the jarheads might decide they prefer the love of their own gender.



KENNETH HERMANN IS A MEMBER OF VVAW LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY. HIS MILITARY EXPERIENCE CONSISTED OF ONE YEAR STATESIDE AND ONE YEAR IN VIETNAM WHERE HE SERVED AS A COMPANY CLERK AND PERFORMED SUCH DUTIES AS PREPARING COURT-MARTIAL PAPERWORK FOR MEN CAUGHT SMOKING POT.

Jonathan Schell: An Appreciation

BILLY KELLY

When I returned home in the fall of 1969, I was terribly confused and a bit angered. My anger sprung from the realization that I had been conned by my government. The confusion arose from my inability to channel what I knew viscerally into an intellectual understanding.

I found my argument presented week after week in the lead comment of *The New Yorker*: lucid, cogent and powerful essays picking apart our nation's failed policies in Vietnam. At that time there were no bylines but I later discovered the author to be Jonathan Schell. I sometimes re-read these pieces and I am startled to discover how well they hold up and, in many cases, can be used fruitfully in reaching an understanding of our predicament today.

Beginning in the late 70s and continuing to this day, Schell has

been in the vanguard of the movement to get control over, if not totally abolish, nuclear weapons. His seminal work on this topic, "The Fate of The Earth," was nominated for a Pulitzer in 1982.

In the spring of 2003, his latest work, "The Unconquerable World," was published. I feel this book is the culmination, so far, of a life devoted to the study of humanity and how we might someday learn to live together.

This book has led me on a painstaking journey of discovery. Warfare and violence, particularly the catastrophic forms we experienced in the 20th Century, are examined. Whether the violence is "conventional," a form where our country has no equal, or "non-conventional" as in people's war, it is shown to be a bankrupt policy that cannot work in today's world.

The history of nonviolent

revolution is also traced and the reader will be reminded what can be accomplished when this path is chosen. The words and deeds of Gandhi, Havel, Walesa et al. offer us concrete, hopeful examples of the power of an idea when forced to confront the power of a gun.

This is not an "easy" book. That does not mean the writing is obtuse or the style difficult. Rather I found nary a page that did not force me to examine my beliefs, to draw comparisons, to analogize. To think! This book demands effort from its reader. If expended, I guarantee it will not go unrequited.

Today, just like in 1969, I find myself convinced in my gut that things are amiss. And once again Jonathan Schell has taken on the challenge of showing us a way out of the current quagmire. This is a devilishly difficult book to review or synopsize. Howard

Zinn phrased it correctly: "Schell leads us through his argument (not an analysis, which is passive, but an argument, loaded with energy)." And that it is. A well-argued brief for sanity that would do any high-priced attorney proud.

I termed this book a culmination but in no sense is it an end. The arguments continue, week after week, and can be found in *The Nation*.



BILLY KELLY AND JONATHAN SCHELL WERE BORN IN 1943 AND GREW UP ON THE SAME STREET IN MANHATTAN. IT HAD A "SUNNY" AND A "SHADY" SIDE. KELLY WAS RAISED IN THE SHADE, A QUASI-STREET KID, AND SCHELL WENT TO THE USUAL PREP SCHOOLS AND HARVARD. THEY HAD AT BEST A NODDING ACQUAINTANCE.

Arthur Kinoy, People's Lawyer

Arthur died on September 19 in Montclair, New Jersey at the age of 82.

In the 1950s he worked on the defense of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were charged with atomic espionage. In the 1960s he worked for civil rights in Mississippi and defended the Chicago Seven and Adam Clayton Powell. In the 1970s he took on the Nixon administration over the

practice of wiretapping political enemies, and won.

He helped found the Center for Constitutional Rights. He also taught law, organized, and wrote a book called "Rights on Trial: The Odyssey of a People's Lawyer."

I first met him when I was elected to the National Office of VVAW in 1972 and had moved to New York City. He was open and

listened and didn't talk about his time in the army in World War II, which I didn't find out about until his death. He was different from a lot of political "heavies" in that he acted like a human being. He offered me a job two years later when I was leaving the NO but I declined. (I should have taken it and listened to his gentle advice; I would not have strayed for a while.) He was also a joy to meet

at a conference or wherever.

He is survived by his second wife and longtime VVAW friend, Barbara Webster, and two children of his first marriage, Joanne and Peter.

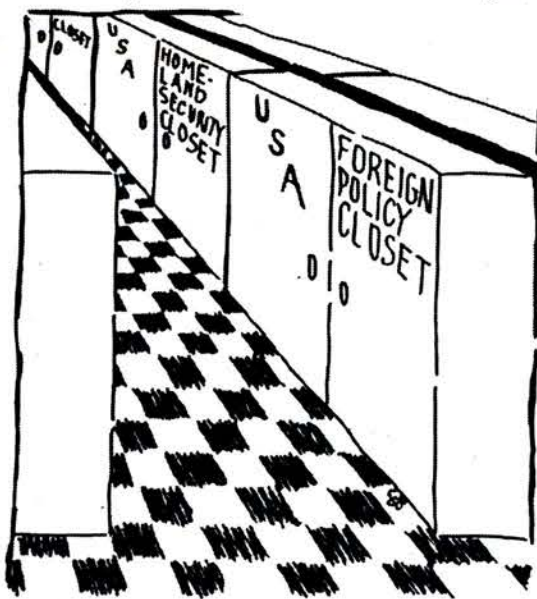
He will be missed.

Barry Romo



Billy X © 2003

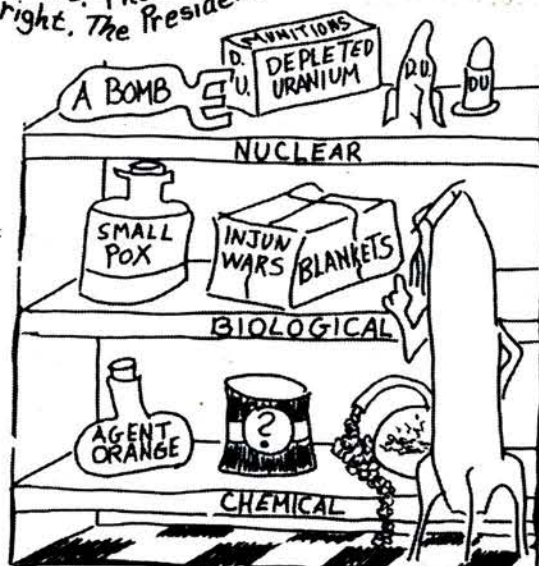
Oh where; oh where can we place Oxy this time???... Afghanistan???... IRAQ???



Better get your supplies from the Foreign Policy Closet, Oxy.



Wait one! These casualty figures can't be right. The President said it was good as OVER!



Say Professor, shouldn't Small Pox be in Homeland Security?



Ah-but there could be exciting opportunities in North Korea... Iran... Syria. Little countries looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction. What do they want? Détente???



As for Weapons of Mass Destruction: Yeah! Yeah! We're #1! USA! USA! Proud to be the only nation that's actually used all 3!!!

What Brings It All Back

DAVE CONNOLLY

One of my boyhood friends gave my son Jake a Traveler's Cross for his First Communion; you know, the one that says: "I am a Catholic; please call a priest." And that cross time-skipped me back to my mother putting one around my neck the night I didn't get a beer at my own "going-off-to-the-war" party. I was only eighteen, not old enough for beer yet but old enough to spend more than a year in Vietnam holding onto that bit of silver, making it into a juju,

something I hoped would get me through too many a dark night. But don't think it was just Jesus we leaned on for luck. We were sure our lives depended on not only Him, our training and each other, but also on weirdness, like how many minutes had gone by since we last shot at Charlie, how many paces we had taken that day, whether we'd heard the "Fuck You" lizards call to us, whether the point man had stepped off with his left or his right foot. See,

what we thought would save us got that crazy because our survival seemed that random.

I no longer have my cross. I wish I did because I no longer have my mother either. I traded my cross for a jade Buddha my Vietnamese counterpart wore which his mother had given to him.

I hope Nguyen Thieu, a good and brave man, continued to step off on the correct foot after I left the war and still today wears my

cross. I hope my son never has to count his paces, never hears the song the lizards sing or swaps his cross with a friend. And I truly hope that Jake's cross, my mother, and Buddha keep him so safe he never feels the need to write about what brings it all back.



DAVE CONNOLLY IS A VIETNAM VET AND A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM SOUTH BOSTON.

R.I.P. Harry Fisher

At the New York march against the war on Saturday, March 22, my wife and I had just left the veterans' contingent to check out what was happening in Washington Square when Harry Fisher, one of the veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, collapsed and died.

I attended his memorial at the 1199 Martin Luther King Labor Center in New York City. His daughter Wendy passed along this obituary statement to relay.

Ben Chitty

Harry Fisher

Born: March 12, 1911, New York City

Died: March 22, 2003, of a heart attack, while participating in a demonstration against the war on Iraq

Harry was raised in the Hebrew National Orphan Home where he made lifelong friends and learned lessons on the value

of community and solidarity, but also suffered abuse at the hands of cruel caretakers, thus learning firsthand about bullies and hypocrites.

When released from the orphanage, he became first a socialist, then a union organizer and a member of the Young Communist League. As a young communist, he participated in countless strikes and picket lines, often receiving beatings by police and thugs; he was arrested so often that he came to refer to his jail cell as his "second home." While not in jail, he and his comrades found homes for the homeless, raised money for the unemployed, and relentlessly pursued justice for the poor.

He briefly attended Commonwealth College, a school for activists in Arkansas. In 1936, at the height of the Depression, he joined the Merchant Marines and sailed to ports in Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and parts of Africa. It was on this trip that he

witnessed poverty and misery the likes of which he'd never seen. This further instilled in him a disdain for injustice and hypocrisy. Shortly after this trip, Harry volunteered to fight fascism in Spain.

Spain was a turning point in his life. He arrived in France in February 1937 and was smuggled over the Pyrenees into Spain. He was one of 2,800 Americans who volunteered for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, part of the 40,000-member International Brigades that formed the most diverse army that has ever existed. Harry was one of the few soldiers who went through practically every major battle with the Internationals. Nine hundred of his American comrades died there. His story is told in his book, "Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War," published by the University of Nebraska Press in 1998. That book was exceptionally well-received, and has since been published in both Germany and Spain.

Harry met his future wife,

Ruth Goldstein, upon disembarking from the ship that brought him home from Spain in September of 1938. They were married on May 7, 1939, and worked together at TASS for the next 54 years, with the exception of the years Harry spent in the U.S. Army during World War II as a turret gunner on a B-26 bomber.

In his final years, Harry made four extraordinary trips to Europe to speak about his book. He developed countless friendships with peace-loving people all over the world. At home, he was in daily communication, via email, with comrades in Germany, Spain, Japan, Israel, Mexico, and England, as well as many in the United States. The manuscript for his second book, "Legacy," was completed just three weeks before his death.

Harry was a pacifist at heart. His hatred of war was profound, but his hatred of fascism was even deeper.



They Lied!

They said it was not a war: it was undeclared, a conflict.
They lied!

They said you were an only son, a conscientious objector, they would not take you.
They lied!

They said you would be safe fixing helicopters. They sent you on a scouting mission.
They lied!

They said: no man left behind. For twelve days after the crash, they left you behind.
They lied!

They said they would bring your remains home. They left your brains scattered in the jungle and your bones incinerated in the chopper.

EMPTY COFFINS DON'T LIE, but
They lied!

They said your death was necessary to protect our freedom.
They lied!

They said in time we would accept and understand.
They lied!

Your friends, classmates, neighbors said they would never forget you.
They lied!

THEY LIED! THEY LIED! THEY LIED!

My brain creates your image daily and scans my senses and surroundings for memories of you.

My heart emanates my love for you and love received from you.

YOU NEVER LIED!
I'll always remember and love you, and
I'LL NEVER LIE!

Dedicated to my brother, Michael R. Seibert, MIA then KIA. Crashed and burned 08/09/69 (US Army First Air Cav).

Morgan Haner

Letters to the Editor

War is probably the most difficult undertaking people engage in, completely contrary to all of our goals of health and government. Already a difficult decision, the war with Vietnam compounded this, misleading us into an action without cause or merit, an action we could only lose. There seems to be a vague agreement that what the United States did to Vietnam was a mistake. Realizing just how bad a mistake requires a courage many do not possess. This is why I tell people I am still protesting the war in Vietnam.

I've written a lot on this subject. I have a work-in-progress document titled "Conscience of the Country," a phrase an ambassador from Vietnam and I seemed to share when he identified Americans who protested the war as the conscience of our country. I've even written songs: "Conscience Of The Country," "Hearts And Minds," "My Friend Jim." I thank the VVAW for bringing some of it to you.

I have read a lot too, at the public library and online. I can provide a bibliography and list of websites. I still have a 1968 atlas cartographing the sham Republic of South Vietnam. There is an interactive website at knossos.shu.edu/gallery/V_Portfolio hosted by Seton Hall University that is very lively, and occasionally very disappointing.

My credentials: you may not consider me a veteran. The VA does not consider me a veteran.

I protested the war. There is evidence: documents, witnesses. Shortly after, I was forced, psychiatrically, to register for the draft in 1972 or face further incarceration in a mental hospital. I was told I didn't qualify as a conscientious objector; I used the term as defined, not shrunken and abused by the Selective Service. This subject is taken up at the National

Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objection, nisbco.org: it contains a proposal of having objection to the war with Vietnam, exclusively, classified as conscientious. I was classified as insane (schizoid personality disorder) and unfit for service: 4F. This has injured me socially and psychologically ever since.

Because of this experience of compelled registration, I recently told someone I am a veteran of that war. Remember, Nixon finally ended the draft in '73, a point of comparison. Like all 18-year-old American males: we are compelled by law to register for the draft. Such obligation means the nation owes us for registering, a policy not yet in place. Compelled, uncompensated registration is the first step in turning very young, inexperienced men into sadistic slaves, while "only following orders" is no defense.

Justified mutiny. In March of 1998 the Army awarded Hugh C. Thompson and Lawrence Colburn the medal of honor for standing up against U.S. troops at My Lai by placing their helicopter gunship between the troops and those unfortunate people, to oppose further massacre and for evacuation of the victims. VVAW has no such hardware, so must persuade by other means.

Nixon quit the draft only after noncompliance was so rampant that it had failed; violators were too numerous to prosecute. The Carter pardon would have acquitted my refusal to register. Whither the pardon (Presidential Proclamation 4483, January 21, 1977)? In 1977, the pardon was progressive, freeing a few draft resisters from prosecution. But! The pardon is an indictment when we deserve, instead, to be commended for protesting that war. It could be an aid to bringing about

the true resolution to the matter: not to pardon but to commend the Vietnam War protester, commend and compensate and correct all records in error in this regard. Lobby Congress for this. Organize a class action federal tort claim.

I took up personal correspondence with my congressman on this matter. Lt. Gen. Samuel E. Ebbesen wrote back, "We [US Department of Defense] do not support the proposal [that Americans who opposed the role of the United States in Vietnam be 'fully exonerated, appropriately recognized and justly compensated.']. The reward of civil disobedience, if any, is advancement of the cause for which the protest is waged. The price may be unpopularity or punishment. There is no need for Government recognition or compensation for acts of disobedience. Such action by the Government, beyond President Carter's pardon in 1977, could undo much of the healing brought by the passage of time since the end of the Vietnam Conflict." Full of dire hypotheses, typically paranoid, it fails even the relationship of time to healing. It seems unaware of an organization like the VVAW. It is probably entirely self-serving.

The period of 20 years for the release of classified documents passed in 1995. This was sent January 3, 1995, one month before the release of Robert McNamara's "In Retrospect: the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam." I heard McNamara apologize, twice, when he toured the nation promoting "In Retrospect" and his much less popular "Argument Without End," for misleading us into the war with Vietnam, justifying that mutiny.

With all due respect: flying the MIA under the U.S. flag is symptomatic. It is, by design and use, painfully obvious. Although

all wars have personnel that go missing, as honored by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, it is the war with Vietnam that pushed this action through a Congress that has been mistaken before toward Vietnam. That flag accuses Vietnam of still holding prisoners of war, as if, by extension, the United States is holding prisoners to exchange. President Clinton, in spite of a reputation for protesting the war, signed the right to fly the MIA into law. It may very well be the initials "MIA" mean "Missing In America." This is what we get when the true cause goes neglected.

Exonerating mutiny underestimates the debt. Protest against the war with Vietnam should be recognized as rightful, legitimate service, alternative and/or additional.

I advise the VVAW to focus its energies and resources on this issue. VVAW was created from a unique need. There are many, many legitimate causes in the world. I notice the VVAW publishing reports of some of these other causes. If the VVAW is to expand it should expand to include, as participants and beneficiaries, civilians that protested the war too.

It is important that the war with Vietnam remain the priority it is to us. If we don't do it, no one will. Lobby Congress for this. Organize a class action federal tort claim.

Please share any information that can help me with my situation. Thank you.

Arthur J. Toegemann
Providence, Rhode Island
arttoeg@hotmail.com



[Non-veterans are welcome to join VVAW - see next page. —Ed.]

Someone recently wrote about Country Joe. Went to his site at www.countryjoe.com and ordered a bunch of stuff. Just watched the video — "Vietnam Experience" — blew me away.

I didn't wake up to my past until January of this year. Much of what I'm experiencing is new. It's very weird. I've learned so much. Thanks to all of you and everyone else who have been active for the past 30+ years.

I see my role now as speaking up and teaching. Sorry it took so long! I'm very proud to associate with VVAW. The clips from the video were amazing. I can't believe I never paid much attention before this year.

Peace,
Arnold Stieber
Michigan



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, including active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups to deal with traumatic after-effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at Vet Centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice — facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are 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 future generations 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. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long term struggle. JOIN US!

Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War



We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of U.S. aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia also put forward lies. The U.S. military was not protecting (the sword) the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China (the China Gates), 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 more than 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!**

SUPPORT VVAW!

DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

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 _____

Branch _____

Dates of Service (if applicable) _____

Unit _____

Military Occupation _____

Rank _____

Overseas Duty _____

Dates _____

☐ Yes, add me to the VVAW email list

☐ I do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW

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 _____

Total Amount Enclosed _____

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

RECOLLECTIONS

Waking Up to Peace

ARNOLD STIEBER

Life has many chapters and we, as individuals, are many "people" within each chapter. As children we may be sons or daughters, friends, students, explorers, loved, abused. As teenagers our awareness expands, and our arrays of "people" expand. As we live, more chapters develop. Among other things, at this point in my life, I am a Vietnam infantry veteran.

When I left Vietnam in early 1971, I pretty much closed that chapter of my life. I floated for a few months, but basically I was okay. I never touched a weapon again, nor watched any violent movies, nor read anything about Vietnam. But in the background, something was there. Not always. It would fade for years at a stretch.

About seven months ago I was home alone at night. I turned on the TV. The movie "Platoon" was playing. My first thought was to turn it off. Then I thought, hey, *after 30+ years, I can handle this.* Besides, I was curious. Wow. Stuff was there. Especially the kids. The violence was real. I could smell Vietnam. I could hear it. I could feel it. Some was comfortable. I lived there. Some I couldn't watch. But it was there.

The next day I went on the Internet and looked up Vietnam Veterans Against The War on

Google. I was amazed. They were still in existence. I read things I never knew. I followed the links. More new information. The more I read, the more I wanted to read.

I discovered peace groups, and "actions." I marched in my first peace demonstration in Ann Arbor, Michigan and helped form the world's largest peace sign. Wow. This was good. Maybe that's why I was in Vietnam — to help others realize that violence is not the answer.

I read more. I attended seminars. I met many terrific folks. I went to D.C. twice in March. I was nervous. The second D.C. march was "Operation Dire Distress" organized by Veterans Against the Iraq War and Veterans For Peace. A teach-in on Saturday (the tape is available from C-SPAN) and a march on Sunday. The teach-in was great, but the march was the ultimate high. About 500 veterans and friends assembled on the hill overlooking the Vietnam War Memorial. (I now refer to all war memorials as tributes to ignorance — not as an offense to those who died, but as a condemnation to the leaders who can't solve conflicts without hurting others.) We were separated from the Wall by twenty mounted police in their battle gear!

America, what a place. There were reporters there from all over the world. I was interviewed by the BBC and gave them an earful. I only noticed one U.S. reporter, from NPR.

We laid wreaths at the major memorials, for all who have died in wars — ours and theirs. In the background, sitting in bleachers and looking very Sundayish, were about 300 politically correct folks listening to "patriotic" music and waving flags. Here we were, veterans, many with military clothes on (the Vietnam guys with jungle fatigues) carrying flags (some upside down) and signs, and marching for peace. And there "they" were, looking very antiseptic and proper. The irony was amazing.

After the wreath-laying we marched around the Capitol and did cadence. Some of the verse were priceless. Here's one: "Hey, hey, Uncle Sam, we remember Vietnam. They cheer you on when you attack, when you come home they turn their back." There are many more. The police and spectators looked baffled. It was powerful. The antiseptic folks stood on a hill and looked down on us. There were some young kids dressed as military recruits who taunted us; I think they were hired

by the antiseptics. It was humorous.

After that experience I became even more committed to education, both for myself and helping to educate others. I started writing letters to newspapers, websites and other media and groups. I've sent booklets to individuals and groups. I "discovered" Bishop Thomas Gumbleton and have attended Mass at his parish. I made him an associate member of Veterans For Peace, and he was happy that I asked. I "discovered" Pax Christi, the *National Catholic Reporter*, the *Nation*, Sojourners, *Yes!* and many other groups and publications. The Internet is a beautiful thing.

I woke up, and it feels right. It's still difficult to speak out, but I feel that I can make a difference. Maybe that's why I was in Vietnam. Now must be my time. I am a Vietnam infantry veteran and a believer in a better world.



ARNOLD STIEBER (VN 52ND INFANTRY 1970-71) IS A MICHIGAN CONTACT FOR VVAW AND A MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE AND OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA.

I'M TELLIN' YOU... THIS WHOLE SITUATION
COULD GIVE SLAPDASH, DIMWITTED,
POLITICALLY-INSPIRED INTERVENTIONS
A BAD NAME...

