



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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VVAW Statement to the People of Vietnam

VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the US war against Vietnam, we in Vietnam Veterans Against the War wish to send greetings and best wishes to the people of Vietnam. We celebrate with you the success of your struggle for liberation from foreign domination.

On April 30, 1975, the effort on the part of successive US governments to deny Vietnam national independence and reunification came to an end. Thirty years later,

we who served in the US armed forces during that war remember all the fallen on all sides, the millions of Vietnamese, the tens of thousands of Americans and soldiers from other countries, all of whom were victims of an illegal and immoral war.

We recognize the progress made by both the American and Vietnamese governments toward reconciliation between our countries, and we welcome the spirit of friendship and cooperation that

has grown between the people of our countries.

We stand with you in your struggle to get recognition, compensation and treatment for the poisonous effects of the use of herbicides such as Agent Orange against your population during the US war. The chemicals that continue to damage the land of Vietnam and its people are familiar to US veterans, because we brought them home in our own bodies.

We veterans have also been fighting for treatment and compensation here in the United States for decades, and many have died in the midst of the fight. Therefore, on this thirtieth anniversary of the end of the American war against Vietnam, we call upon our government to compensate the millions of Vietnamese who continue to suffer the effects of the US policy of chemical warfare.



The Struggle Continues in Fayetteville

JANET B. CURRY

The history department of a suburban St. Louis public high school where I teach organized an all-day, in-school "field trip" on the war in Vietnam. One of the opening speakers, Barry Romo, was asked what he, as a Vietnam veteran, thought of the Iraq war. His answer was that it was every bit as much of a mistake as Vietnam, only worse, because we did not learn from Vietnam. As I considered the response of this group of about three hundred sophomores, in a school whose students voted overwhelmingly for Kerry last November,

I was drawn to a minority of students who felt Romo had broken some rule, gone too far. It wasn't that he was too forceful in his delivery—they liked that; it wasn't that he was confrontational with the other speaker, who still seemed to be processing what to make of his own experience as a vet in a political context—they thought the whole thing was respectful and very relevant; it wasn't that they disagreed with Romo's politics per se—they basically agreed with him; and it wasn't the descriptions of violent events—they finished the day by watching "Platoon." It was something else they felt strongly about, but could not pinpoint, something that had to do with what should and should not happen in a school. Was it being



Terry & Bill Perry leading the march in Fayetteville

persuaded to think critically and take major risks to pursue a resulting conviction? (Don't we already have too much homework?) Was it the nagging feeling that one's own (maximally cool) generation was becoming engulfed in the same problem as their parents' generation had? (Shouldn't they have protected us, made some progress?) Was it that even a fifteen-year-old already bears some responsibility for not having been smarter than that, more aware, more effective? How can those of us who have already learned a lot and survived our risks, more or less, open communication with those who are still unsure?

In Fayetteville, North Carolina at the March 19 demonstration

to "Bring the Troops Home Now," it was clear that whatever state of indecision, fear, fascism, guilt, dread, or adolescent mortification of sticking out on Iraq policy

you might meet with, there was a vast spectrum of perspectives represented among the speakers, whose insights might be the ones

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From the National Office

JOHN ZUTZ

It's been thirty years since the NVA tanks rolled through the gates of Saigon's presidential palace to end the fighting in Vietnam. For those of us connected to Vietnam, it's time to reflect on the past and make resolutions about the future.

Listening to many who speak of that war today, it would be easy to believe it was all glory and honor. Many of us experienced the days of boredom, and most of us survived the minutes of horrors. It was a war of mud, blood, and sweat. We saw things our schools hadn't taught us, and we smelled various types of feces—not much different from any other war.

Some, even some veterans, believe we could have won. Reasonable people can differ on that. In any case, after all our sacrifices, we lost. But we swore the country would learn "the lessons of Vietnam."

For most Americans, in the end, it was a war based on lies. We learned that LBJ lied about the incidents in the Tonkin Gulf to get us into the war. We learned,

thirty years later, that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara realized in the early sixties that we couldn't win—but he kept saying we could win.

We learned that Richard Nixon, who was elected on a peace platform, wasn't a thief, but he was a liar. When he said he had a "secret plan" to end the war, he meant that he would increase the bombing and spread the war into neighboring countries, making the war more intense.

We learned that General Westmoreland lied when he said we were winning. We learned that the officers under him lied, using body counts and other means to reinforce his lies.

We learned that military operations are ineffective without a well-defined target, a well-defined withdrawal strategy, and a well-defined rebuilding strategy. We learned that military victories don't necessarily mean that our troops are able to put their weapons down.

We learned that our country

has a long history of turning its back on the returning troops, beginning with the American Revolution. In our case, our leaders denied the existence of Agent Orange, PTSD, and other war-related problems. We learned that our veterans have to fight our own government to have their problems addressed.

And, even now, as the Vietnamese people try to obtain compensation from the US government for the Vietnamese victims of our chemical warfare, we find that our courts reject their appeals, as they rejected ours for so many years. (VVAW continues to support the people of Vietnam in their demands, recognizing the continuing costs of war more than thirty years later.)

Those are the lessons of Vietnam. We swore back in the '70s and '80s that we would learn those lessons before we would send our sons and daughters into war again.

We lied.

Our current leaders supported the war in Vietnam while we were fighting, but most of them didn't have the balls to go themselves. Today we call them "chickenhawks."

Chickenhawks didn't learn the lessons. They stayed home with Mommy and watched the war on TV. From what they saw, they knew that what we were doing was right.

Those chickenhawks are lying to us today. It's bad enough that our leaders lied to get us into the current war. It's bad enough that our government is lying to us, telling us that we're winning, saying there's a light at the end of the tunnel. It's bad enough that they have flimflammed the troops to support them.

VVAW might be able to bypass all the lies.

We can't forgive the many who wrap themselves in the Christian banner—just as they use the Stars and Stripes—to spout the slogan "Support the Troops" while cutting veterans' benefits and veterans' health care. Many of them would like to privatize the VA.

We wish them all a special spot in the center circle of hell.

So, what's your resolution?



JOHN ZUTZ IS A NATIONAL
COORDINATOR OF VVAW.



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Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

If you're older than forty, your conception of American foreign policy was probably shaped by ideas about the Cold War and imperialism. You thought that the Soviet Union was out to take over the world and needed to be stopped. Or maybe you didn't. You thought the United States stood for freedom and liberty as it poked around in third-world countries. Or maybe you were wise to that. You recognized that there were two superpowers meddling in places around the world. Or maybe you thought one or the other was doing something righteous while other people thought of it as meddling. That was the framework of discussion in this country during the post-World War II era.

In 1981, Ronald Reagan became president, and a new concept was added. Reagan declared that the Soviet Union was "the Evil Empire." Now the conflict was elevated to a higher plane: good versus evil. He beat al-Qaeda to the punch and reintroduced the concept of holy war.

American leaders had previously spoken of the Soviet Union as a dictatorship or "the Red Menace," but that was for public consumption. Decisions were made according to *realpolitik*—what worked and what didn't, according to one's view of the world. The decisions weren't always the best, but they were based on the perceived situation. When the unwinnable war in Vietnam was unnecessarily prolonged, that wasn't done because of some ideology. It kept going because neither Johnson nor Nixon wanted to be the first president to lose a war, and they didn't want the United States to appear weak. Now along comes Reagan to introduce the idea that there is evil in the world and suggest that it is the reason to carry out policy in regards to the Soviet Union. Now we have people who

act bad because they *are* bad. In retrospect, we can (ugh) appreciate Henry Kissinger.

At first Reagan's Evil Empire seemed like more of the rhetoric of the Cold War. Then a new and powerful force appeared on the political scene: the Christian Right. Reagan fed off them, and they fed off him. For them, the concept of evil was easily understood. Now,

This mentality of good and evil (us and them, fight to the death) compounds the problems of foreign policy.

for many, there was another factor to consider in making policy. In addition to the politics and economics and military advantages and disadvantages, we had to think about who was possessed by the devil and his cohorts.

George I and Bill Clinton had geopolitical and imperialist reasons for the Gulf War and attacking Yugoslavia and Kosovo. Evil was put aside as a policy influence until George W. Bush ascended to the Oval Office. Here was a born-again Christian, a true believer, ready to fight evil ... which suddenly appeared on 9/11. Now he had an enemy: al-Qaeda and its evil leader—his mirror image—the former CIA trainee and recruiting agent, Osama bin Laden.

This mentality of good and evil (us and them, fight to the death) compounds the problems of foreign policy. A foreign policy based on imperialism is bad enough. Now we have the forces of righteousness, which don't look for a middle ground, which is the territory of diplomacy. In Iraq, for example, this limits the exit strategy; coming to an agreement with opposition nationalist

forces might be a way out of that mess. They are, however, lumped together with fanatics such as al-Qaeda in Iraq, the evil enemy, so they must perish.

The problem is not only that we have God in our foreign policy, but we also have Bush's interpretation of God. George II is evidently reading-challenged. After all these years of reading

the bible, he probably only got up to Ezekiel, from which he gets foreign policy instruction. Ezekiel is full of terror—bring pestilence, famine, and sword. Slay their sons and daughters and burn their houses. "Make them an object of terror," says the Lord of Ezekiel. Invade and subdue Iraq. Maybe Iran. Maybe Korea. Pestilence was brought to Iraq in the form of destroying their sanitation system, causing cholera and other water-borne diseases. And the sword also brought food shortages. We made the Lord of Ezekiel happy.

George II, for all his self-righteousness, is not a New Testament type of guy. There you find the story of Jesus. According to this yarn, if Jesus had any politics, he was about two-thirds anarchist and one-third socialist. He was a feed-the-people kind of guy. George II, on the other hand, is a feed-some-of-the-people kind of guy. He is out to reduce government programs of importance to the people: Social Security, Medicaid, Amtrak, homeless assistance grants, youth training programs and more. Only some of the people—the wealthy—get theirs, in tax-cut form.

On the morning that Bush left for his tour to sell his Social Security reform to the nation, he had a prayer breakfast in Washington. There he said that prayer is the great equalizer in America. I suppose that means that the wealthy and the poor, the well-fed and the hungry, the comfortably retired and the Social Security-dependent are all equal, and therefore the government need do nothing to feed the people like Jesus did. Bush wants to have it both ways. He sees the world as divided between good and evil. He wants to battle the evil he sees abroad, but to avoid doing good at home.

In reading his bible, Bush had an attack of attention-deficit disorder, and nothing sank in until he got to Revelations, where there was more self-righteous talk about good and evil and war and destruction. Now in addition to imperialism and the never-ending quest for oil, our foreign policy is also being determined by some vague moral notion. Or maybe fighting evil gives the perpetrators of war and US expansionism another excuse to be allowed to go forth and do what they want. For example, which one is General Wald: a fighter of evil or an imperialist in disguise? Listen to Wald (deputy commander of the US European Command), who was asked if the United States was prepared to help defend Nigeria's oil fields against ethnic violence. He replied, "Wherever there's evil, we want to go there and fight it." Is he really going after evil, or is it that anyone standing between us and oil is evil? Any action taken, for whatever reason, now has a new justification.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND AUTHOR.

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

A few months ago, I picked up my Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine (don't ask), and read that, as John Zutz pointed out in the last *Veteran*, the VFW has worked itself into a "frenzy ... on the Richter Scale" about a proposed Canadian monument to Vietnam War resisters who went north. As John quoted a VFW spokesman, that organization feels that the

proposed monument is a "tribute to cowards."

Since John has already penned an excellent column on the subject, I didn't see any reason why I should waste your time and *Veteran* space covering the same ground. The only explanation for my decision to go ahead and do that may be that, as "Boonies" readers are aware, I sometimes

get so hung up on a topic that I don't know when to let go of it. It is one of the more salient, if occasionally boring, characteristics of this column.

With all due respect to the VFW's selfless obligation to explain to the rest of us who are our real American heroes and who don't make the cut, I would suggest that getting your draft

notice didn't necessarily mean you should start writing your obit. As a draftee, you had better odds of winding up at Fort Hood, Texas or Bumfuk, Egypt (we're there too, you know) than going to Vietnam. And even if you got the 'Nam slip, you had a better chance of landing behind a desk at Cam Ranh than,

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My View

JOHN ZUTZ

In early April, the small town of Kewaskum, near Milwaukee, was forced to hold a referendum to allow the school board to exceed spending limits by \$430,000 for five years. The money was to be spent on new textbooks and computer systems for the schools. It barely passed.

To discover what this has to do with military spending, please examine one of our newest military purchases: the Stryker interim armored vehicle.

The Army signed a \$4 billion contract to produce just over 2,100 Strykers (about \$1.9 million apiece). They weigh about 19 tons, have eight-wheel drive, will go 60 miles per hour and travel 300 miles on a tank of gas (5.5 miles per gallon). The basic steel hull will protect the internal areas from 7.62 mm bullets. The Stryker's tires can be inflated or deflated from inside the vehicle to adapt to surfaces ranging from deep mud to hardtop, and it has run-flat tires, a built-in fire-suppression system, and self-recovery winch. They weigh around 38,000 pounds,

which allows them to theoretically be transportable in a C-130.

Sounds like a pretty good deal, right? Three hundred and eleven Strykers are in service in Iraq today—supporting our troops. And it probably would be a pretty good deal, except for some minor problems.

The 126 pieces of crew-installable appliqué ceramic-steel armor increases the protection to .50 caliber armor-piercing rounds, RPG-7, and 152 mm artillery airbursts, but adds 7,000 pounds. The Stryker's Caterpillar engine struggles to move the extra weight, so the armor isn't normally in use.

In order to accommodate the weight of the extra armor, the tires are inflated to 90 pounds and the central inflation system is disconnected. This causes the Stryker to bog down when surface conditions change. That would be bad enough, but the Stryker's winch isn't sufficiently strong to recover it with the external armor.

There are some major flaws in the Stryker design as well. The

Stryker needs a waiver from the Air Force to be carried on a C-130.

The waiver is necessary because the vehicle is too wide to accommodate the 14-inch safety aisle around all sides that is required by the Air Force for the loadmaster. Additionally, due to its weight, only a portion of the Stryker crew may fly in the same aircraft. The infantry carrier variant requires multiple alterations to fit into a C-130.

The weapon system doesn't shoot accurately when the vehicle is moving. Computer and other systems malfunction because of air conditioning problems. Troops can't fasten their seat belts when wearing body armor. We'll be paying billions more in the future to update and refit these lemons.

Still, the Stryker is a piker when it comes to cost. A few of the Pentagon's favorites:

Abrams main battle tank: 10,000+ made, \$4.3 million each, 1,100 in Iraq, 69 tons, over 80 damaged so badly by improvised explosive devices they needed to

be shipped back to be rebuilt.

Bradley fighting vehicle: 1600+ made, \$3.2 million each, 25 tons.

Tomahawk cruise missile: 4000+ made, \$1.4 million each.

B1B bomber: 100 made, \$200 million+ each.

Nimitz class aircraft carrier: 12 in service, average life-cycle cost \$444 million annually, 50-year lifespan.

I'm not saying we shouldn't have some of these things. I do think we could get by with fewer, so the kids in Kewaskum and other small towns can have modern textbooks.



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

Notes From the Boonies

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say, in the 3/5 Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The above reads back as a little more flip, or insensitive, than I meant it. After all, a lot of guys in 'Nam started the day behind a typewriter and ended it in a body bag. So try this: *Newsweek* reported, a few years ago, that eight percent of draft-age males, during the Vietnam War, went to Vietnam. Those are pretty good odds. If I'm one of those draft-age males, and I want to go to college or join the ironworkers' union, or—imagine this—don't want my World War II-era parents to be ashamed of me, why in the world would I not just roll the weighted dice, take the two years, come home and sign up for the GI Bill? I could join the American Legion, even if I had spent my tour in that exotic resort town in Egypt. Option number two would be moving to a foreign country where I don't know one damned soul, trying to get a job, and not knowing when or if I'd ever be allowed back within the confines of Christian County, Illinois. Throw in knowing that Taylorville High School is not likely anytime soon to name the gym after me, and this is not

exactly a prescription for prudent career planning. If I am the laziest and most chickenshit individual on the planet, I would also have to be one of the stupidest to take that

As a draftee, you had better odds of winding up at Fort Hood, Texas or Bumfuk, Egypt (we're there too, you know) than going to Vietnam.

second option. Unless, of course, I just believed that war was wrong and I had the proverbial courage of my convictions.

Perhaps it's time to take a look at the mindset of our mainstream veterans' organizations.

The necessary disclaimer is that one should avoid generalizations. I am certain that there are VFW and Legion and AMVETS members who agree with everything I have just said, just as there are members who realize that our current Iraq fiasco is based on one Bush lie after another. However, I'm pretty confident that if you polled all of these guys (and a few women), and certainly if you canvassed the leadership of these organizations, you would find

overwhelming support for our invasions of both Vietnam and Iraq. If our government decided to invade some off-the-wall, entirely non-threatening country like, say, Mexico (oops, done that already), I suspect that the mainstream veterans' organizations would fall right into line in support of it.

And I will never, if I live to be a hundred, understand why.

I suppose one reason may be that, organizationally and individually, they need to feel that they literally "served," in the sense of doing some good in the world. This is natural enough. I have my own fear that I'll wake up one morning and realize that, after twenty-six years as a probation officer, I could have had more effect on my clients' lives by giving them tips on horse races. I suppose where this breaks down for me is the realization that, as an enlisted man (or a lieutenant, or even a general), I wasn't responsible for the war in the first place! I am responsible for decisions I make; I am not responsible for decisions others make, even if I get

dragged along into it with them. (Well, not exactly "with them.") But if I'm not responsible for it, I damned sure have no obligation to defend it.

This is where my argument runs into a snag. I may not have an obligation to defend it, but I have a right to. My guess is that the vast majority of men and women in mainstream vets' organizations really believe that the Vietnam War was just, and that those who opposed it—especially those who went to Canada—were wrong. I acknowledge their right to those beliefs. What I don't understand—and have trouble forgiving—is their rush to label them as cowards. That's cruel, it's sanctimonious, and it's wrong.

I hope to be in Nelson, British Columbia in 2006, for the dedication of the war resisters' memorial. I hope you can make it too. We can all gather round for a group photo, and send one to this country's best-known draft-dodging deserter, George W. Bush.



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.

Thirty Years Further Down the Pike

HORACE COLEMAN

It's thirty years since the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. "Hanoi Jane" Fonda has published her memoirs. Colin Powell, in an interview in Germany's *Stern* magazine, said he was wrong. The intel was bad; there were no WMDs.

Then it was Agent Orange and PTSD. Now it's Gulf War syndrome, depleted uranium and PTSD. Then it was the Hanoi Hilton; now it's Gitmo and Abu Ghraib. Then it was Buddhist monks burning themselves alive; now it's suicide bombers.

The WWE and Arnold Schwarzenegger went to Iraq. I remember talking with actor James Garner in IV Corps. Once it was M16s and ammo that didn't match; now it's ammo shortages and not enough armor for troops or Humvees. We still can't get our politics, priorities and logistics together. It used to be communism; now it's terrorism.

Back then, it was RMK-BRJ getting "funny with the money." In Iraq it's Bechtel, Halliburton's

KBR subsidiary (which operated as BRJ in Vietnam), Custer Battles (ironic name there), etc. New government policy: outsource the money to civilians; keep the pain and suffering with troops.

Then it was me and a broad slice of my generation. Now it's my son and a much smaller proportion of his. Once it was trying to flunk your physical, going to (and staying in) college or Canada. You could get multiple deferments or father a child (like Dick Cheney). Maybe you had some strings pulled (like President Bush) to get into the National Guard—practically a guarantee that you wouldn't go to 'Nam. You could get a job that gave you an exemption. Maybe you claimed, as did Congressman Tom DeLay (apt name), that "the minorities have all the good jobs" in the military.

There's no draft now. If you're in the military and can avoid a stop-loss order, being redeployed or having your Guard or Reserve unit activated, ya got it made. Unless you really get your

ticket punched and have to deal with shrinking VA aftercare.

What have we learned since Vietnam? Overall, not much. Well, no pictures of mass coffins are allowed. (Digital photos and videos of prisoner abuse are okay.) Nomenclature and place names changed. Fallujah replaced Khe Sanh (with a better outcome, so far). Harriers, not F4Cs. Sandstorms instead of monsoons.

People "support our troops" now—with flags and magnetic stickers on cars—but the Army, Army Reserve and Marines are missing recruitment goals. So green cards are offered and robots are being built, since "patriotic" citizens mostly support our troops by not becoming one.

I recently met Tim Goodrich, cofounder of Iraq Veterans Against the War. He's sincere, concerned about his generation's veterans, articulate, well-informed and practical. He, and the members and founders of similar groups, figure things out for themselves and do what they think appropriate.

Some causes and efforts require patience and perseverance. Sometimes things don't change much—they're just different. Although some people still persuade others to do unnecessary things, more people realize what's actually necessary. You don't need everyone, just a critical mass.

"Here's where the unwilling are made to do the unnecessary for the ungrateful." That's one of the most important lessons learned from Vietnam. It took the Vietnamese more than a thousand years to win their flawed freedom. Children there are still being born with birth defects related to Agent Orange.

Thirty years since 'Nam. Are we safer or better off for having fought that war? How long will it take us to win our freedom from our greatest enemy—ourselves?



HORACE COLEMAN IS THE VVAW
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CALIFORNIA.

NYC Vets' Statement

On December 11, 2004, a meeting of 350 to 400 veterans, military families and supporters took place in New York City. Below is the statement adopted by the meeting attendees.

We are veterans, military families and supporters who have assembled at a public meeting and speak out in New York City to express

our opposition to the illegal and unjust occupation of Iraq.

We do not believe our servicemen and women should be sent overseas to kill and die or be maimed to protect politicians' credibility. Real support for the troops means insisting that they be brought home now and that they, along with veterans of previous conflicts, receive the care and as-

sistance they need and are entitled to upon their return.

We also stand in defense of our civil rights and liberties, including the right of the troops themselves to speak out against mistreatment, incompetent leadership, corporate corruption, the "backdoor draft" or illegal orders.

We know this is a long-term

struggle, and we pledge to continue organizing against this folly and those who dragged our country into it. We do this in solidarity with the men and women they have put in harm's way, and in solidarity with the ordinary citizens of Iraq who are suffering under foreign occupation.



VA demo in New York, 2004

Creating a Pain in the Brass: Counter-Recruiting in Chicago

RAY PARRISH

When I'm asked about counter-recruiting in Chicago, I say that I'm active in CCOMY. If I don't pronounce this clearly, I might get red-baited. The mission of CCOMY, the Chicagoland Coalition Opposed to the Militarization of Youth, is to provide greater cohesion among the many organizations in Chicago working to counter the tactics of military recruiters in schools, to end the militarization of Chicago schools, to assist military personnel seeking conscientious-objector status, and to assist young people facing the draft.

CCOMY will do this by facilitating communication among these various organizations and to the wider community through its website, email, newsletter and other means; by providing informational material; and by organizing meetings to foster cooperation among these groups.

The effort involves a lot of get-togethers for training, information processing and decision-making. We have held draft and military-counselor training sessions led by people from the Center on Conscience and War, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, and the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild. The Chicago American Friends Service Committee sponsors the meetings and

provides staff and other resources. Member groups include various student, community and church groups in addition to VVAW and VFP.

Members have almost completed editing a locally produced counter-recruiting video. The 400

By training counter-recruiters, we will be providing counselors for the GI Rights Hotline and any future draft counseling needs.

Many of the groups bring counter-recruiting material addressing the military recruiters' lies and half-truths, the politics and

of your visit is transformed from counter-recruiting to "pre-enlistment counseling." You are now creating informed consumers by educating young people about GI rights, the military justice system, and how to deal with rape, homophobia and the realities of the GI Bill and VA health care and compensation. You may fit into the school's curriculum, because you are already a proponent of nonviolent conflict resolution, since you talk about conscientious objection. And because you discuss combat- and rape-related post-traumatic stress disorder, you will be seen as a resource for the staff and students. You empower young people if you convince them to make the effort needed to find a nonmilitary future. Pre-enlistment counseling can be seen as a positive influence on the campus, and military recruiters may even welcome you as source of support and information. It's also nice to know that when a youth enlists after listening to you, your work has given the military not an uninformed, easily cowed robot, but rather a knowledgeable, assertive "pain in the brass."

Doing our outreach work this way allows the public to see those of us who are opposed to

Counter-recruiting can be made more effective and satisfying with the inclusion of veterans and others trained as military counselors.

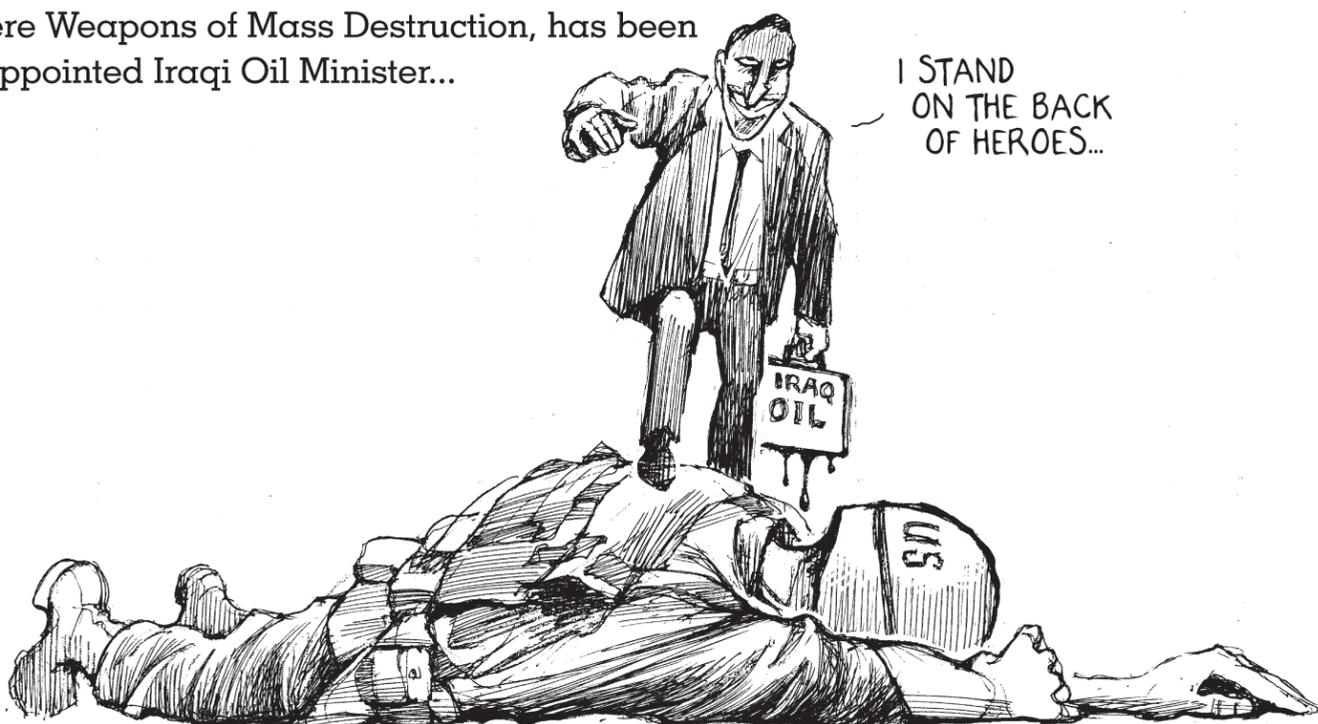
or so pages of material from dozens of groups have been digested down to just a dozen or so. One of our lawyers "opened up communication" with the Chicago Public School Board, and they decided on a one-month extension to the deadline for submitting the "opt-out" forms which deny permission to give military recruiters personal information about students. One third of a local high school will be taken over by the US Navy for an academy, despite determined opposition from students, teachers and community. In addition to standing on the sidewalks near schools, local counter-recruiters are approaching school councils, students, teachers and counselors.

economics of war, conscientious objection, homophobia, racism, or rape in the military. When young people say that they're going to enlist despite the counter-recruiters' best efforts, many counter-recruiters feel that they've let them down. And despite their repeated assertions to the contrary, they're distressed when it's said that they're not "supporting the troops."

Counter-recruiting can be made more effective and satisfying with the inclusion of veterans and others trained as military counselors. With the simple addition of literature from Vietnam Veterans Against the War and the GI Rights Hotline, the perceived purpose

continued on page 25

Ahmad Chalabi, convicted bank fraud and embezzler, who told the Pentagon that there definitely were Weapons of Mass Destruction, has been appointed Iraqi Oil Minister...



Defending the Barricades: March 19 in Chicago

BARRY ROMO

Last year, fifty right-wingers took the stage at the peace demo on the anniversary of the Iraq War. This year, VVAW was asked to protect the stage. Speakers were to include Reverend Jesse Jackson, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (Ga.), and the families of servicepeople killed in combat. The right-wingers posted on their website that they should show up an hour before the rally. VVAW showed up three hours early. When twenty-five of them showed up, three of us confronted them. We

told them who we were and said that they had better not come close to the stage. We then asked how many of the young people in the right-wing group had served in the military. Only one had. We offered to march them all to the Marine recruiting station. These brave patriots declined.

Jesse Jackson was the first speaker. A Left nut-group tried to storm the stage, demanding to speak because we let the "fascist" Jackson speak. We invaded their space and directed them out of the

stage area. As the rally continued, some right-wingers tried to heckle the stage and hold up anti-antiwar posters. An Air Force Iraq War vet was won over when members of VVAW talked to him on the side and explained our security concerns.

Three different Mexican families spoke in Spanish about the service and deaths of their children in Iraq and Afghanistan. While their moving testimony was going on, more nuts tried to invade the stage, demanding no speakers,

only chanting. We asked them why. They answered, "Because it is boring." We stopped them. They said that we had ruined the whole demonstration.

The rally was a resounding success. No one bothered the stage, and VVAW was heartily thanked.



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

Lowering the Flag

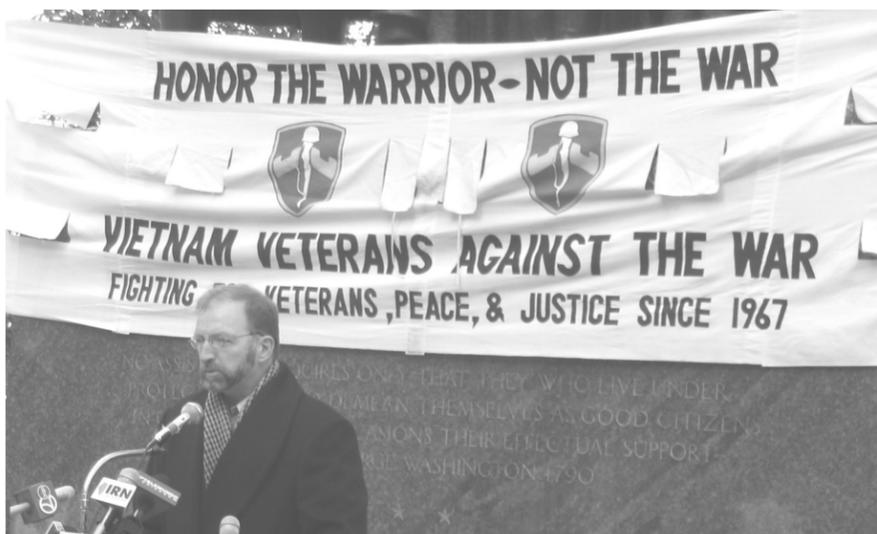
BARRY ROMO

Military Families Speak Out, VVAW, and others dramatically demanded that the governor of Illinois lower the state flag whenever a serviceperson is killed in action. We raised and lowered a flag 54 times in front of the State of Illinois Building. We also placed a flower on a flag-draped coffin, read the names of the dead, and sounded a bell for each fatality. The governor said he would lower

the flag only for Illinois National Guard. We responded, "You lowered the flag for tsunami victims, mudslide victims in California, and the pope." Honor our dead; don't hide them.



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



Paul Vogel of MFSO speaks in Chicago at Veterans Day, 2004



Long Acronym, Short Memory

BILL PERRY

VVAW contacts Ward Reilly (Baton Rouge), Patrick McCann (Miami), Tom Baxter (Tallahassee), and me, Wild Bill Perry (Philadelphia), all triangulated their way to the School of the Americas Watch three-day demo at the front gate of Fort Benning, Georgia in November 2004.

We linked up with more than a score of other VVAW members and nearly a hundred Veterans for Peace sisters and brothers.

Accompanying the Philadelphia delegation of vets, Michael Hoffman, cofounder of Iraq Veterans Against the War (www.ivaw.net), led the proselytizing with Big Red One and Third ID troops, who were all over the main gate and in uptown night spots.

The School of the Americas Watch demo drew about 15,000 folks. It was a very eclectic bunch, with Franciscan friars and Jesuit dudes all robed out in their floor-length, rope-belted, hot-'n'-itchy-looking outerwear.

Lotsa nuns, all looking much sweeter than the evil bitches who beat the hell out of me until I got thrown out of their elementary schools, mixed with freshly scrubbed, apple-cheeked virgins from every major Catholic college imaginable.

Even though the local judges made it clear that first-time trespassers *always* get 90 days and a second conviction nets 180 days, many of the above Catholics were determined to get arrested, scaling the eight-foot temporary

fencing and falling into the arms of MPs and deputized soldiers. The "lucky" ones would be those pulled off the fence by the consortium of Georgia state and local cops.

Plenty of your garden-variety "youth culture" types from AFSC (Quakers) and your local piercing-parlor franchise joined the Catholics in their weird self-flagellation ritual. Makes you wonder how many protective custody cells they have in the Chattahoochee County Jail and the local fed joint. You can bet eighty percent of these folks couldn't make it in "general population." They must get automatic 4.0s for the semester they're locked up for. I could understand a Gandhi/MLK/Mandela-type complex if they could get some kind of ink in AP or Reuters, but nobody outside of Columbus, Georgia ever even hears about them.

Hundreds of folks with origins in the same Central and South American nations that the SOA assassins operate in graced the main gate area, joined by union leaders and organizers and the legal assistance networks who work with witnesses of—and exiles from—the puppet nations.

These folks initially got all worked up when, in '89, a little girl, her mom, and six Jesuit priests were massacred in El Salvador. Nineteen of the twenty-six officers who were found guilty (by the UN) had attended Fort Benning's School of the Americas. This bad press caused the Department of

Defense to change the SOA's name to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), based on the Army principle: "Long Acronym, Short Memory."

Puppetistas, stilt-walkers, face-painters, and an amazing assortment of locals who set up unlicensed food kiosks and barbecues on their front lawns, (and sold at really competitive prices) made the SOA Watch visually appealing.

Some folks go for the star power of Martin Sheen and Susan Sarandon, and maybe that'll get a *People* or maybe an *Us* blurb, but the local reaction is mixed.

The Right counters the SOA Watch with their "God Bless Fort Benning" rally, held in a stadium too big for their crowd of 7,500. In broad daylight, country cornball Lee Greenwood headlined this year. Hundreds and hundreds of Cub Scouts and Brownies joined five thousand E-2s and E-3s (who couldn't get weekend passes) and Greenwood in that great footstomper, "God Bless the USA."

Headline speakers at the God Bless Fort Benning rally included Brigadier General Ben Freakley (the Fort Benning commander) and the mayors of Phoenix, Alabama and Columbus, Georgia. All three of them thoroughly trashed the commie-pinko priests and nuns, but they failed to tell the Brownies and the Cubbies about the SOA. A Blackhawk helicopter landing and four hundred Harleys stimulated

and excited the crowd.

I went to "jump school" at Benning thirty-seven years ago, so I had to take a cab to the on-post National Infantry Museum to pick up some curios, decals, and a mug. Post access and egress traffic was diverted to the south gate because of the three-day demonstration at the main gate. Vehicles were stacked up three and four deep at the four toll-booth-style checkpoints at the south gate, and MPs were checking IDs and occasionally searching trunks, as if looking for terrorists sneaking into the drive-in movies.

Although I had my black VVAW T-shirt on, complete with logo and large-print letters, the MPs were blinded by the flag in the background of my VA hospital ID card. They paid me no mind, but patted down my cab driver, and made him open the trunk. God bless Fort Benning.

While this VVAW contact prefers a sharp focus at demonstrations rather than the all-over-the-board ANSWER-style gatherings, all three of our Down South contacts went plumb crazy over the venue. Reilly, McCann and Baxter were really pumped, what with having so many VVAW—and vets in general—in one place, all at once, Down South. I'll bet that, as time passes, Fort Benning will become VVAW's southeastern regional meeting place.



BILL PERRY IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

Pentagon Report on Abu Ghraib Exonerates Top Officers



Fear and Loathing in Academia

TERRY J. DUBOSE

Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas has the largest non-governmental archive on the Vietnam conflict in the world, and it is still growing. They are making everything available digitally at the Vietnam Project website (www.vietnam.ttu.edu). This wonderful archive exists primarily because of the work of director Dr. James R. Reckner and a dedicated staff.

The Vietnam Center holds triennial symposia on Vietnam. The fifth symposium took place March 17–19, 2005 in Lubbock, Texas. The participants ran the gamut of opinions and attitudes, from Ambassador Michael Marine, current US ambassador to Vietnam, to Hoang Au Phuong (Bao Ninh), author of “The Sorrow of War” and a soldier in the North Vietnamese Regular Army who fought against US troops in the central highlands of Vietnam. In consecutive panels were members of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (now Swift Vets and POWs for Truth) and some representatives of VVAW. These were the best-attended panels of the three days, with standing room only.

When Nancy Miller Saunders—part of the Winterfilm Collective that filmed the *Winter Soldier Investigation*—learned of the call for papers by the Vietnam Center, she contacted some old VVAW friends and asked if we would be interested in being on a panel to give our side of the debate. At issue were the not-so-Swift Boat Vets’ lies about the VVAW and John Kerry’s testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971. Our panel immediately followed that of the

swift liars, in the same room.

We had four panelists. Nancy served as our panel moderator, giving the opening statement and introductions. She gave a good opening statement, pointing out that the phrase “My country, right or wrong” had been taken out of context and twisted, then used against the VVAW. Nancy turned that quotation on them as surely as if she were wielding a flame-thrower by giving the entire quote by Senator Carl Schurz (1829–1906): “My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right.” Her segue into how the Swift Boat Vets had cherry-picked half-truths, ignoring the full context and turning them into lies, was right on.

She then introduced Bill Hager, of Georgia. Bill gave a great extemporaneous speech, titled “Image vs. Reality and the Manipulation Thereof for Political or Personal Gain: Swift Boat Vets vs. the Reality of VVAW.” Bill Hager served two tours in Vietnam as a combat engineer with the United States Marine Corps (1965–66 and 1968) and was VVAW’s California/Nevada regional coordinator from 1972 to 1974.

Then came my bit, “VVAW Truth and the Half-Truths and Lies of the Swift Boat Veterans.” I served with the Army’s 53rd General Support Group (1967–68) and was VVAW’s Texas regional coordinator from 1971 to 1972.

Alex Prim was third on our panel, with “A Literary Campaign: Vietnam Re-fought in the Books of the 2004 Election.” Alex Primm served as an Army information

specialist (1968–9) and was a VVAW member in 1971.

Last was Gerald Nicosia, author of “Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans’ Movement.” Nicosia knows so much about VVAW, John Kerry, the Swift liars, and that period that you could tell he was very aware that there was too much to say in the fifteen minutes he had been allotted. He did a great job of countering the Swift Boat half-truths and lies that were spread around in the last election.

The audience was pretty heavily in favor of the Swift Boat folks, primarily because of familiarity with them in the election, and a lack of familiarity with or understanding of VVAW. Our panel did a good job of describing how the Swift liars had taken everything out of context and twisted meaning, even joining half-truths to create complete lies. The truth of VVAW was driven home with a showing of “Winter Soldier” after our panel.

The Swift Boaters played fast and loose with the truth, acting as an Orwellian ministry of misinformation, taking half-truths and statements out of context, spreading libelous lies.

B.G. Burkett, a Dallas stockbroker and Army veteran involved in the Swift Boat group, said, “John Kerry is the only swift-boater who butchered women and children in a boat. When he says he’s a war criminal, he’s absolutely right. He is a war criminal.” He also said, “I personally think George Bush is a draft dodger. But George Bush never lied about Vietnam. John Kerry did.”

Swift Liars groupie Larry Bailey verbally refused to recognize me for a question. The Vietnam Center’s director, James Reckner said he found Bailey’s actions “totally unacceptable. There can’t be a dialogue without questions and answers. You can’t answer questions just from your friends.”

The Lubbock *Avalanche-Journal* (March 20, 2005) carried this quote by Larry Bailey, organizer of the anti-Kerry “Vietnam Veterans for Truth” and one of the worst of the ministers of misinformation: “We want to drive a stake through his heart,” Bailey said, speaking of Kerry.

What I think the VVAW panelists realized is that the Swift Liars are easy to befuddle. When the proper research into their published statements is done, it is easy to point out their contradictions. We must not allow them to appear in public or make statements without someone there to tell the truth, because they are trying to rewrite history—a history that we are repeating in Iraq. We must “speak the truth to power.”

The unedited audio and video of the two panels, as well as the rest of the proceedings, are available for viewing at the Vietnam Center’s website



TERRY J. DUBOSE WAS IN VIETNAM 1967–68 WITH THE 1ST LT. 53RD GENERAL SUPPORT GROUP, AND WAS THE VVAW TEXAS COORDINATOR IN 1971–72. HE IS CURRENTLY AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES.



NANCY MILLER SAUNDERS, BILL “WINDBENDER” HAGER, TERRY DUBOSE, ALEX PRIMM, AND GERALD NICOSIA

Jazz Funeral for Democracy

WARD REILLY

The antiwar effort of south Louisiana shone brightly on January 20, 2005: Counter-Inauguration Day in New Orleans.

Over fifteen hundred proud antiwar activists—from as far away as Washington, Wisconsin, New Jersey, New York, and Florida—joined hands on a beautiful winter day to condemn the \$40,000,000 inaugural orgy of King “Curious George” Bush and “Little Dick” Cheney, two men considered to be war criminals by those in attendance. They partied hard while our troops were dying hard in *their* illegal war.

What started out as an off-the-cuff remark turned into one of the best antiwar, anti-administration demonstrations in the country. It was a unique event in the history of US activism, using a traditional New Orleans jazz funeral as the vehicle of protest. We were there to “bury” the war and our civil liberties, and to burn the USA PATRIOT Act.

The demonstration started in Louie Armstrong Park, where fifteen hundred “Jazz Funeral for Democracy: A Wake for Peace” pins (designed and made by Andy Lehman, Megan Bronson and me) were handed out to the first to arrive. Pictures of these can be seen on our website (www.jazz-funeralfordemocracy.com), which was produced by Michael Goff and received more than 10,000 hits in the two weeks prior to the event.

After a few speakers, many media interviews, and generally organizing everybody into position, the somber crowd marched very slowly (a jazz funeral tradition) down Rampart Street, led by principal organizers Buddy Spell, his wife Annie, and their daughter Sarah, who was being towed in a classic red wagon. They were followed by members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War; Veterans For Peace; the Baton Rouge Coalition for Alternatives to the War on Iraq (CAWI); New Orleans Conscience, Concern, and Commitment (C3); and Code Pink.

Behind the lead group came the Constitution All-Star Band, with the famed Trémé Brass Band taking up a position by the horse-drawn hearse (complete with casket), both bands dressed in traditional mourning finery. They were followed by the huge contingent of protesters: lovely ladies in

black holding decorated umbrellas (another jazz funeral tradition) made by Jennifer Shaw, and men in black suits or blue jeans. Of course, hundreds of antiwar, anti-Bush, and anti-USA PATRIOT Act posters, banners and signs were everywhere.

Off we went at eleven AM sharp, as Bush and Cheney took the oath of office, swearing again to uphold the constitution of our nation—something they have yet to do.

The crowd gathered strength along the way, and many local jazz musicians joined in along the route. We turned onto Canal Street, the heart of New Orleans and its main street downtown, where even the street cars *desired* to slow down and look at this proud moment in Louisiana history unfolding. We marched past Bourbon Street and turned left toward Jackson Square, where we had a permit to set up.

Other bands that marched or played at the street party following the jazz funeral—organized by Marine Vietnam-era vet and certified madman, “Sheik” Richardson—included Kostini, Paula and the Pontiacs, the Panorama Brass Band, Leigh “Little Queenie” Harris, God’s Little Toy, Otra, and Christina Friis and Sam Price.

Many thanks to all of them, and to the more than forty groups that officially endorsed the event, including Raging Grannies, Pax Christi, Artists and Writers for Peace, the Noomoon Tribe, and United For Peace and Justice, to name just a few.

The New Orleans police, as has been their way since we started marching against the war in Iraq in 2002, handled the traffic and crowd in perfect cooperation, making the entire action flow with ease and keeping it problem-free.

Our action was in stark contrast to the \$40,000,000 police-state-looking orgy of decadence the Bush gang produced. In Washington, there were snipers on every roof, and soldiers were forced to stand every twenty feet along the main route as shields for our “brave” president. Visitors were subject to several searches before having to get behind metal or plastic barriers for the privilege of watching a pitiful excuse for



Ward Reilly speaks at the Jazz Funeral for Democracy

a president ride by, gazing from his little twelve-inch window. The scene looked more like an old Kremlin film clip than it did anything that used to happen in *my* country.

Donna Bassin, a psychologist and PTSD expert, came all the way from New Jersey to film part of a documentary as part of a continuing study on the effects of the current political situation on vets and the effect this war is having on Vietnam-era vets.

The AP, UPI, and several radio stations and magazines also covered the event, the Baton Rouge *Advocate* gave the demonstration a half-page article and a great photo, and the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* did a piece. CBS and ABC also covered us locally, and we were shown in both Baton Rouge and New Orleans in a completely positive way.

Bob Smith, a retired command sergeant major, three-combat-tour Vietnam Green Beret and VVAW member, emceed the event. VFP member Dennis Kyne, a Desert Storm vet and depleted uranium expert; Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness (always an inspirational speaker); and Avery Friend, a thirteen-year-old activist from south Louisiana (of whom we are especially proud), joined me in speaking to a very appreciative crowd.

Arthur Morrell, a Special Forces Green Beret veteran and Louisiana senatorial candidate, also spoke; as did Mabili Ajani Oguniyi, a man who has spent the last decade as a radio revolutionary in Tampa Bay, Florida. Also speaking were Mike Howell and Marty Roland of the New Orleans

antiwar group C3.

At one point, for one long minute, the entire crowd stood in silence with fingers raised high in the peace sign, in honor of all that have been killed or injured by the disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was, without question, the most moving part of the event for me.

Grey Hawk, of the Louisiana Houma tribe, gave a beautiful prayer in his native tongue, and we felt particularly honored that many Native Americans joined us that day in solidarity against those who would destroy our nation.

The end of this portion of our action at Jackson Square came as Marty Roland of C3 ripped up the USA PATRIOT Act and symbolically burned it. We then threw its ashes into the mighty Mississippi River.

We ended that fine day, in true New Orleans fashion, with a street party that lasted until late in the evening, at the Blue Nile club, one of several that had offered their space to us.

I only wish that all antiwar citizens could have been in attendance, because peace and love, in the name of sanity—and with a sense of urgency in trying to save our nation—ruled this day. It was only a success because enough citizens of this country still care enough to stand up for what is right: something that made all that were there feel very good inside.

The constitution and the Bill of Rights might not be dead, but they need CPR now, or the next jazz funeral for democracy might be sooner than we think ... and for real.



WARD REILLY IS A VVAW MEMBER.

End War, Don't Honor It

LANE ANDERSON

On November 2, 2003, a group of antiwar protesters put up 340 crosses, for the American military personnel who had died in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, on the beach next to Stearns Wharf in Santa Barbara. I had been participating in peace marches and protests for more than a year at that time, but after the invasion of Iraq, I participated by setting up a table and putting out educational information. (I was uncertain, as a VN "baby-killer," about protesting during war). I took the table and information to the beach that first Sunday and set it up.

We decided, after we took the crosses down, to do it again. Until that decision, it had been planned as a one-time thing. Stephen Sherrill, who thought of using the crosses as a protest, asked the Veterans for Peace, whom I was representing, to help out as an organization. We still had it in our minds as a protest at that time. I can tell you that only the experi-

ence of engaging with the public, as they witnessed our installation, was able to turn me from a protester to a listener. I began to see the power of the installation on the passersby. I think it is true of most of us who stayed with it--it changed us, we didn't change it. At least one VVAW cap or shirt has usually been present.

I am by nature impulsive. It was my tendency to approach people, as they looked, with my opinion. I learned slowly to let the display take people beyond opinions and to a place where we could discuss things with open hearts.

I hope that Arlington West will remain a memorial. Without much effort, it awakens many of the passersby to the cost of war. With a little gentle coaxing, many can get beyond the cost of war and discuss the cause of war.

"Are there so many? How sad! But what can I do about it?"

"Well, if we all pitched in and changed the need for resources in faraway lands, our troops could come home!"

"What do you mean?"

And the conversation thickens. I try not to mention George W. I know he is not the main problem. I try to focus on the cause of war unless someone needs a memorial. I understand that my goal is not to memorialize warriors, but to end war; not to make it easier for the families and friends, but to turn them into antiwar advocates. Maybe it needs to be painful for those who send their sons and daughters to war. Maybe they need to understand that their sons and daughters died for lies. But I want them to come to that conclusion with understanding and support, not with ranting and preaching. So it is a delicate balance, but I want to remember that my goal is to end war, not to honor it.

Arlington West is much more than a memorial for me; it is an in-

tervention into societal forgetfulness. Unlike the traditional grieving process that allows people to go back to their lives, I do not want them to do so. I do not want them to lapse back into forgetfulness. Unlike with traditional grieving, I do not want to absolve them of blame; I want them to understand that they *do* bear the responsibility for the dead ... that it is in their lifestyles that they kill!

Our crosses and equipment have been installed at SBCC, Ventura College and Ventura Beach. Installations patterned after ours have appeared in Santa Monica, San Diego, Oceanside, Encinitas, Orange County, Oregon, Idaho, Michigan, New York, and Florida.



LANE ANDERSON IS A VVAW
CENTRAL CALIFORNIA COAST
CONTACT.



Help Iraq Veterans Against the War

IVAW wants to reach out to returning veterans. They are looking for additional members, but also they are starting a new program, Vets4Vets, to offer support to all returning veterans. You can help!

As an initial step, IVAW members in six cities have committed to starting support groups in their local areas. Their vision is that some support-group participants will want to take action as part of their healing, and some will not. Some of those who want to take action will want to do it through IVAW. Vets4Vets will also want to reach out to returning vets on an individual basis, regardless

of their geographic location.

VVAW is starting a network of members and friends who will commit to supporting IVAW by doing broad outreach and supporting their Vets4Vets individual outreach by helping them connect with particular returning vets.

Broad Outreach

IVAW has an attractive brochure. You can get it out in your city by taking it to junior colleges, making sure your local counter-recruitment group has copies for its literature tables, and using your own knowledge about where young vets might be hanging out. You

can donate the cost and make the arrangements to place ads in small newspapers. We are thinking of developing an ad that will mention both IVAW and the VVAW Military Counseling Program. Putting up flyers is another idea.

Individual Outreach

As you go about your life and talk to people, you run into people who know returning vets. You can ask if they would be interested in talking with other returning vets, and get their contact information to pass on to IVAW. If you can't get the contact information, you can give your friend or acquaintance

the contact info for IVAW and for the VVAW Military Counseling Program.

If you would like to participate in VVAW's network to support IVAW's returning vet outreach program, please email Hannah Frisch (hf52@aol.com) or call her at 773-924-5057. Or you can email IVAW's volunteer staff person, Frank Corcoran (heartsandmindsfc@yahoo.com), or call him at the IVAW office (215-241-7123) or at home (610-622-4955).

We all know how important IVAW is. Let's get involved.



Second Annual Candlelight Vigil for the Dead

WARD REILLY

The Second Annual Candlelight Vigil for the Dead was held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana at the Unitarian Universalist Church on February 20, 2005. It was held to honor and remember *all* of the victims of the neocon-inspired war in Iraq.

The vigil was attended by members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, the Coalition Against War and Injustice, and Bienville House for Peace and Justice. Many non-affiliated vets (from World War II to the Gulf War) also attended, as did an active-duty soldier, William Chernota, who is attempting to get out of the Marines as a conscientious objector.

Guests from New Orleans and Covington joined in the solemn event, which was first done last year as a way to commemorate the first anniversary of the worldwide antiwar demonstration that took place on February 15, 2003. On that day, upwards of 10,000,000 citizens around the world attempted to convince the Bush administration not to go to war with Iraq.

The candlelight vigil got front-page coverage, and was

front-and-center with a beautiful photo in the *Advocate*, Baton Rouge's main newspaper. The photo's caption was straightforward in declaring that the more than one hundred participants were mourning the deaths of 100,000 innocent Iraqis, and of course the deaths of 1,478 of our own citizens, including 34 from Louisiana, one of whom had died the day before.

The vigil was a complete success. Visually stunning, it was the result of hard work and two months of planning. The vigil featured a continuously running digital slideshow showing the horrific effects of the war on all involved (produced by Dr. Louay Mohammed), photos of the first thousand US troops killed, and a personal bio and photo of each Louisiana soldier killed in action in Iraq.

The name, ranks, dates, and hometowns of all the Louisiana KIA were read by me, and a "peace bell" was rung once for each American soldier killed in action. The bell-ringing, which started at 6:00 PM, lasted until 7:15 PM, was done by children of the organizers and was accompa-



nied by a bagpiper, which added just the right effect.

All the participants ended the evening with a slow walk through the incredible candlelit labyrinth designed by Maida Owens, which was fashioned so that you could enter it, walk past all the candles, and exit where you started, without stopping—a truly remarkable design.

There were 537 KIAs at this time last year, with fourteen from Louisiana, compared to the 1,478 KIA total with 34 from Louisiana this year. I can only hope that this second annual event will be the *last* candlelight vigil for the dead that we have to organize.

Thanks to the UU Church and Minister Steve Crump of Baton Rouge for hosting this event, and to the many volunteers that set up the labyrinth, put the sand and candles in the cupholders, and placed and lit the approximately 1,500 candles—no easy task—and especially to the Bienville House of Baton Rouge, who again paid for all the materials necessary for the vigil.

May all the dead rest in peace, and may we end this war as soon as humanly possible.



WARD REILLY IS THE VVAW BATON ROUGE CONTACT.

Coaching Winter Track in Time of War

The boys are running "suicides" on the football field today: ten-yard increments out to the fifty and back again, push-ups in between. It's thirty degrees, but they sweat like it's summer in Baghdad, curse like soldiers, swear to God they'll see you burn in Hell.

You could fall in love with boys like these: so earnest, so eager, so ready to do whatever you ask, sure of you, trusting, wanting to please, full of themselves and the world.

How do you tell them it's not that simple? How do you tell them: question it all. Question everything. Even a coach. Even a president. How do you tell them: ask the young dead soldiers coming home each night in aluminum boxes none of us is allowed to see, an army of shades.

You tell the boys "good work" and call it a day, stand alone in fading light while memory's phantoms circle the track like weary athletes running a race without a finish line.

—W.D. Ehrhart



Coffins lined up at the March 19, 2004 Fayetteville demonstration

From Hawk to Dove

PAUL WISOVATY (REVIEWER)

Patriotism, Peace and Vietnam: A Memoir

By Peggy Hanna

(Left to Write, 2003)

As old as I am, I'm still real naive about some things. For example, whenever I meet a minister or a priest (in Douglas County, I don't run into a lot of rabbis), I just assume they're against killing people. I think I read something about that when I was a kid in Sunday school. My guess is that Peggy Hanna grew up thinking the same thing, until she got it shoved back in her face during her days as a Vietnam antiwar activist. Among her many tales of struggle and disappointment (and some notable triumphs), the ones that most bothered me personally were the ones that disproved my above-noted assumption. As will be apparent later, she didn't enjoy that revelation a whole lot either.

Peggy started out, as Phil Donahue writes in a note on her book, as "a Catholic Vietnam hawk who came to admire the peacemakers at a time when the vast majority of Americans, including the faithful of her own church, had little patience for the peace movement." Most readers of her and my ages will recall those times. Those of the more honest among us will admit that they didn't wake up one morning in 1964, read about the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and say to themselves, "This war is wrong!"

Not at all. If you were born in the 1940s, America just didn't do wrong stuff. "America" and "wrong" didn't belong in the same chapter, let alone the same sentence. And we weren't just talking about invading foreign countries. Women really did belong in the home, changing diapers and cooking up seven-course meals for the breadwinner. (If you paid any attention to "Leave it to Beaver," you know that all of those chores could be comfortably performed in high heels.) Negroes had some good ideas, but they just needed to be more patient. Our mainstream churches were as incapable of mistakes as our government, and probably more so. After all, they had some clout backing them up. If you're younger than me and Peggy, I forgive you for not understanding anything I just said. No, it doesn't make any sense. But

it was real.

But back to Peggy. As I suspect she will agree, she was a true "1950s" woman in the early 1960s. Her first son was born on July 17, 1962, and when her husband dropped her off at the hospital about an hour before she was to give birth, she was stopped dead in her tracks by a sign on the front door that read "Women in Shorts or Slacks Not Allowed." Her immediate reaction was that she would have to return home to get into a dress before she could be admitted. I'm serious! This is what they did to us—more specifically, to women and minorities—growing up in the 1950s. My God, no wonder we all went along with Vietnam. Authority was everything.

As with most of us, Peggy's transition to starting to think about all this stuff did not take place overnight. (I note, however, that her book has fifteen chapters, and Chapter Two is entitled "Hawk to Dove." Once she started to wake up, she woke up pretty quickly.) She and Jim, her husband, moved to rural Ohio in 1966, and she immediately noticed that some things there didn't set especially well with her innate sense of morality. Some of the folks she initially encountered could appropriately be

described as racist, pro-war hicks. (In fairness, I confess that in 1966 I was a racist, pro-war hick. I am at least no longer racist or pro-war.) However, she did find some solace in nearby Springfield, a "conservative, declining industrial community" with a population of about 80,000. Peggy became involved with a group called Springfield People for Peace, which was what the name suggests: an island of folks who were appalled by what we were doing in Vietnam.

Of course, once you start waking up to what's going on in the real world—as opposed to what they taught us in high school—things open up on a lot of fronts. Pretty quickly, Vietnam became just one issue area for her. There were also civil rights, women's rights, and—an especially difficult problem for anyone brought up in our mainstream churches—questions about the rightful role of the faith community in addressing all of those issues. Peggy's book addresses her challenges in all of those areas, and none of them was easy for her. You can take the progressive out of the 1950s, but you can't take the 1950s out of the progressive.

Most of "Patriotism, Peace and Vietnam" chronicles the author's efforts, and the efforts of

Springfield People for Peace, in trying to bring the local Buckeye population to an understanding that Vietnam was wrong. I gather that they were not especially successful. Peggy was among a 171-member delegation that attended the Paris Peace Talks in 1971 and returned home to talk to local schools, churches and assorted civic groups about their experience. They were often treated like traitors, even in their own churches, and that's what hurt them the most. As it should have. She and I have never understood, and she and I will never understand, why so many of us in this country equate patriotism with going along with everything the government tells us to do, and why anything else is called treason.

Actually, the church experience was probably not what hurt her the most. What hurt the most may have been knowing that so many Vietnam vets did not understand that Springfield People for Peace was not the enemy. It would ease a lot of their pain if they did.



PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE US ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.

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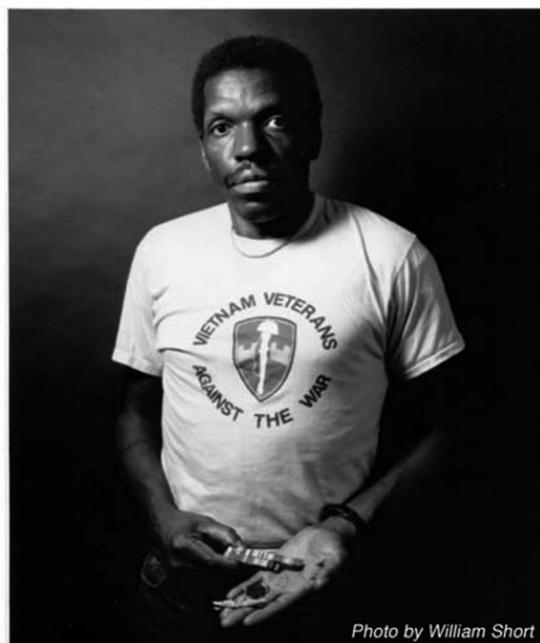


Photo by William Short

I SALUTE THOSE who made ANOTHER BROTHER. It's an important documentary about a difficult time in our nation's history and should be seen by the widest possible audience.

Gil Noble
Producer, *Like It Is*

TREMENDOUS! An incredibly powerful film that follows the complex and often difficult life of Clarence Fitch, who despite great adversity was able to retain hope and commit himself to social change ... it's more than the story of one man's life, it's a story about the power of redemption.

Bill Fletcher, Jr.
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Objectivity in the Mirage: Al-Jazeera and the Struggle to Report a War

EDITH SHILLUE (REVIEWER)

Control Room

Directed by Jehane Noujaim
(Magnolia Pictures, 2004)

Filmmaker Jehane Noujaim's documentary "Control Room" throws a curve into the US debate over Al-Jazeera's professional credibility in the Middle East. An honest and well-made film, it would make an excellent addition to any public library, community group, or university collection.

Noujaim, an Egyptian American, flew into Qatar in March 2003 with a press pass but no contacts and began filming and talking with reporters and producers in Al-Jazeera headquarters and the Central Command media center (Centcom), 700 miles outside Baghdad. Noujaim's work is well-edited and challenging. Contrasting official statements and rhetoric with battlefield footage, she is able to expose the contradictions and hypocrisy of the war machine in a way far more convincing than Michael Moore's cage-rattling polemic in "Fahrenheit 9/11." The film is entirely without a narrator, giving a significantly more complex perspective than Moore's bellicosity. Noujaim is a filmmaker wandering through chaos, trying to reveal the extraordinary ignorance that fueled US representations.

Among the fear-filled propaganda floated by Donald Rumsfeld and other Bush administration spokespersons in the buildup to war was the explicit suggestion that Al-Jazeera is incapable of "objective" reporting and frequently serves as a front for al-Qaeda. These comments were based on the station's broadcast of images of US weaponry (bombers and armored personnel carriers) as well as hospitalized Iraqi civilians and bombed buildings. Underlying such rattling suggestions, whether from Rumsfeld or others, is a colonialist mentality that only Western perspectives have legitimacy and that a monopoly on "objectivity" is found within the "free market" of US and European media conglomerates. As Noujaim films Al-Jazeera senior producer Samir Khadar and Hassan Ibrahim, a senior reporter, viewers may be surprised by the moderate liberalism that informs their inquiry. Khadar states that Al-Jazeera's explicit images are

part of its understanding of the human cost of war and make a necessary intervention in otherwise dishonest portraits from the West. As Ibrahim states, there is little or no support for Hussein among the population, but in war, "the problem is not Saddam, the problem is what the people will go through." Somehow, according to Rumsfeld and US military officials, the broadcasting of these honest images of bombings, dead bodies, and hospitals full of civilian casualties are not honesty but mere "incitement."

As the film develops, viewers may be surprised by the extent to which Al-Jazeera's administrators accommodate America's increasing demands for delimiting media access and interfering with reporting. The perceived necessity for centralizing media information at Centcom is quickly exposed as fraudulent when the rhetoric of military-speak is paraded in front of a crowd of eager reporters from around the world. Prior to the invasion, a military representative tells us "sensitive site exploration teams" are finding further evidence justifying military action. After such small gatherings, major news organizations primp and tailor their teams in furnished offices inside the compound. This is what "embedding" looks like. Noujaim managed to film a range of exchanges between military personnel and reporters and was able to contrast them to great effect. In one exchange, reporter Ibrahim confronts a media rep from the Marine Corps (Josh Rushing) who clearly believes the administration's line. Ibrahim asks, "When was Hussein planning to use the weapons of mass destruction against the US?"

"What do you mean, when?"

"When?"

"When were they...?"

"When was Hussein going to use these weapons?"

"When did they have the will to use them against us?"

This conversation degenerates into catch-22 dialogue, and without even trying, there is a

clear, effortless exposé of US propaganda. What's most frustrating is that viewers will actually like Rushing—he's a nice guy, trying to be honest and do his job.

It is through filming such exchanges and contrasting field images with statements by US officials, such as Rumsfeld, that the film is most effective. Footage of home invasions by US and British soldiers provides us with a clear understanding of the heavy-handedness of even basic elements of US policy and the neverland Centcom reps are in when providing information to media groups. Indeed, as they begin to speak honestly to the filmmaker, the delusional nature of the administration's perspective is evident. Much of US objections to the honest imagery used by Al-Jazeera is built on the assumption that all the behavior of the coalition is "necessary" or "unavoidable." The images that Rumsfeld refers to as "incitement" give the lie to a pervasive US notion that war can be clean and good. Rushing later states, with all honesty, that the US military has the most effective and exact munitions in history and that "compared to the bombing of Dresden," the events in Baghdad are a cakewalk! Justification is implicit in such reasoning. Yet it was later noted by Ibrahim that Rushing was "silenced" as a result of his openness in the film. In spite of his clear loyalty, the exposed contradictions were reason for discipline.

The pressure in Al-Jazeera's position during the war is made clear as Noujaim runs footage of both Rumsfeld and a Hussein regime official indicting the organization as a propaganda machine for the other side. Watching producers and reporters trying to balance information is a look at their difficult struggle with effective and honest reporting. Their conversations inside Al-Jazeera's offices include critiques of the rhetoric and activities of Arab nationalism and condemnations of the "conspiracy theory" of US activists over Arab oil reserves. When there is an "accidental" strike against Arab media outlets (including the Al-Jazeera Baghdad headquarters), film footage shows what appears to be a targeted bombing. The event resulted in

the death of one of their reporters. Al-Jazeera reporters then found themselves blacklisted among Iraqis because they were believed to be targets for the military. It is this difficult straddling of honesty and effective critique that US and British journalists seem to have lost sight of. In one exchange over Al-Jazeera's broadcast of the image of dead US soldiers, an American reporter asks Joan Tucker, manager of AlJazeera.net, if her journalists "take a position" on the war. The hallucinatory nature of the US media and its image of itself is evident. Tucker's reply is plain and apt: "Are any US journalists not taking a position on the war? This word objectivity is almost a mirage." The music and thematic titles of any current US news broadcast and the well-known biases of the Fox network make this clear. Problematically, the film does not address the station's decision-making process over broadcasting messages from al-Qaeda or other organizations committing either kidnapping or political murder. Nonetheless, such a question can be considered or discussed in the light of other information.

This is a film that raises questions many in the United States have just stopped considering; it shouldn't be as difficult, or controversial, as it is to bring them back to center stage. In one rather depressing exchange, a reporter asks Ibrahim what could possibly stop the violence and chaos of US military interventions around the globe. His answer is a wake-up call to US activists. "The US constitution will stop it. I have absolute confidence in the power of the constitution and the people of the United States [to restrain the government]." Post-election, these words are like a cry for endurance and persistence on the part of antiwar activists.



EDITH SHILLUE IS THE AUTHOR OF "EARTH AND WATER: ENCOUNTERS IN VIET NAM" AND "PEACE COMES DROPPING SLOW: CONVERSATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND." SHE LIVES IN BELFAST.

The Struggle Continues

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to make a difference in extending the attention spans of those trying not to get involved. Here are some of their messages, paraphrased.

Thom Barton, *GISpecial*: Civilian protest during Vietnam was a necessary but not sufficient part of the resistance to stop that war. The resistance of the Vietnamese was necessary, but not sufficient. Rebellion in the armed forces was necessary and had sufficient power to stop the war, and it will take all three again today to end the war in Iraq. Rebellion in the armed forces has to be underground—it can't be done from prison—and the numbers are increasing.

David Potorti, cofounder of September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, whose brother Jim died in the twin towers: My brother's death is being used as an excuse to wage a war on the world. We unleashed forces that we cannot pull back. Today, in the name of September 11, we occupy a country that had nothing to do with September 11. We must return to the moment of historic choice, and instead join the rest of the world in real solutions, not in terrorizing the rest of the world. We must not ignore the suffering of the Afghan families, the Iraqi families, the Spanish, Japanese, South Korean, Canadian, British, Italian, and all the other military families; the coffins that arrive in the middle of the night so we can't see them; those sitting in the vets' hospitals. I pledge that I will not support the killing of children who are just like my children, of parents who are just like my parents, of brothers just like the brother I lost. I will not respond to terrorism by becoming a terrorist.

Cindy Sheehan, cofounder of Gold Star Families for Peace, whose son, Casey, was killed in Iraq, not "lost": If George Bush believes in this "march for democracy," why doesn't he march his daughters over there? And if George Bush won't send his kids, he should bring our kids home now.

Khalilah Sabra, Muslim-American Public Affairs Council: There are 100,000 dead Iraqis, 1,500 dead US servicepeople, and countless young men psychologically and physically disabled by the war, the violence of the occupation—and that wasn't supposed to happen. The majority of us allowed ourselves to become subservient to a group of elected officials whose primary obligation is to train another generation to be prepared to make the same decisions as the one that came before it, to be proud of their country, unquestioning of its motives, antagonistic toward all foreign ideologies, and well-protected against ethical considerations other than those serving to decorate their overall self-interest. This administration does not foster debate, dissent, or ethical discussion; but acceptance of military excess, expectation of a life of self-reward and anesthesia in the face of misery on another side of the world, and anticipation of financial excess and global control. In 1966, Robert F. Kennedy said, "Few men are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one vital, essential quality for those who seek



Speakers in Fayetteville, March 19, 2005

to change a world which yields most painfully to change." Clearly it is time for Americans to act, and act together.

Luci Murphy, Community Coalition for Justice and Peace, Washington, D.C.: Ms. Murphy linked women's experiences of slavery, menial work, poverty, and motherhood in a haunting song whose chorus was:

*And you take my money,
You think I don't see.
You use it to fire on women like me.*

And then:

*And you take my children,
You teach them to kill.
You teach them to fire on women like me.*

Lynn Woolsey, US congresswoman: This war is wrong. It is time for the United States to support our veterans. Support and call your representatives to cosponsor House Concurrent Resolution 35. There are 28 cosponsors so far. Let's get the rest of the 435.

Stan Goff, retired Special Forces master sergeant and member of Veterans for Peace, whose son, Jesse, is serving in Iraq: George Bush and his puppeteers had been itching for a war since 9/11, and everything they have done since then has been on purpose. They lied to get a portion of the American public to cosign this energy war; bombed civilians; killed journalists; illegally imprisoned people, including children; organized the massacre at Fallujah; poisoned friend and foe alike with depleted uranium; misrepresented Iraqi resistance as foreign; sent thousands of our neighbors, husbands, mothers,

fathers, and children to be killed, maimed, and driven crazy—all of that on purpose. They insulted our intelligence to by casting this clueless preppie as some kind of man of the people. They wanted a war of conquest, but they got a grinding war of attrition. They failed to see what kind of anger they would wake in us when we began to see the true character of this war.

They wanted a war, and we're going to give them one: a social and political war. We will expose their lies, expose their crimes, disobey their directives, hone our fear of their intimidation. We will not be governed by thieves, murderers, kidnappers, and liars. We will fill the streets, and if we have to, we'll fill their jails. We can begin with the conscience of every person in uniform sent to do the administration's dirty work: to offer them redemption, and then a chance to truly fight as liberators. We will not stop until we have broken this malignant power.

Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson, cofounders of Military Families Speak Out, who have a son in the Marines in Iraq: Our family members who are in Iraq right now vowed to defend this country and its constitution, and instead they are being used to fight for oil markets and dreams of empire. We, as their families, have to endure the results. We are afraid when the doorbell rings, or when the phone rings. In 2002, we were two families; now we are over two thousand. Here's to Vermont, where 49 out of 57 towns voted to bring our troops home now. Not one more day, not one more dime, not one more life. Bring the troops home now, and take care of them

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David Cline, a VVAW national coordinator, in Fayetteville

IVAW Holds First National Meetings at Fort Bragg

WARD REILLY

The weekend of March 19–20, 2005, could become known as the “beginning of the end” of the disaster in Iraq, as history was made with the national launching of three powerful groups opposed to the war: Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Gold Star Families for Peace (GSFP), and Military Families Speak Out (MFSO). As always, VVAW was well-represented on this historic occasion of activism, as part of hundreds of Vietnam vets in the group of 4,800 that marched on Fort Bragg in solidarity with all vets and military families.

Counter-demonstrators numbered a pitiful seventy, and the best they could come up with was one giant billboard that said “Code Pink Kills Our Troops.” How pathetic is the pro-war side? All they could come up with was



IVAW meeting in Fayetteville

to focus on a women’s peace and justice group like Code Pink—to counter the actual troops that have been there to fight and die and who are now returning and telling the truth, and the families of those killed in action. We are in better shape than I had hoped, if that is all the support the pro-war people can find in the most military town of all, Fayetteville, Georgia, the home of no less than four military installations.

For the record, we had supporters there from as far away as Hawaii, California, Louisiana, and New Jersey.

VVAW national contacts Hannah Frisch, Bill Perry, Dave Cline, and me were also present at the Sunday morning press conference and meeting, which opened with a strong, funny, and inspirational speech by Cline, who was honored with the opportunity to open the first national meeting for IVAW. Cline is also the president of Veterans for Peace (VFP).

Also marching on Saturday

were VVAW members Tom Baxter and Patrick “P-Mac” McCann, and the family of Dave Curry, and many others that I just don’t know. I saw at least fifty VVAW pins in the crowd. Vietnam vet Ralph Baldwin’s band started the Saturday meet-up with some of his bands songs, including “1984,” which surely must be what year it is. Hannah Frisch, Jan Curry and myself carried one of several VVAW banners, as did Bill Perry and his wife. Patrick McCann took a turn at cadence, as did Dave Cline during the one-mile march.

Any pro-war person would be a fool to question the truth spoken by those in these groups. “Gold Star families,” of course, are

families that have had a member of their family killed in action, and it is incredibly brave of them to join the antiwar movement so strongly, speaking out about the fact that they were lied to in order that their children could be sent to war in Iraq. No one has given more than they have, or speaks louder than they do.

I was honored to be one of only a few non-Iraq vets who were allowed to sit through the series of teach-ins and organizational meetings of IVAW. Debbie Clark, a VFP member from Atlanta, was also in the meetings.

I had met co-founder Mike Hoffman at the SOAW demonstrations at Fort Benning



David Cline, Mike Hoffman and Bill Perry

last November, and we had dinner and a beer together. I bought some of his IVAW pins to help out with his expenses, and he returned the favor by allowing me to sit with them at the meetings. The meetings were quite historic in themselves, and I felt right at home with these great young veterans.

I was fortunate again to meet almost every one of the founders of IVAW, men and women who are extremely bright and very angry about the lies that were used to send them to a needless war, by a horrible bunch of liars that couldn’t care less how war affects those who do the dirty work. I understand their numbers are growing as fast as the troops are starting to flow back into the country, and they, like the GSFP, can give credible leadership to the stop-the-war movement, just as VVAW did beginning in 1967.

The list of speakers was long, and notable speakers included IVAW cofounders Kelley Dougherty, Mike Hoffman and Jimmy Massey; Cindy Sheehan of GSFP; Lou Plummer, vet and MFSO cofounder; Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange and Code Pink; Stan Goff, Special Forces

master sergeant for twenty years, who tore down the house with his fiery speech; VFP executive director Michael McPhearson; Dennis Kyne, an outspoken Desert Storm veteran, depleted uranium victim, and scholar; Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, who has a bill on the floor to end the occupation in Iraq; and Michael Berg, the father of Nick Berg, the US contractor who was beheaded on video in Iraq.

And now begins the push to get the word to the media, and to get these groups in front of Congress, so they can tell the truth about what is happening in Iraq. That might force Congress to quit funding this war crime.



WARD REILLY SERVED IN THE US ARMY INFANTRY IN VIETNAM FROM 1971-74. HE IS THE BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA VVAW CONTACT AND THIS ISSUE’S AWARD WINNER FOR “MOST PROLIFIC CONTRIBUTOR”.



The Struggle Continues

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when they get here!

Shawn Cunningham, president of the Civic Engagement Task Force, and a student at North Carolina Central University:

I'm in a suit, because this is who we're talking to: the suits in Washington, the suits in Congress. We are students, churches, veterans, and families united; united, Congress must listen to us. The caskets that have been carried and arranged here represent all the students pulled out of classes and sent to this unjust war.

Michael Hoffman, cofounder of Iraq Veterans Against the War, who spent four years in the Marines, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq:

We have *seen* that destruction. We have lost our friends, and taken lives, and we are here to tell the truth of what is going on in Iraq right now. In the US military, we were trained to fight and kill, but we were never trained how to rebuild a government, a water system, or

soldiers in this war, who joined to look for a better way of life, but who instead lost their lives completely. Send the troops home now! We are on our feet with you standing for peace and justice!

Rann Bar-On, Israeli activist with the International Solidarity Movement:

It is the Israeli occupation that is *causing* the murder of thousands in Israel, causing the violence, just like the occupation is causing the violence in Iraq,

precipitating the first invasion of Fallujah: It's too late for my son, and too late for me. I should have spoken out sooner against the war. But it's not too late for you.

Kevin and Joyce Lucey, Military Families Speak Out, parents of a son returned from Iraq:

My son Jeff killed himself three days after he came home. Yesterday would have been his 24th birthday. Some may say that Jeff returned unharmed, but he was destroyed by hidden emotional wounds of this war. Very little money is devoted to these young men. We are obligated to give not just adequate care, but the best of care. Let not another family find their son like ours. He was found by his father hanged in the basement with a garden hose.

Dennis Kyne, Gulf War I front-line medic with a unit that slaughtered many innocent civilians:

Depleted uranium is the cause of Gulf War syndrome. We have returning vets with malignancies, with thyroid problems. This weapon is omniscient. It's not an "undiagnosed illness."

Diedra Cobb, Virginia Antiwar Network:

I am here today because I refused to fire my weapon when

the army called me to Iraq. I was raped, and nothing was done about it.

Cathy Lutz, Brown University:

In Fayetteville, they tore down a homeless shelter to build the museum honoring the 82nd Airborne. War is strangling Fayetteville.

Stephen Funk, Iraq Veterans Against the War, the first conscientious objector whose application was denied, who was imprisoned for six months:

When I came out, I thought I was all alone. Military people who come out will not be alone.

Medea Benjamin, Code Pink:

What the counter-demonstrators are referring to ["Code Pink Kills"] is that we sent \$600,000 to the women and children of Fallujah after the United States destroyed their city.

There were many more speakers that day, and there are so many compelling facts and arguments from elsewhere, but they don't do any good on a page. Let's take a few and open somebody's mind this week. ☺

JANET B. CURRY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW'S EXTENDED FAMILY.



fix a power grid—but the people of Iraq can. We owe them more than we can ever repay, but in real aid, not by the World Trade Organization or the World Bank. And we owe real aid to all those who come home. When they joined the military, they signed a contract to say that they would take care of us, and that the country would take care of them—it goes both ways, and we are here to tell all the military, from Camp Lejeune to Fort Bragg to Pope Air Force Base, that we will stand by them and fight for them.

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (Hispanic, Haitian, and other immigrant workers in Florida):

As many of us fought together against one of the world's largest fast-food chains, Taco Bell, and won, so today we stand with you to ask for justice in this unjust war. There are many immigrant

so only by refusing to participate in the occupation can we stop the violence. The occupation contributes nothing to the security of the state; it only aggravates it and takes resources away from the needed education, medical care, welfare, and pensions. End the occupations, end the violence; bring the troops home now!

David Cousco, brother of a cameraman for a Spanish independent news agency who was killed in Iraq:

On that day there were three attacks on journalists, including on Al-Jazeera and on the Hotel Palestine where newspaper reporters were known to be staying. They don't want the eyes of the independent press in Iraq, only embedded journalists.

Daniel Berg, father of Nick Berg, a contractor killed in Iraq, whose body was then displayed,



Ward Reilly in Fayetteville, March 19, 2005

Abu Ghraib Soldiers: Scapegoats for a Flawed Military

LOU PLUMMER

One Friday, when I was in my early twenties, I took off my camouflage fatigues for the last time. The following Monday, I reported to the best civilian job I could get. I was given a new uniform, a can of mace, a set of handcuffs, and the keys to a cellblock at a state prison in North Carolina.

I was no longer in the infantry, but there was still an enemy and a mission. I no longer trained to kill Central American communists. Instead, every day I faced a prison population that was nearly 80 percent African-American in a state with a population that is nearly 80 percent white.

It was my intention to treat the inmates I was charged with supervising in much the same way I had been treated as a junior enlisted soldier in places like Fort Benning, Georgia and Fort Hood, Texas. I had been belittled and dehumanized in the name of discipline. I intended to use the same tactics to control the criminal scum I was assigned to manage.

I was quickly disabused of that notion by more seasoned

guards, and, surprisingly, by inmates who weren't mindless crack-addicted drones. I was reminded that I'd volunteered to be in the military and that none of the prisoners in C-Block had signed

The officers and administrators of the Abu Ghraib prison have a contingent of young soldiers much like I once was. These young men and women are products of a military that gave them a one-hour

education by working in US prisons, are as much to blame for the outrages in Iraq as I was to blame for the conditions of the prison I worked in.

There is an attitude in our country that trains us to accept the fate of those who we are told are less deserving than ourselves.

It isn't the little people on the bottom who should be condemned for designing the system. It is the self-serving masterminds at the top who should bear that burden.

President Bush says that he intends to get to the bottom of this situation. I suggest that he forgo that plan. He should instead get to the top of it.

Few of them have the slightest idea how to refuse an unlawful order, much less how to report a war crime.

a contract assigning them to their current surroundings. It wasn't a matter of coddling anyone. It was a pragmatic approach to effectively managing other human beings in a high-pressure situation.

I also quickly learned that the managers of the prison didn't want to rehabilitate anyone. They only wanted to continue to operate their little fiefdom as far from public scrutiny as possible.

class on the Geneva Conventions during their first month in the military. They have been trained and drilled into mind-numbing, unquestioning obedience ever since that moment. Few of them have the slightest idea how to refuse an unlawful order, much less how to report a war crime.

These soldiers, some of whom have been conditioned to accept racism and human degra-



LOU PLUMMER IS A MEMBER OF MILITARY FAMILIES SPEAK OUT AND THE BRING THEM HOME NOW (WWW.BRINGTHEMHOME NOW.ORG) CAMPAIGN. HE CAN BE REACHED AT PMPROJ@PROGRESSIVE.ORG.

The Case of Lynndie England Comes to an End

WE DROPPED SOME OF THE CHARGES...

... BUT NOT THAT OF BEING THE LOWEST-RANKING PERSON IN THE ROOM WHEN THINGS GO WRONG...

HAH! NOBODY BEATS THAT RAP...



DANZIGER
NYTS/CWS May 3 2005 (2379)

That War

MARC LEVY

I wear the Combat Medical Badge and Cav patch on my fatigue shirt as Veterans for Peace march in Boston's Veterans Day Parade. As per a state court ruling, we are officially excluded from such occasions but allowed to march one mile behind. Burly sunglassed motocops straddle bikes on either side of us; grimy street sweepers are hot on our gray-flecked tails.

Thirty-five of us march, in old army field jackets, or store-bought boonie hats, or standard-issue street gear. Two men carry a life-sized black coffin draped with the American flag. Behind them, two members in dignified spirit and step hold a large banner that reads *SUPPORT THE TROOPS, BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!* And right behind that commonsense radical cloth totem, a final pair hoist a five-meter white banner whose bold black letters ask *WHO WANTS TO BE THE LAST MAN TO DIE FOR A MISTAKE?*

Most people clap as we

march past in our official seclusion, though not a few smug faces turn away. Every so often, a boisterous sidewalk patriot will bark out a "Fuck off" to our assembled ranks, to which we energetically reply, "Fuck you!"

After a time, we pass a solitary black man, sixtyish in age, neatly dressed in a Disabled American Veterans costume: tan cunt-cap with silver piping, the cap spangled with dainty cloisonné pins; a shiny satin jacket embroidered with the letters *DAV*; a thicket of medals pinned to his chest. Humble and sad and irreproachable, with no one on either side of him; I think that is strange. As the coffin trundles past, the black vet snaps a slow rising salute, holds it for several dignified seconds, then gracefully brings it down. Those of us who see it are instantly grief-struck. We continue marching, step by strident step. To the beat of a lonely drum, a man aptly named Winston calls cadence.

At parade's end we gather near the busy intersection of Boylston and Tremont. Mulling about, I make eye contact with an Army Ranger wearing Class *As* dotted with polished brass insignia, campaign ribbons, the Good Conduct Medal, a unit patch I've never seen. He is not quite fit, a tad heavy, maybe Reserve or National Guard. Without thinking I walk over and warmly shake his hand. "Were you in Iraq?" I say.

"No," he replies, "were you?" He is genuinely bewildered.

"No, I say. "I was in a different war. I hope you don't go, but if you do, I hope you get back in one piece." The Ranger looks even more uncomfortable, as if someone had just grabbed him by the balls. But I am calm and sincere, and maybe he sees that in the heart of my eyes, or hears the soft beat of sorrow in my trembling voice.

We're standing near the traffic light; when it blinks green, he crosses the street to join a bunch

of Junior ROTC students who wait for him. Poor guy. They have been watching him going head-to-head with a veteran peace freak the whole time. Who was it that said: "So it goes"?

All in all, it was a good day, a well-spent day, but the war—the one where US Marine snipers shoot civilians, the one where billion-dollar high tech is outsmarted by primitive IEDs, where Fallujah is destroyed to save it, where suicide bombers run amok or steer hell on wheels, the war that can't be won, that's already lost, over and done with, kaput, yeah, that fuckin' war—that war drags on.



MARC LEVY SERVED WITH D I/7 CAV IN VIETNAM/CAMBODIA '70 AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC. HIS SHORT STORY, "HOW STEVIE NEARLY LOST THE WAR," WAS PUBLISHED IN NEW MILLENNIUM WRITINGS, ISSUE 14 (2004-2005).

Chicago VARO Blues

RAY PARRISH

If you are a veteran trying to get a difficult VA claim approved, I'm afraid that I have to advise you to try it anyplace but Illinois. Recent stories in the *Chicago Sun-Times* by Cheryl Reed revealed that, thanks to the work of the "service center" at the Chicago VA regional office (VARO), Illinois veterans are the most dissatisfied in the nation and have one of the lowest per-capita VA disability payments. I wrote about this problem in a 2002 article in the *Veteran*. The unserved veterans here are the homeless—mentally ill veterans with the most severe PTSD, anger-control problems, or mood disorders—who are being abused by the system that's supposed to help them.

As a result of the initial story, the Chicago city council and Senator Obama held hearings overflowing with veterans waving sheafs of documents. After my testimony, I began working on a solution with the Veterans Strike Force One, a group of mostly African-American veterans who have spent five years gaining a lot of respect and an office at the newly renamed Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (formerly Chicago West Side). They wanted to

add mental-health VA claims and discharge-upgrade counseling to their already-successful veteran outreach and job-placement programs. We hope to use the publicity of this crisis to initiate programs to help those veterans who have been left behind.

We can only hope that the VA inspector general comes to town and reviews the rating decisions on a case-by-case basis rather than relying solely on a statistical analysis. Complaints from veterans about these decisions should be resolved only after review by a sympathetic veterans' advocate who has experience reviewing claim files. A quantitative analysis of Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) reversals and remands should be followed up, in order to identify rating specialists whose misconduct may be criminal.

While it may be true that racism motivates some rating specialists to delay and deny some claims, pure laziness and perceptions about job performance expectations seems to play as great a role in their work process and in the decisions they make. Yes, there are good, honest people working at the VARO, and it is only a small number of VA employees who are

treating veterans unfairly.

Many raters try to avoid working on complex claims, because they take too much time and therefore hurt their productivity numbers. In addition, many raters behave as if they see certain veterans as malingerers and they feel a responsibility to deny their claims, regardless of the supporting documentation. Many raters think that bonuses or promotions are tied to the money that they award to claimants. When decades worth of retroactive benefits are involved, it seems that some raters are trying to balance the budget on the backs of veterans.

A rater who doesn't want to approve a legitimate claim can avoid having an unjust denial overturned by allowing it to be sent to the BVA, knowing that the decision was flawed in such a way so that it will be "remanded" back to the local VARO for "further development and a new rating decision." When the claim comes back, it will be somebody else's problem. Some decisions are remanded when raters "neglect" to obtain all the relevant medical records before making decisions. Oops! Sorry! Or they might fail to deal with all of the claimed

disabilities—another oops. Raters face no consequences for these failures. Repeated use of this tactic leads to the chorus: "The veteran died while his claim was on appeal." After a little experience, some veterans look forward to a BVA denial, because only then can they get a lawyer when they file an appeal at the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, which is impartial and very veteran-friendly. But this only happens when both the VARO and the BVA have run out of reasons to avoid making a decision.

Some raters take advantage of mentally ill veterans by provoking them into behavior that sabotages their claims. Many vets don't make it past the first page of an eighteen-page rating decision or "statement of the case." They fail to respond by some deadline or fail to understand that they are being asked to provide information concerning the location of medical records. Or vets simply reply with curses or declarations amounting to "forget it," which is heard by unsympathetic raters as "dropping their appeals."

Veterans with mental ill-

continued on next page

Chicago VARO Blues

continued from previous page

nesses are unlikely to be any kinder or more cooperative to any of the VSOs (veterans service officers) from the veterans' groups who have been unable to help them in the past and who they suspect are in league with the VA. These veterans need a different kind of VSO, with special skills and patience. Most of the local offices of veterans' groups seem to be embarrassed by the *Sun-Times* report, and may see the mere suggestion as another not-too-subtle criticism of the effectiveness of their VSOs. Fear that their dues-paying membership may, in turn, decline may cause them to deny any shortcomings and oppose any changes.

At this point, we must confront the catch-22 that has resulted in the disparity in VA claims. We must realize that most of the mentally ill homeless veterans aren't eligible for VA treatment and compensation because they don't have honorable discharges. Medical opinions saying that the misconduct that led to the bad discharge was due to a service-connected mental illness has caused many VAROs to grant entitlement to benefits after a "character-of-service hearing." The catch is that the medical professionals that you need in order to get the "evidence" aren't available until after you've proven your case. Most VAROs, including Chicago, don't see their "duty to assist" to include obtaining the records and opinions needed to win the claim.

The most immediate need is for a review of the claims of the most desperate veterans, who have already complained about unjust treatment to congressional staffers, VSOs, and state, county, local, and independent veterans' advocates. Where appropriate, these long-suffering veterans should be given immediate compensation and treatment. In addition, a homeless veteran shouldn't have to wait for a decision on his claims in order to get room and board. VARO raters whose decisions have been repeatedly overturned will also be revealed in such a review. Both VSOs and VARO personnel need training to better deal with "difficult" claims and veterans. VA policies may need to be adjusted to allow for this and to encourage VARO personnel to take on these cases. To sum up: we must identify the

most needy veterans, review their claims with input from veterans' advocates, and get them help immediately! Then we must reform the representation system for VA claims in Illinois.

Now that we know that Illinois vets need help, what is to be done?

We need to create a "veterans' community service center." It would provide access to housing, health care, legal assistance in qualifying for federal and state benefits and upgrading military discharges, and comprehensive mental-health treatment.

Once opened, our major outreach concern may be how to handle the overwhelming demand for our services. Groups such as the Veterans Strike Force One at the Jesse Brown VAMC have already made contact with many of Chicago's needy veterans. The most obvious resource for outreach statewide is the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, it could provide referrals for treatment, housing, and so forth in local communities. Working with other state agencies and community medical and mental health centers, these newly trained "veteran social workers" will be able to insure that veterans are provided immediate diagnosis and treatment, independent of VA actions. This will also produce medical documentation for the VA claims.

We need to recognize that these veterans need skilled advocates (to help them win VA benefits), mental-health professionals, and the financial resources that will allow them to live until they win those benefits. To that end, we need a staff of six lawyers and paralegals, who will help veterans obtain VA benefits and upgrade their military discharges. Veterans who have claims that have been difficult to win need VSOs with the patience and counseling skills needed to get the facts from the veterans, and the training needed to make sense of the medical records and claims files. We should invite the National Veterans Legal Service Program (NVLSP) to set up an office here. Housing, job training and placement, and mental-health referrals and services could be provided by additional caseworkers.

Since few people have all of these skills, we need to consider



Ray Parrish at Veterans Day in Chicago, 2004

teams of specialists. For example, the challenge of finding the VA's mistake in a claim file may attract people who are uncomfortable in interpersonal or emotional situations, but who love a good mystery. Those who can help a veteran to remember and record his or her experiences may be unable to deal with the VA's legal and bureaucratic necessities. Both of these workers need each other to do their jobs, but neither one is providing what the vet finds most critical: housing, food, and treatment. To vets, a solution without the support that they need to live in dignity while their VA claims are decided is hollow. Most of the veterans that need our help have a difficult time relating to non-veterans. They should be matched up with the many caring veterans who would welcome the opportunity to get trained and paid to help their brothers and sisters.

The treatments that stand a chance of successfully returning these veterans to their communities can only happen with access to medical and mental-health clinicians and veteran caseworkers. Nonprofit service providers have full-service programs, providing housing and support, that can be expanded to include a veterans' unit or that can provide a model to be used in establishing dedicated veterans' programs.

Let me tell you about the Heartland Alliance program that I worked in for three years. (Swords into Plowshares operates a similar veteran-specific program in San Francisco. Both have annual budgets of over two million dollars.) We had twenty people working on three ACT (assertive community training) teams and another twenty working in the PSR (psychosocial rehabilitation) day program. Each ACT team had a supervisor with an advanced degree, a licensed social worker, a certified alcohol and drug abuse counselor, and three caseworkers (who needed

a college degree in anything and enough experience or aptitude to impress the boss). We ACT caseworkers spent our time with the clients, shopping, learning to be polite, cleaning or cooking, and learning to sit quietly in benefit offices. The PSR has trained therapists who conduct daily AA and NA meetings and regular sessions of art, music, dance and writing therapy as well as instruction on personal hygiene, housekeeping and cooking. Doctors and nurses supervised medications and developed individual treatment plans for the clients, which the teams then implemented.

Our lengthy waiting list accepted only those whose mental illness was so severe that they were homeless and couldn't keep up with the forms for state and federal benefits. We had nearly two hundred "members," twenty-five of whom were vets. Each six-person team had about sixty members on its rolls. Two of the teams did outreach and helped the PSR to stabilize their members. I was on the transitional team that "graduated" about one member a month to "independence."

We owned and operated several buildings, providing housing with varying programs and levels of supervision. With a goal of obtaining subsidized housing for our members, we worked with the landlords of several studio-apartment buildings, who tolerated the frequent "failures" common to this population. In addition, we placed many people with Lakefront Supportive Housing, which runs several buildings for low-income, elderly, and disabled people. They have subsidized rents, in-house social workers, and various activities and meetings.

Chicago veterans need a similar program that can address all of the problems that they face.



Criminal Facilitation: Helping the Military Recruit Our Students

BEN CHITTY

As teachers and staff in colleges and high schools, we are required to make our students available to military recruiters. This is the law.

Soldiers say that IRAQ has come to mean "I Really Am Quitting." As the armed forces scramble to replenish their ranks depleted by the occupation of Iraq, the law is invoked more and more often—likewise, criticism and resistance. At the City University of New York, a third student of which was killed in Iraq this January, students who picketed and protested National Guard recruiters on the City College campus this March were detained, and then charged with felony assault and summarily suspended from school.

But our colleges are not exactly swarming with eager employers. Many students need more financial help than we can give them. Some could perhaps profit from a little practice in discipline to get the maximum benefit from their college educations. Many would argue that military service is a career open to merit, an honorable profession, even a patriotic duty. So what's wrong with letting them onto college campuses and into high schools to recruit our students?

Plenty.

It's not just that the work is dangerous—every combat video game and combat comic book makes that clear. It's that the

dangers aren't limited to hostile fire. Meningitis breaks out in boot camps; anthrax inoculations cause debilitating reactions; weapons and equipment turn toxic. Already one out of every three veterans of the first Gulf War is rated disabled, mostly from "friendly fire" or exposure to some combination of experimental vaccines, carelessly dispersed chemical agents, and particulate residues of depleted-

homosexuals as a contribution to "unit cohesion," at the cost of the careers—and sometimes the lives—of soldiers rumored to be lesbian or gay.

It's not just that injury can be severe—though soldiers now survive multiple amputations, and head and spine injuries that used to be invariably fatal. It's that so many injuries could have been avoided or eased. Our government

sends our soldiers into combat without proper equipment, then reneges on its obligation to care for them when they come home. Post-traumatic stress can be a lifelong condition, and can also afflict the soldier's family and friends. As very severely disabled veterans begin to crowd VA facilities, the government moves to limit (and in effect reduce) public funding of the VA, while charging elderly veterans more for their prescription drugs.

Whatever we call military manpower policy, the fact is that our military depends on economic conscription to fill its ranks. Our students already fit the target profile: as we raise tuition and reduce or defer financial aid, we move our students right onto the bull's-eye.

It's not just that young people sometimes seem to hear only what they want to hear about military life. It's that military recruiters really are in sales. In their zeal to complete the mission, sometimes they fail to make completely certain that their recruits thoroughly understand how easily college benefits can be lost, what kinds of training and duty assignments are likely, and how few rights they will have. Sometimes they lie.

Of course our students have the right to explore any career options. And if they take and then quit jobs at Burger King or the Bank of New York, they might lose some pay. But when they try to quit the military, they go to prison.

Military recruiters are easy enough to find, but under these conditions, "questionable" hardly begins to describe school sponsorship of military recruitment. "Criminal facilitation" would be closer to the mark.



BEN CHITTY IS A DISABLED NAVY VETERAN OF TWO DEPLOYMENTS TO VIETNAM, AND WORKS AS LIBRARY SYSTEMS OFFICER AT QUEENS COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK. A VERSION OF THIS ESSAY APPEARED IN HIS UNION NEWSPAPER, THE CLARION, PUBLISHED BY LOCAL 2334 OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS.

It's not just that the military life is hard — though combat does change you, and not always for the better. It's that so many military hardships have little relation to combat.

uranium armaments.

It's not just that the military life is hard—though combat does change you, and not always for the better. It's that so many military hardships have little relation to combat. One out of every three female veterans reports having been harassed, abused or raped by fellow soldiers. Domestic violence is twice as common in military families. Most military commands condone contempt for

sends our soldiers into combat without proper equipment, then reneges on its obligation to care for them when they come home. Post-traumatic stress can be a lifelong condition, and can also afflict the soldier's family and friends. As very severely disabled veterans begin to crowd VA facilities, the government moves to limit (and in effect reduce) public funding of the VA, while charging elderly veterans more for their prescription drugs.

It's not just that war and killing are bad—though combat is certainly cruel, and the occupation of hostile territory indoctrinates soldiers in casual brutality. It's that the people who design the policies of brutality leave it to the soldiers on the ground to reap the consequences of remorse or revenge. The same officials who excuse abuse and torture in the misbegotten expectation of intelligence and vengeance let the lower ranks be scapegoated if and when such crimes come to light.

Even if we could fix everything that's wrong with the military, make our government treat our soldiers with respect, and honor our obligations to those sent on our behalf into harm's way, we still might not want our colleges and high schools to sponsor the military recruitment of our stu-

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Veterans Day 2004, Chicago



VVAW members Joe Miller and Kurt Hilgendorf



Bill Shunas of VVAW



Leah Byron, Iraq War veteran



Stacey Paethe of Military Families Speak Out

Terror and Preventive War are “American” Values

S. BRIAN WILLSON

Systematic use of terror and preventive war are historic American values. Their roots are directly and inextricably interconnected to the defense mechanism we call racism. The defining and enabling experience of the republic of the United States is the genocidal elimination of the human beings who originally lived on our lands. Eurocentric racism and so-called divinely inspired ethnocentrism have been inherent characteristics facilitating the “development” of our civilization through a long history of brutal exploitation of land, labor, and natural resources. Once the Pacific Ocean was reached, the attitude began to spread outward, until it now stretches to every corner of the globe. These values did not originate with the United States, but date to the first urban civilizations in the Fertile Crescent some 5,500 years ago.

Nonetheless, most of us were raised to believe that the United States is an “exceptional” civilization, superior to all others in history. We have historically died and killed to maintain this belief. After my military experience, however, I was motivated to seriously study history for the first time.

Captain John Smith of the Virginia colony in the early 1600s referred to our original inhabitants as “subanimals” and “beasts” worthy only of “extermination.” Puritan leader John Endicott of the Massachusetts Bay colony regularly ordered death to the Pequot Indians. Our founding document, the Declaration of Independence, refers to the land’s original inhabitants as “merciless savages,” and George Washington termed them “beasts of prey” to be “destroyed.” European settlers regularly called them “brutes” or “vermin” to be “eliminated.” General William Tecumseh Sherman in the 1870s ordered “extermination” as the “final solution” to the “Indian

problem.” Hitler later took note.

During what we call the Spanish-American War (1898–1902), US forces fought against Filipino citizens, calling them “goo-goos,” while murdering upwards of half a million of them under orders such as “burn and kill the natives,” issued by General Jacob H. (“Hell-Raising”) Smith to US Marines.

The explicit origins of preventive/preemptive war through use of terror can be discerned in the behavior of our leading founding father. Continental Army Commanding General George

Washington ordered Revolutionary War General John Sullivan in the summer of 1779 to “lay waste all the [Iroquois, especially Seneca] settlements around... that the country may not be merely overrun but destroyed... But you will not by any means, listen to any overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected. ... Our future security will be in their inability to injure us... and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire them.” There it is—preventive war using terror.

Sullivan’s scouring of the countryside with axe and torch soon transformed that beautiful region from the character of a garden to that of sickening desolation. Sullivan’s campaign was nothing other than a scorched-

The defining and enabling experience of the republic of the United States is the genocidal elimination of the human beings who originally lived on our lands.

earth policy, bearing comparison with Sherman’s Georgia march to the sea, or the search-and-destroy missions of US soldiers in Vietnam. The Iroquois Confederacy was the most advanced Indian federation in the New World. It had made a territory that embraced the central portion of New York State into an area of flourishing farms, well-cultivated fields and orchards, and sturdy houses. In a little more than a month, all of this had been wiped out.

But that simply prepared our civilization for the rest of the story. Immediately after the Civil

War, General Philip H. Sheridan described his mission to clear the west of indigenous peoples: “We took away their country and their means of support, broke up their mode of living, their habits of life, introduced disease and decay among them, and it was for this and against this that they made war.”

On hearing of the loss of Captain Fetterman’s entire detachment in 1866 near Fort Phil Kearney, General William Tecumseh Sherman wrote Commanding General Ulysses S. Grant: “We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women and children. Nothing else will reach the root of this case.”

Thirty-five years later on Sumar (Philippines), General Jacob H. (“Hell-Roaring”) Smith

issued Christmas Eve orders to “adopt a policy that will create in the minds of all the people a burning desire for the War to cease.” “Burn and kill the natives” soldiers appreciatively called the campaign. General Smith, an old Indian-fighter, adopted tactics that had worked against Geronimo’s Apaches when they were captured, imprisoned, and finally herded into a reservation. He began by ordering all Filipino natives, under pain of death, out of the interior. Those who streamed down to the coast were immediately thrown into concentration camps.

Elihu Root, secretary of war under presidents McKinley and T. R. Roosevelt (1899–1904), justified the conduct of military operations in Samar by the “history and conditions of the warfare with the cruel and treacherous savages who inhabited the island,” citing two sustaining “precedents of the highest authority”: (1) General George Washington’s orders to General John Sullivan in 1779 to destroy the Iroquois, and (2) the “severity” General William Tecumseh Sherman proposed against the Sioux after the 1866 Fort Phil Kearney massacre.

Root unwittingly revealed two important truths. The first was that the national past contained authorizations of terror. The second was that throughout our past, justifications of traditional forms of violence had remained relatively fixed.

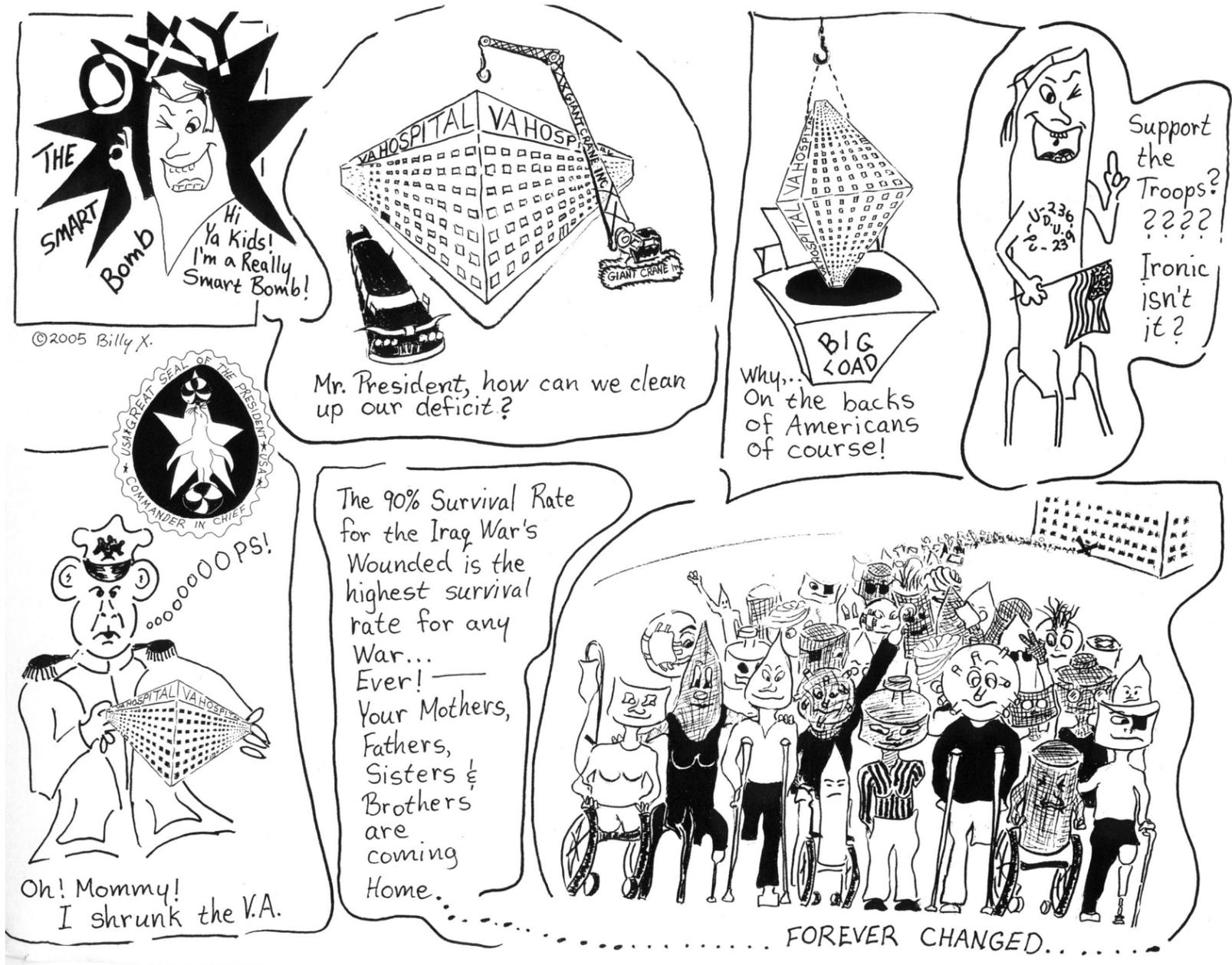
Nothing has changed!



S. BRIAN WILLSON SERVED IN THE USAF 1966-70, AND WAS HEAD OF A FORTY-MAN COMBAT SECURITY UNIT IN VIETNAM (1969). HE IS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF HUMBOLDT BAY VETERANS FOR PEACE, AND A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONTACT FOR VVAW.



NYC Borough, and Long Island VVAW action outside brig on Flushing Ave., Queens, NY, 1971–72



Sheldon Ramsdell Archive

I have recently set up an archive for Sheldon “Shelly” Ramsdell at Cornell University. I am requesting that anyone with Ramsdell-related items consider sending them on to Cornell when it is convenient.

Shelly's archives are far flung. My goals for this effort are two fold: (1) To gather as much as possible at Cornell, and (2) to put the Cornell archivist in

touch with other extant collections (McGovern collection, McCarthy collection, No. California LGBT Historical Society, etc.) I am also working with his family regarding securing potential archival holdings that they may have.

Overall, I am trying to create a comprehensive picture of his work through this collection “network.” At some point, if I am able to find key pieces, perhaps I

can raise some money to begin a non-profit book project based on his photography with any proceeds going to support organizations like VVAW, the Alexander Hamilton and Bob Basker American Legion Posts, AIDS education organizations, etc.

Please contact me directly with any questions, suggestions of people I should contact regarding Ramsdell archival materials, or

to obtain information on sending materials to Cornell. Cornell will reimburse you for any shipping-related expenses.

Thanks,

Linda Alband
 Executor
 Sheldon H. Ramsdell Estate
 achiote@sbcglobal.net
 650-359-5010

Creating a Pain in the Brass

continued from page 7

the militarization of youth to be far from the right-wing stereotype of being unpatriotic and hating GIs (military personnel). Many in the education community hear the military recruiters and wish that their students had access to another point of view. Many believe that students need to hear from veterans and activists who are critical of war or government policies concerning the way that GIs and veterans are treated. Many just want to provide information about the military justice system to those young people who cannot be

dissuaded from enlisting. We can't do this unless we get in. We can get in by keeping confrontational tactics as a last resort and venting our frustration only at antiwar rallies. The US military presence is provoking insurgencies not only overseas, but also in US schools.

In addition to antiwar street demonstrations, the domestic opposition to the current “war to end all wars” is seen in both spontaneous and planned confrontations with military recruiters within schools and at the public events where recruiters prowl. The

military has just about used up the “stop-loss” and IRR (Individual Ready Reserve) draftees and the influx of volunteers that got duped by Bush’s hyper-patriotism. Now recruiting quotas aren’t being met because of the war’s growing unpopularity and the body counts. In addition to offering \$150,000 reenlistment bonuses, the military is doubling the number of recruiters. The money and resources being used on this effort is bad enough, but recruiter misconduct is rampant. As a GI counselor, I’m hearing from unfit GIs who should never have been allowed to enlist, as well as those whose military experience has left them with permanent emotional and

physical injuries. And I’m just as concerned about recruiters with conscience-driven nightmares caused by the desperate measures that they have felt forced to employ to meet quotas.



RAY PARRISH (SGT., USAF, 72-75) IS VVAW'S MILITARY COUNSELOR, PROVIDING FREE CONFIDENTIAL DISCHARGE COUNSELING; LEGAL, MEDICAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS FOR GIs AND VETERANS; VA CLAIM AND DISCHARGE UPGRADE HELP; AND COUNTER-RECRUITING AND DRAFT INFORMATION. IF YOU NEED HELP, CALL HIM AT 773-561-VVAW OR EMAIL HIM AT CAMIBLUE@VVAW.ORG.

The Day the Earth Stood Still

It came without a warning,
one beautiful breezy sunny morning.

It seemed a day like any other,
no reason for anyone to bother.

Children went to school and parents to their work,
and right around the corner, no one knew what lurked.

The horror came in quick,
like a window smashed with a brick.

It spread rapidly like a disease,
causing all other activities to cease.

Everything started moving in slow motion,
while people tried to make sense of the commotion.

The wind no longer blew,
and birds no longer flew.

Except for one white bird which I did see fly,
it flew so slow I felt I could take it from the sky.

An eerie silence made its way,
announcing it was here to stay,

While four demons, flying high in the air,
sought to destroy the living and make the ground bare.

A darkness fell upon the land,
snatching helpless souls with its hand.

Above the earth it came to hover,
laying down a death blanket for all to cover.

That white bird flies repeatedly in my mind; I can still see it,
but it's the pure eeriness of it all that makes me fear it.

Multitudes of lives were taken on that day;
why it happened, only God can truly say.

Now there is no need for any kind of explanation.
No matter how this story is told, there can be no exaggeration.

The time has come for Americans to rise up and take a stand,
stare evil in the eye and say you will not destroy my heart, my soul,
my land.

The answer cannot be hate,
for that will only seal our fate.

The answer is trying to discover,
how we can help heal each other.

That's the day the earth stood still—
now what will you do with what you feel?

— Cesar Ruvalcaba



Cesar Ruvalcaba at Veterans Day, Chicago, 2004

Have old VVAW photos? The National Office would love to have them in our archives and for the website. Send us copies of the photos or mail us a CD with them scanned at 300 dpi. Please include captions with the year, event and participants if at all possible.

To donate money for VVAW's Military Project, providing free counseling and referrals to veterans and GIs, send checks to:
VVAW
PO Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640
and put "Military Project" in the check memo.

Soldiers in Our Midst

DOUGLAS NELSON

I gave this speech to a hundred people in Washington, D.C. on Inauguration Day. Military Families Speak Out and Iraq Veterans Against the War were well-represented.

In 1968, the year I was in Vietnam, the majority was wrong. History has proven them wrong. The minority became the majority, but not before 58,000 of us were dead and many more maimed.

I am here today to talk with you about soldiers, about what motivates them to be where they are, and how I think we in the peace movement should relate to them. I enlisted in the army in 1967, after doing badly in college and being threatened with the draft. My father, a World War II combat veteran, sat me down at the kitchen table and said that returning veterans of the Vietnam War had nothing positive to say about our reasons for being there, and that I should not waste my life by enlisting in the army. I did not listen to him. I spent a year in Vietnam and two years in Japan. I joined the veterans' peace movement in March 2003, because I am opposed to our war in Iraq. My father's words returned to me: "This doesn't feel right; I have serious misgivings about this." How ironic that one of the first people to welcome me into the veterans' peace movement was a World War II veteran.

I used to like Sergeant Rock comic books. The soldiers in them fought with visions of flags and the people at home they were protecting. I learned later that patriotism is in the dreams of psychotic old men who chose not to go to war themselves. Soldiers fight to live another day—another day without a bullet out of nowhere, without their Hummer being blown up by a roadside bomb, without a random mortar round dropping on them. They fight for something else: they fight for each other. Whether a soldier goes on combat patrols, prepares meals for hundreds, or repairs trucks, he does what he does so that his buddy may live. Not to do one's job is unthinkable. Much of what soldiers do, in battle and otherwise, can be explained by this motivation. Like it or not, this is the situation in which our country places young men and women.

They have the right to ex-

pect us to honor the sacred trust between a soldier and his nation. This implicit trust states that you will be asked to lay down your life only when war is a last resort, when all other means of settlement have been tried and have failed. When war is necessary, it should be in the defense of our country, and should be fought with the probability and expectation of accomplishing specific objectives. "War on terror" is not a coherent, credible foreign policy objective. "Terror" and "evil" are not specific enemies.

We veterans speak out, write and march because we believe that our country has placed them in an

I learned later that patriotism is in the dreams of psychotic old men who chose not to go to war themselves.

impossible situation. This is a war against a country that did not attack us, did not have weapons of mass destruction, and did not participate in the planning of the 9/11 attacks. This war, like the one some of us fought in Vietnam, is unwinnable without doing the unthinkable. We are killing and maiming far too many innocent people. Those who survive our excesses have joined those who fight us. We are not winning converts to democracy by torture, bombing, and home invasions. The other side's atrocities do not give us the right to do likewise. Nothing we are doing in Iraq will have any influence on whether or not we suffer further attacks, or on whether or not other countries buy, steal or develop nuclear weapons.

We know that the vast majority of soldiers behave according to the morals and values they were taught at home and in church. The military is no better than the rest of American society, and it is probably no worse. That is precisely what scares us. How can we expect children raised in an atmosphere of violence, whether actually witnessed or seen daily in a barrage of acted violence in movies and video games, not to act out that violence? How can we expect people to act, raised in a culture that is obsessed with punishment and prison? Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo are merely

an extension of our own prison system. It makes no difference whether the brutality is inflicted by guards or by other inmates; it is still sanctioned, government-administered brutality.

It is interesting to note that now no one takes responsibility for having ordered the torture at Abu Ghraib. Like the My Lai incident in Vietnam, one good soldier called us on our behavior. Some of the worst of soldiers and bureaucrats have tried to cover for the criminal behavior. Martha Stewart will have served more time in prison than will any of the military and intelligence officers who gave the orders to "soften

them up."

We know that they are sometimes given orders to do what they know is not right. Marine sergeant Jimmy Massey has chosen to go to Canada to speak out against being ordered to kill Iraqi civilians who did not understand what was expected of them at a traffic checkpoint.

Convoys travel at high speeds through Iraq, to try to minimize the blast effects from improvised explosive devices. A soldier stopped his truck to attend to the body of a tiny child who had been hit. He moved the little crushed body to a doorway and saw a little American flag in the tiny hand. He told this story when he got home, but there were apparently many more. He cannot be with you today. He killed himself.

When the reason for going to war is flawed, the corruption flows downward. Our nation has created a moral climate in which we dehumanize Middle Eastern people to rationalize mistreating them and acting with indifference to their lives. Our soldiers and Marines are caught in the middle, between a population that does not want us in their country and an administration that took us to war for unsound reasons.

Depleted-uranium munitions are the Agent Orange of the present war. Iraqis, Afghans, and Americans alike are likely

to suffer ill-health effects from breathing radioactive dust, and from contact with the munitions. Expect the same rounds of denials of health effects that veterans faced in the struggle to receive care and compensation for Agent Orange exposure.

Be very suspicious of an administration that tells us how much they value and respect our military. We saw how much value was placed on advice from general officers who expressed grave misgivings about this war. No one was ever ordered to serve more than one tour of duty in Vietnam. Many soldiers and Marines, professionals, reservists, and National Guardsmen have been to Iraq twice already. This administration throws a forty-million-dollar party while the soldiers they sent to war have ragtag, improvised armor on their trucks, and have had the budget cut for the care and treatment they are going to need for their wounds and psychological trauma. They are an expendable commodity, to serve the cause of cheaper oil and fat government contracts for friends of the administration.

To the extent that my generation has been silent, uncaring, unwilling to read and to understand the issues, and unwilling to talk to our elected representatives, we are truly sorry. Inasmuch as we failed to run a candidate in the last presidential election to stand against this ill-conceived war, we are sorry. When we see soldiers as somebody else's kids, not our own, we are sorry.

I can tell you, many of these soldiers and Marines are angry and confused. They may misunderstand our message, even when we try to present it civilly and with reason. They will think that our message dishonors their service and their buddies' sacrifice. To them, we offer a smile and a peace sign.

You may choose to turn your backs today, with good reason. Please don't turn your backs on our military people. This country has turned its back on them too often, in too many ways, already. Treat them as brothers and sisters, and later, you will see some of them in our ranks, when they are free to do so.

continued on page 28

Five Lives Ruined

DIAN CAMPBELL

Five lives ruined because of war, veterans who served in Vietnam. Two died in the last year and a half; three remain. I am sad about these men, who have faded from everyone's memories, except those of close relatives. They served their country, and came home to despair and hopelessness. They saw and experienced the horrors of war. Their minds were assaulted as well as their bodies.

One is a veteran who served in Da Nang. His company dropped him off in a Montegnard village with six other men. Trouble is, the commander forgot to come back for them for six months. But for the kindness of the villagers they would have starved to death, or frozen to death in the trenches of red mud. When they did come back to rescue the seven vets, Sgt. Steve Martin said he took a helicopter to the nearest place he could buy a video camera, and then he flew back to record the home of hell he and his men had endured. He suffered a nervous breakdown, got a divorce, and is currently in terrible shape, as far as I know. He couldn't even work in the family business anymore. He served as a pallbearer for my husband's funeral, as they had been childhood friends. A life ruined.

I never met the second man. His name is Dexter Dedman. His mother lives down the hall from me in a senior apartment house. Her son served in Vietnam and was exposed to Agent Orange. When he was injured overseas, he was sent home and was never the same.

He has spent the years since then in board-and-care homes, unable to function. He hated the VA hospital and refused to go back. He was given medications to control his anger and outbursts of emotion. He couldn't talk about what he'd seen in 'Nam. His ability to cope declined, so they took him away last month, at the age of 55, to "adjust his meds." He came back, and in a few days he was dead: no reason given. His mother is a good churchgoing woman, and she said, "God saw my son's pain and said enough is enough." A life ruined.

Another veteran was a friend of mine. When he came back from Vietnam as the result of an injury, he was partially deaf. He joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He went to work for a paraplegic named Stan Price. When his girlfriend got pregnant, they needed extra money. I gave him and his wife a job in my hot-dog stand. He fed his friends and augmented his income. I admired the way he worked for the veterans so unselfishly, as did his girlfriend (who later became his wife). I lost track of him for years until I read about him in a book about Vietnam. I wrote the author, and he gave me Robert Waddell's address in a California state prison. He was serving a ten-year sentence for using heroin. Yes, he never shook his habit after the war. He was dying of liver failure for having hepatitis. I decided to help him get a transplant that was being denied him. I wrote to him, and he

was excited about my attempts to bring some publicity on the prison to shame them into helping him. Before I could help, he died of pneumonia, from neglect. A son I never got to meet is without a father now. A life ruined.

I have a two cousins who live near me, Joseph Lugo and Robert Lugo. They say they were exposed to Agent Orange. One is okay, if you call being a functioning alcoholic okay. The other fellow has a severe drug and drinking problem. He was living in the park and got hit by a car on his bicycle a few years ago. He sued, and got an apartment with the money. Then he got hit again, and now he has a broken back. He is in a hospital and says he might quit drinking, says the nightmares of Vietnam are so vivid. He won't go to a VA hospital. Two more lives ruined.

I grieve now for the veterans who will be returning from this new war.

I grieve for my mom's first cousin, who never got out alive from the Philippines after the Red Cross plane that was airlifting him due to a leg wound was shot down in Linguyan Bay in 1945 by the Japanese. He was twenty-one.

I grieve for my mother's other first cousin, who was written about in Richard Tregaskis's book, "These Men Shall Never Die." He was a flying Marine and the second pilot to land on Guadalcanal. He later became a three-star general. He was proud of the planes he'd shot down, and he was proud of all the killing he'd done. He died

an alcoholic with nightmares. His name was Richard Mangrum. He died a few years ago.

Tregaskis was wrong. These men and women do die, and they die badly.

When will wars that are not purely for defensive purposes go to end? When will the needless deaths and disfigurement of body and mind end? Not in my lifetime, if the present administration stays in power. It will be business as usual: lives ruined over oil and money.

Let's show the world we care for our men and women in the service, and bring them home from Iraq.

I only mentioned people I knew and know of. Leaving out the names of women who were mothers or wives or daughters doesn't mean they suffered any less.

My friend Robert Waddell saw the worst of napalm victims, the death and destruction of a country, and then was given the "Nixon Detox" upon his medical discharge: cold turkey and isolation. Is anyone really surprised that he continued his addiction? I am not only sad for him, I am mad for him. No new liver for him. He was a criminal now in their eyes. No rewards for caring for paraplegics or serving his country. Talk about a modern-day tragedy. When will someone write his story? I wish I was capable of doing so. I have the title already: "A Life Ruined."



Soldiers in Our Midst

continued from page 27

You people of college age are the conscience of your generation. I love you for that. I am still looking for the conscience of my own generation. Please know that you are the lucky; these soldiers are the unlucky, the cast off, the used up, the thrown aside. Many of them were lured into the military with the promise of jobs and education. They come from places that offer little of either.

The draft is coming; it is inevitable. I cannot in good conscience ask you to do what I did not have the courage to do: to resist the draft, not to enlist. Some of you may do as I did and choose the path of least resistance, to go

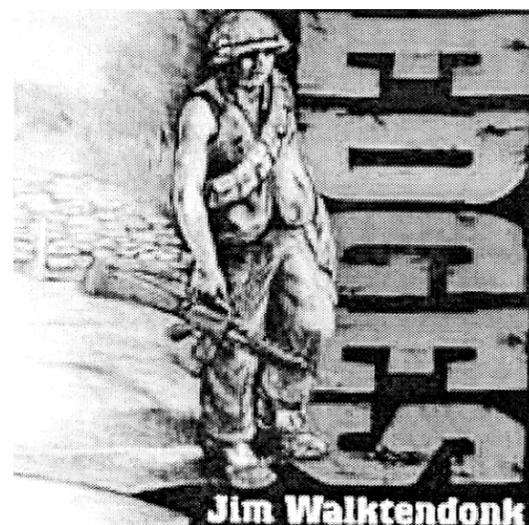
and hope you live through it. If for no other reason, treat soldiers as if it could be you, your brother, your friend out there.

We can only tell them what we wish the peace movement had told us thirty-five years ago: "This war you are caught up in is not of your making. Our issue is with those who have brought this war on the world, not with you. You are our own. We love you. We want you home."



DOUG NELSON IS A MEMBER OF
VVAW FROM VIRGINIA.

The Music of Jim Walktendonk



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Back Porch Blues

BOB RIGGLE (REVIEWER)

Up Close & Personal Watermelon Slim

Southern Records Group & Management

Looking at some of the song titles on longtime VVAW member Bill "Watermelon Slim" Homans's newest CD, "Up Close & Personal," you'd never guess that he used trucks to make most of his living. With songs like "Truck Holler 1 and 2," "Blue Freightliner," "Scalemaster Blues" and others, Homans shows us that the highway of time "is populated by friends, enemies, lovers and strangers, triumphs and frustrations, elation and despair." Although there were many more, I'm sure, Homans thanks the late John Lee Hooker, McKinley Morganfield and Chester Burnett "in recognition of the eternal process of torchpassing."

Brandishing a steel guitar

for "Blue Freightliner," Homans offers up an upbeat perkiness that makes it the closest thing to a road-trip tune on the disc. Again on the steel for Chester Burnett's "Smokestack Lightning," he shows off his talent with some of the best guitar work on the CD.

The raw, almost gritty harmonica work on Sonny Boy Williams's "I Don't Care No More" is what helps give this CD that down-home, back-porch feel. To misquote a car commercial, "This could be your father's blues." While the harp work on "Cynical Old Bastard" isn't as earthy, Homans does cut loose with a far-too-short jam.

"Bridgebuilders" is probably the standout song on this CD, primarily because of the very distinct departure in style from the others. His use of African rhythms highlights their influence on

not only the blues, but other forms of music as well.

For those of us who miss John Lee Hooker, Homans antes up "Got My Will Made Out." It's the closest I've heard

anyone sound like Hooker in some time, minus the trademark toe-tapping.

A 2004 W.C. Handy Blues Award nominee for "Best New Artist," Homans is currently on tour throughout Europe, Asia and the United States.

WATERMELON SLIM
WATERMELON SLIM

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL



For tour info, contact Chris Hardwick (405-447-4329, chris@southernrecords.com).



BOB RIGGLE IS A MILWAUKEE
VVAW CONTACT.

Dead Letter Day

He sent the letter to the guy's wife
The same day,
Leaving out the following:
"About 2 in the morning the automatic went off
And nobody moved, we just waited for the morning
Light and the order to recon.
There were two of them. One was dead.
The other hung on all night,
Waiting to blow away some round-eyes
Before he bought it too.
He shot the second man, missing the point.
The point opened up and somebody threw a frag
And it was all over. Except that your husband
Took a bullet through his helmet that tore a
Gash in his head, and going down shot the man
In front of him. The blood was deep, dark red;
He was lying flat on his back, in shock;
His eyes were wide open and lifeless,
As if he could see everything.
They say he lived a few days in the rear,
Even got up and spoke. Then died.
Head wounds are like that."
She wrote back. First thanking him and the platoon
For writing her, then going on for pages asking
About his last moments. You could tell she was crying;
And he cried too, and did not reply to the desperate
Letter, and has desperately not replied ever since.

— Marc Levy

automatic: automatic ambush (an American booby trap)

round-eyes: an American

point: the first soldier in a patrol

Watermelon Slim

Veteran, artist, musician,
VVAW for life.



Go to www.watermelonslim.com
to order Slim's new CD,

Up Close & Personal

Double-Time Duffy

continued from page 32

still quiet, I began to stretch and look around. Suddenly, two short whistles went right over my head. The rounds exploded in my position, just where the FNGs (fucking new guys) were standing. We had been suckered! I dove for cover. Incoming rounds were falling right on my platoon position, but mostly on my previous platoon, Bravo One. "Corpsman up, corpsman up!" I pushed down my fear and ran to the two new guys. One had been hit in the right hind area. A huge piece of flesh was gone, leaving a gaping red crater, and his leg had been dislodged from his hip. The other had lost his right arm; it had been severed at the elbow. I found the arm, and we put it in his poncho, and both men were carried toward the field hospital. Lucky bastards. Only two days in-country and they were going

back to the World. Million-dollar wounds.

I ran over to Bravo One's position. Their bunkers had taken several direct hits, and there were many casualties, including their platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Grosshans. This was my first command, and I knew them all. They started calling out to me, asking, "How bad is it, lieutenant?" It was terrible; half of Bravo One had been ripped apart. Many had multiple shrapnel wounds. But I assured each one, "It's okay, and you're out of here." Each wounded Marine was laid in his own poncho and carried away. I didn't hide my tears. Out here, men cried. This was the second time for me—I hoped it would be the last time.

Our battalion got a new executive officer, Major Edward Patrick Duffy. Double-Time had

finally got his wish. He was in-country with a line battalion. I wouldn't welcome him; why risk leaving my hooch? Damn, he'd joined us at a really bad time and place. At least he'd survived coming aboard; some hadn't. Our LZ was a killing zone.

On December 9, 1967, I got called up to battalion. I carefully covered the fifty or so yards. I entered the bunker, and saw Major Duffy sitting in the entranceway, reading a letter. We said hello, but he was more interested in the letter. I understood, and moved on into the command post.

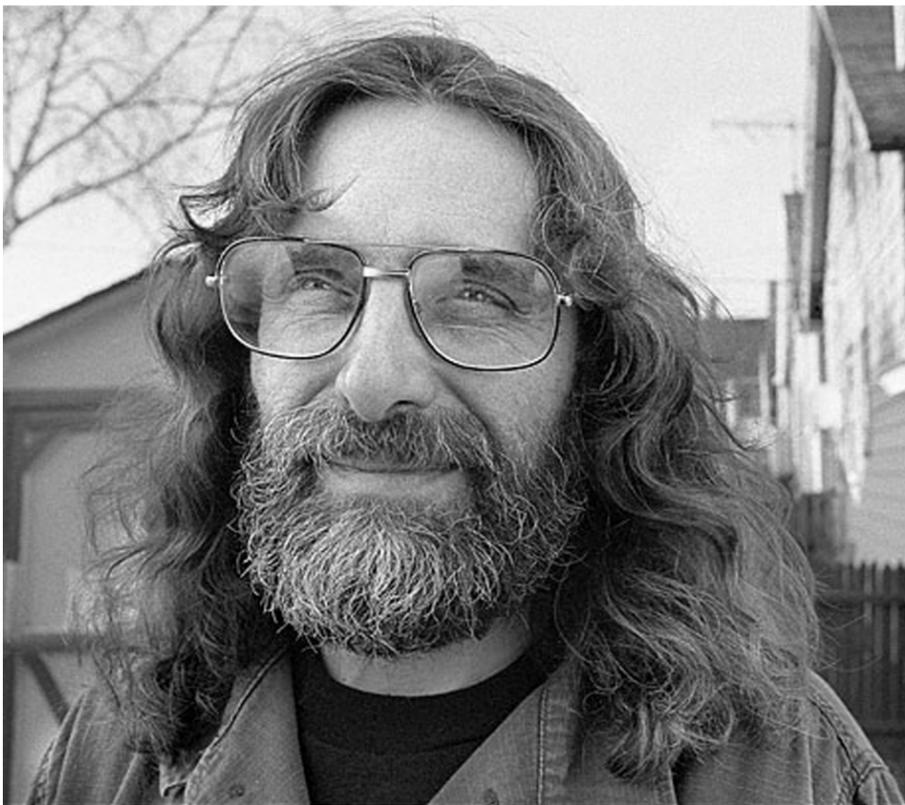
On my way out, he was still sitting there, this time writing a letter. He looked up as I passed, and I realized that he had bunked down in the entranceway. Not a good choice. I got back to my bunker just in time, as a barrage of rockets slammed into the hill. I put my face into my private corner. The earth shook, and I bounced. Death was

taking a walk, and I didn't want to catch his stare. I was terrorized, and I started laughing.

Finally, the incoming stopped. I climbed out of the bunker and looked around. My guys were okay, but there was smoke rising from the battalion command post. I knew that Double-Time had stopped. Later, I watched as his body, wrapped in his poncho, was put on a chopper. It rose, amidst swirling dust. I stood straight, pumped my right arm two times, and saluted.



JOSEPH GIANNINI IS A FORMER MARINE GRUNT WHO FOUGHT IN 'NAM 1967-68 WITH THE 1ST BATTALION, 3RD MARINES. FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS, HE HAS WORKED AS A CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYER. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE THE FIRST GULF WAR.



Former VVAW national coordinator John Lindquist

Words From Pete

He said, I don't eat white rice.
I hurried to ask,
What if it were brown or black?
No rice to eat;
Not ever, he replied.
I drove the trucks
in Vietnam,
he sighed.
Trucks with moldy carrots,
rotten potatoes and more.
Maggots swarmed there
in the eyes of potatoes,
and those of my comrades.
Maggots are rice,
and rice are maggots.
I don't eat white rice,
he softly cried.

—Paula J. Countryman



Jazz Funeral for Democarcy, New Orleans, 2005

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 the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist" (VVAW-AI). VVAW-AI is actually the creation of an obscure ultraleft sect, designed to confuse people in order to associate themselves with VVAW's many years of activism and struggle. They are not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW, Inc. and are not affiliated with us in any way. We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit.

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 _____
 Email 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.
- Sign me up for a lifetime membership in VVAW. \$250 is enclosed.

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 \$25.00 (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

Double-Time Duffy

JOSEPH GIANNINI

I first met Captain Edward Patrick Duffy in October 1966. He was my company commander at Officer Candidates School (OCS) at Quantico, Virginia. We nicknamed him "Double-Time Duffy" because he double-timed us everywhere. He designated another Marine and me the company guides. The two of us stayed approximately fifty yards in front of the company at all times. I can't recall how many times I looked back at Captain Duffy to see if he'd given the order for normal time.

Physical fitness and training were an important part of OCS. If a candidate failed the physical part, he would be washed out. During PT (physical training), the candidates dressed in gray sweats, black watch-caps and black combat boots. Meanwhile, Captain Duffy dressed in green sweats, a green watch-cap and black combat boots. Because of this, I secretly gave him another name: the "Green Hornet." One day, on an off-base pass, I came upon some Green Hornet stickers. Great. I went back to the base with at least a dozen. That night, when I thought everyone was asleep in our barracks, I snuck down to Captain Duffy's office. I plastered the stickers all over his office-door window. I told no one,

and was never found out. Cool.

One cold day, on a company hike, we came up to a wide stream, and I looked back at Captain Duffy. He signaled for us to move across. The other guide and I started across, and I quickly realized that the stream was about chest-deep and that the current was moving very fast. I told the other guide to keep going, and waited midstream to give a hand to Captain Duffy. He approached, somewhat unsteadily, but motioned me off. I made for the opposite shore, then looked back. He was struggling in the current. I emerged on the other side of the stream, soaked and feeling about thirty pounds heavier. I stood on the shore watching Captain Duffy approach. Surely this would be the first time he would order normal time. He caught my stare, and pumped his right arm two times—double time!

In December 1966, I graduated from OCS. I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps (and could run a marathon). I said good-bye to Captain Duffy, and I went off to the Basic School. I graduated in June 1967. Left, on leave, with orders for Vietnam. Got married on June 12 and left on June 24, 1967. I stopped over on Okinawa and was held there

for about two weeks.

Finally, I was on my way out. Waiting in an airport lounge for a typhoon to let up, I spotted Double-Time Duffy, now a major, sitting at the bar. I approached and said hello. He was upset, and started complaining about not having orders for Vietnam and being stuck on Okinawa. "Lieutenant, I'm a career officer. I need line experience. I've got to get in-country." I really didn't know how to respond. He was in no mood to make small talk, so I pushed off to wait alone for my flight. When I left, he was still drinking alone.

In early December 1967, I was leading a rifle platoon: Bravo Three. Our battalion was ordered to occupy a hill designated Alpha Three. It was just below the DMZ (demilitarized zone, AKA Dead Marine Zone). Our mission was to defend this hill and the Seabees building a combat base on it. This soon-to-be combat base was slated to be part of the McNamara Line, a string of bases extending from the China Sea to the Laotian border. The concept was that the defenders would use electronic surveillance to detect the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) coming across the DMZ, then intercept them. (It didn't work.)

It was the monsoon season, cold and windy with torrential rains. We moved on to the hill under cover of darkness. We were cold, soaked to the bone, and miserable. No one could get any sleep.

The night passed without any casualties. The next day, one of our patrols was hit with a command-detonated claymore and suffered several WIAs and two KIAs. The NVA could plainly see us from their camouflaged positions in the surrounding jungle. The incoming started: artillery, mortars, recoilless rifles and, most deadly, rockets with delayed detonating fuses. We dug deeper, but surviving was just plain luck. This hill could be a smaller Dien Bien Phu—the site of a 1954 battle during the French War of Indochina in which the Viet Minh (now the NVA) surrounded 15,000 French soldiers and decisively defeated them. The incoming was continuously intermittent. Leaving your hooch could be a deadly decision. We became giant, filthy rodents, fearful of moving about.

On December 7, 1967, the sun came out. I looked up and out: it was quiet. I waited. No incoming, so I cautiously emerged. It was

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