



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

Volume 35, Number 2

Fall 2005

VVAW Marches in DC

WARD REILLY

On a mercifully overcast day in Washington, DC on Saturday, September 24, a crowd of approximately 250,000 people gathered in protest of the wars in the Middle East. This protest had the feel of the late 60s and early 70s, and it was heartwarming to see so many youth in attendance, a group that has been sorely lacking in the current antiwar movement in the United States. The Campus Anti-War Network had many hundreds in their group, and they were just one of several youth groups to have their voices heard on the streets of DC.

A strong contingent of VVAW members joined antiwar groups from all over the nation such as Gold Star Families for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, UFPJ, ANSWER and CAN in condemning the neocon-inspired disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan, illegal wars that have cost us more than 2,000 KIA U.S. troops and almost 20,000 WIA, not to mention the staggering cost of \$300 billion.

\$300 billion for what? The Iraq mess continues to get worse, as the Bush administration continues to make more and more enemies by using our troops as a police force, which is not their job. Had our Louisiana National Guard and their equipment been home to protect our citizens, the disastrous Katrina would have resulted in far fewer casualties, and there would have been a much faster first response, which was virtually nonexistent due to Bush's misuse of our National Guard in the Middle East, and the general



September 24, Washington, DC (photo courtesy of Charles Jenks, Traprock Peace Center)

ineptness that is apparent in everything the administration does.

There were many, many VVAW buttons and symbols adorning the banners, shirts and hats of the crowd members that gathered around the "Camp Casey III" staging area directly in front of the Washington Monument. The tent was named after the KIA son of Cindy Sheehan, a Gold Star Mother who has become the face of the national antiwar movement, which has grown quickly as the reasons for the wars in the Middle East change by the month.

The Arlington West memorial organizers from California placed the crosses and boots of

their display on the perimeter of the staging tent, in a continued strong effort to show the cost of these Middle East wars in human terms, and thousands slowly wandered through that fine exhibit for four days running.

I was very happy to be able to meet Ray Parrish in person, one of my own icons in the area of counseling vets and conscientious objector work. VVAW contacts Bill Perry, Billy Kelly, Mike Ferner, Dave Cline, Doug Nelson, Patrick McCann, and Mike Hastie were just a few of the VVAW members that again came out in

support of the antiwar movement. Fighting war and injustice has been a lifetime of work for some of these fine people of VVAW.

Ray was interviewed by my good friend Donna Bassin, a psychologist and film-documentary maker from New Jersey. Donna is documenting how the current war has brought so many of the old-school vets back into hands-on activism.

The veterans marched together, and the respect they got from crowd watchers was apparent

continued on page 16



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From the National Office

BARRY ROMO

Well, it's déjà vu all over again. Thirty-three years ago, who would have thought Nixon would be out of office before his second term was up? His was a landslide re-election; he had great poll numbers; he seemed competent; and he had a brain.

Baby Bush barely won re-election (51% is no landslide), but he has Congress. He too has a brain, but it's named Karl Rove, and this "brain" may be indicted for outing a CIA agent.

Bush has no poll numbers. He is incompetent, and his administration is padded with more cronies than President Harding's. And Congress? Well, the possible trials (DeLay, Frist) are the light at the end of the tunnel.

On top of this, the blood of our young continues to drip day after day, and our national treasure is given away to corporate friends. At least Nixon put his tail between his legs and got our troops out of Vietnam after his re-election.

So it looks like we can just sit back and watch merrily as the Bush administration and his party and the Right go down in flames, laughing all the way, right? Uh... no. We have to continue to push and push hard at every level. VVAW should lay out its call in actions on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

We should push locally for resolutions for immediate with-

drawal from Iraq. For those who say "We can't—we need a plan," just remind them that the Pentagon has plans for everything, from invading Iran to the Vatican, to pulling out of Korea, to Iraq. Just do it. No more blood or insanity.

We must also demand decent benefits for Iraq vets, especially in relation to depleted uranium (DU) poisoning. VVAW played a role in passing such legislation in Louisiana, and we are moving in Illinois, where it will pass. We should take this up state by state.

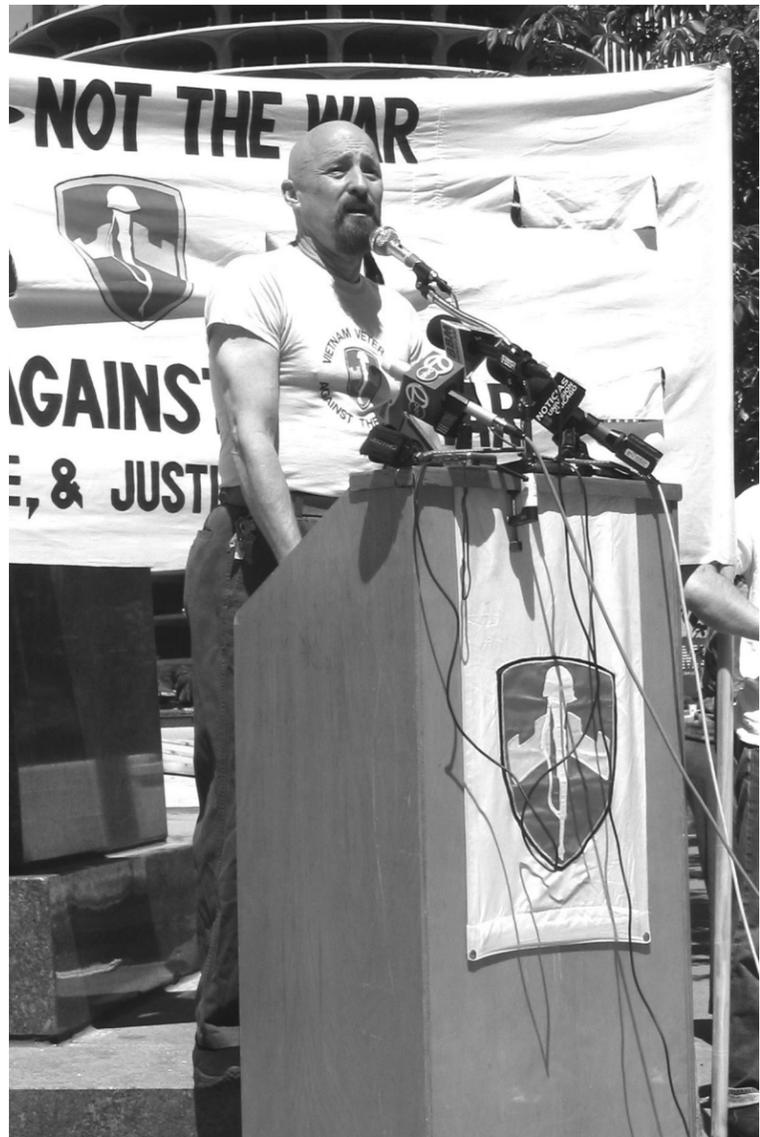
Nationally, we have to keep up the heat through our local organizing. Make noise and bring new people into the movement, always remembering that 10% of folks are coming to their first event.

Finally, there is you, the person reading this paper. If you are not yet a member of VVAW, you should join right now by filling out the form in the back of this paper or by going to our website. If you are already a member, join with others to form a VVAW chapter in your area.

Remember that VVAW will be forty years old in eighteen months, and we are planning to have a great reunion! We must always be ready to celebrate, even in the midst of serious struggle.



BARRY ROMO IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW.



Barry Romo on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005

Editorial Collective

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

Thanks to Jeff Danziger, Vietnam veteran and political cartoonist, for his generous contributions to this issue. Thanks also to Billy Curmano for "Oxy, the Smart Bomb," and to Charles Jenks, Curtis Nelson, Claudia Lennhoff, Bill Branson, Dennis McQuade, Robert, Dave Kettenhofen, John Zutz, Bob Gronko and others for contributing photos.

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Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Can you say "Iraq Syndrome"? There was the Vietnam Syndrome, which was supposed to mean that the people of the United States wouldn't and shouldn't ever again sanction a major war of dubious relevance to our safety. Then came the Gulf War, which was successful and supposedly shattered the Vietnam Syndrome.

The thing to realize about the Gulf War was that George the First thought that taking Baghdad was a can of worms better left unopened, so he left the Shiite allies to Saddam's lack of mercy and quickly ended it. George the First decided that caution was the better part of valor and wisely stopped short of Baghdad. Unlike most wars, the victory was a bit unstable, because it was declared without taking the enemy's capitol; but it was enough to enable them to declare that the Vietnam Syndrome was dead.

Unfortunately, eight years after George the Cautious came George the Arrogant. During those eight years, the Gulf War receded into the past, and the frat boys began slapping themselves on the back. To them, taking the Gulf looked to have been easy. Casualties were acceptable. Press on. Once again, they had the mistaken idea that superior technology (and in this case, the rout of 1991) was all that was needed to win a war.

Heeding the advice of Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and the like, George the Arrogant went forth and proceeded to get into a mess in Iraq. He so believed the talk that he declared victory after the first battle. Since then things have deteriorated in most imaginable ways.

So now we are going to have the Iraq Syndrome, which is the Vietnam Syndrome all over again. With the American people looking at the rising cost of war there—and the need for hurricane

relief here—you've got to think this will be the last major war for a while. (Of course, there will be minor wars all around the globe. You can't change old habits.)

Bush and his advisors have many reasons to be dismayed by what's happening in Iraq. Certainly one of their disappointments is that they're hot to go into Iran,

but there is a shortage of troops. Enlistment is down, and troops are tied up in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran would be even more of a mess, because of the terrain and a more solidified opposition. And because of the newly developing Iraq Syndrome, there would be no support for an Iran invasion.

That's good, but one worry is that in the past, these Bush people have speculated about the feasibility of using nuclear weapons, tactical and otherwise. Because they can't send troops to Iran, would they use nukes? In the eighties, there was much talk about nuclear winters and the devastating effect of even tactical nukes. I haven't heard talk like that lately, and the consensus might have disappeared, especially among the arrogant and shallow intellects and the oil men and woman in the Bush administration. Anyway, a war in Iran seems unlikely for the moment, and these nuclear thoughts may be dismissed as an occasional resurfacing of latent sixties paranoia. So back to Iraq.

Perhaps the worst thing about the whole affair is the party of opposition—the Democrats. Here we are involved in a war of illegitimate origin; that fact is not

even challenged anymore. We are bogged down in that war. We are not winning hearts and minds. The flag-draped coffins are accumulating. Polls are showing that more than half of Americans are opposed to the war. Still, the most prominent Democrats—and the Democratic Party as a whole—are talking about staying the course in

words are starting to lose their effectiveness as wars and hurricanes swirl around George the Arrogant, and he looks more like George the Confused. He sadly clings to these words as his answer to everything.

If he's asked how it's going in Iraq, his answer is "Democracy."

Afghanistan? "Freedom."

Why do we need Social Security reform? "Freedom."

Jenna's prom dress? "Security."

Iran? "Terrorism."

John Roberts' Supreme Court nomination? "Democracy."

Hurricane Katrina? "Terrorism."

The sinking economy? "Freedom."

Life with Laura? "Security."

Hurricane Rita? "Security."

Homeland Security? "Democracy."

Growing up as Barbara's son? "Terrorism."

Tax cuts for the wealthy? "Freedom."

His college-age drug habits? "Democracy."

Poor people? "Freedom."

Higher gas prices? "Security."

How will the world assess eight years of George the arrogant? Terrorism.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND AUTHOR.

So now we are going to have the Iraq Syndrome, which is the Vietnam Syndrome all over again.

Iraq. How sad.

The projected 2008 Democratic candidates like Clinton, Biden and Kerry are not talking about ending this thing. It doesn't take a PhD to figure it out. If for no other reason than political expediency (since more than half the voters oppose the war), you'd think that one of them would come out in favor of a troop withdrawal. That person might just jump into the lead for the nomination. Duh! The only potential candidate to come out for withdrawal is Senator Russ Feingold, who suggested a withdrawal date of December 31, 2006. The end of 2006? Don't go too far out on the limb, Russ. By that time there will be five hundred to a thousand more U.S. dead, tens of thousands more Iraqis dead, and a couple of thousand new terrorists created.

So much for the idea of the Democratic Party being the party of the people. Are the oil companies donating to the Democratic presidential campaigns too?

Meanwhile, George the Arrogant keeps talking about Freedom, Democracy, Terrorism, and Security. These are buzzwords he used in the past to gain support for whatever he wanted. The

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

Like every hamlet and metropolis in America, Tuscola has been getting its Iraq vets home this past couple of years. I was reminded of that in August, when several of them served as grand marshals of our annual Harvest Festival Parade. The crowds cheered and the high-school band played and the fire engines blew their horns, and it reminded me of all the floats

I got to ride on when I got back from 'Nam.

Or not. Sorry, that was cheap. Of course, I am very happy for these young men and women, because they're home safe and sound—at least until they put in six or eight months at Fort Riley and get shipped back again. I got to spend some time talking with them, but the exchanges could

hardly be described as meaningful. I wanted to ask the Question: What's your take on this war? But I didn't. My fear was that they'd think I wouldn't understand. What could my tour under Black Jack Pershing possibly have in common with what they went through? Here's some old guy wearing a VFW cap, and he just wants to hear something that will prop up

his fantasies about America's 21st Century Manifest Destiny. I wear a VVAW pin on my cap, but maybe they don't notice it, or probably they don't even know what it is. Then again, it is also possible that they support the war, and who the hell am I to challenge that? They were there; I wasn't.

continued on page 5

"Winter Soldier" Showing in Chicago

BARRY ROMO

Thirty-four years ago, VVAW organized an inquiry into war crimes; it was called the Winter Soldier Investigation. Held in Detroit over four days, 125 people testified about war crimes, racism, and imperialism in the context of the war in Vietnam. This was truly a historic event. For the first time in history, war veterans got together to expose their government while the war in which they had fought was still going on.

The right wing attacked the event (and they brought it up again to attack Kerry in last year's election). Nixon and his administration challenged the testimony, and they went after VVAW. Yet with all the intelligence agencies at his disposal, he couldn't find any lies or liars.

The Winterfilm Collective made a documentary about the event; called "Winter Soldier," it came out in 1972. Shown mostly on college campuses, it never made it into the mainstream in the good old USA. But in Europe it was a hit, winning documentary awards and being shown in theaters and on television. Some members of the

film collective went on to make top documentaries, including Barbara Koppel ("Harlan County, USA"), Robert Fiore ("Pumping Iron"), and Nancy Backer ("Born into Brothels").

It was forgotten by most except VVAW, and we would show it occasionally.

But last year's attacks on John Kerry, who shows up very briefly in the film, brought back interest, and people wanted to see it. As a result, screenings of a new print occurred in major cities around the country recently. At many of these screenings, many old and new VVAW members participated in discussion groups afterward.

In Chicago, for instance, we spoke at eight showings over eight nights to packed crowds at the Gene Siskel Film Center. Normally Q&A goes on for half an hour after any documentary. After screenings of "Winter Soldier," however, discussions went on for more than three times that. We could have gone longer, except for the fact that the workers had to close the film center and go home.



John Kerry (right) marching with VVAW

It was a chance for us to talk about the present as well as about the past. For example, we were able to highlight the fact that torture as U.S. policy did not begin with Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay.

If you missed one of these showings, you'll soon get a chance to purchase a copy. The film is coming out on DVD at the beginning of 2006. Watch for the

announcement in the next issue of the *Veteran*, or check our website (www.vvaw.org).



BARRY ROMO WAS AN INFANTRY LIEUTENANT IN VIETNAM, 1967-68. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE MINORITY PANEL ON RACISM AND MODERATOR OF THE AMERICAN DIVISION PANEL AT THE WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION, WHERE HE JOINED VVAW.

Notes From the Boonies

continued from page 4

I guess that's the reason I don't ask. It's their war. Somehow, I don't feel that I have the right to cross that line without being invited. This Memorial Day, I had a guest editorial in the *Tuscola Review*, and I spoke to that subject. I said that we have no idea what these young men and women did in the Middle East. They might have spent seven days a week listening to Armed Forces Radio (I read somewhere that Chris Noel is now in an assisted living complex), or they might have spent an afternoon listening to "Taps" being blown in the field for a buddy. My suggestion was to tell them how happy we are to have them back, and not to ask too many questions. If they want to talk about it, they will.

Or will they? Some of us did, and a lot more of us didn't. Some of us didn't start talking about it until we joined VVAW in the '90s. What are these young people carrying inside? How long will they have to carry it? As "Boonies" readers are aware, I've always been a pretty clever wordsmith when it comes to posing questions, but

my columns have a way of ending suddenly without answers.

It gets worse. I have never thought of myself as an old fart (since I'm 59, maybe I'd better start), but in talking with these bright, sparkly young'uns, I feel like I'm a hundred damn years old. They are just so—I hate this word—respectful. They call me "sir," and I don't even let my drug dealers and child molesters do that. I want to grab them by the shoulders and say, "Hey, I *do* know what you went through! I know about being an occupying army with the 'best of intentions.' I know about destroying a country in order to save it, about turning its adolescent boys into drug dealers and its pre-teen girls into prostitutes. I know about the smug looks we used to get on our faces when we talked about the 'gooks,' and I imagine that you are not unfamiliar with the term 'sand niggers.' (If you served with African Americans, the term was no doubt modified. But it's all the same.) And I know—I really know—that one or ten or thirty years from now you

might be writing a column just like this one. I just wish to hell I could do something right now to help you."

They say that if you work for the government long enough, you get paranoid. Maybe that's it. I guess I need to get together with some Iraq Veterans Against the War and talk about all these things. Or maybe I just need to

grow a spine and talk to some of them in my own backyard.



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 U.S. ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.



Washington, DC, September 24, 2005

Louisiana VVAW Members Get First DU-Testing Bill Passed into Law

WARD REILLY

I truthfully didn't know much about depleted uranium (DU) other than the common knowledge that DU was used in armor-piercing ammo and some heavy "bunker-buster" bombs. I had been in contact with a Gulf War vet named Dennis Kyne while doing antiwar work, and when I met Dennis in person at the School of the Americas Watch demonstrations at Ft. Benning in the fall of 2003, all that changed.

Dennis had been exposed to DU during Operation Desert Storm, when he served as a combat medic, and he had written a book about it. I invited him to speak at the Jazz Funeral For Democracy demonstration scheduled in New Orleans for Inauguration Day, January 20, 2005. There he met my fellow VVAW member Bob Smith, a three-combat-tour Green Beret in Vietnam, who had retired from the Louisiana National Guard as a command sergeant-major.

Bob had worked by my side for more than three years doing

antiwar work, and he immediately took a deep interest in what DU was doing to our troops and the environment. He decided to do something about it, and he enlisted my help.

Bob set up a meeting with Jalila Jefferson, his New Orleans representative in the Louisiana House. What happened next I still cannot believe. She listened, as did Rep. Juan LaFonta, the New Orleans freshman, and they invited Bob and me to testify in front of the Louisiana House Committee on Military Affairs. On April 28, 2005, without batting an eye, the committee voted unanimously to send it to the full House, who voted on it two weeks later.

Then we were invited to testify again, this time in front of a similar Senate committee. I told them that I was on the draft board, and that if I was forced to send kids overseas, I wanted to be able to look them in the eye and tell them that I would take care of them when they came back.

The Senate committee voted, again unanimously, to send the bill, now officially Act 69, to the full Senate for a vote. Again the vote was unanimous, and by this time Bob and I were in shock.

Was Louisiana about to become the first state in the union to mandate testing for any and all troops coming home from the Middle East?

On June 16, only two months after our initial contact with our two New Orleans representatives, Louisiana became the first state in the nation to pass a bill to give to all military veterans returning from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom the right to be tested for depleted uranium contamination. The bill received unanimous bipartisan support, and Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco signed it into law on June 16.

I still can't believe it! To top it all off, we did not get a single no vote from either party in both the House and the Senate. It was

a true bipartisan political victory, and *real* support for our troops.

All credit goes to Bob Smith, Dennis Kyne, and Lauren Moret, all DU experts. 

WARD REILLY IS THE SOUTHEAST NATIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW.



VVAW members Bob Smith (in top hat) and Ward Reilly at the Jazz Funeral For Democracy in New Orleans, 1/20/05

War Stories You Couldn't Tell Your Mother

JAN BARRY (REVIEWER)

Winter Soldier

Directed by Michael Lesser
(Milliarium Zero, 2005)

I recently saw a film I've avoided for more than thirty years. It's a documentary about grizzled young U.S. veterans describing military operations in Vietnam that swept through farming villages like Mongol hordes on a rampage. The film, "Winter Soldier," is being rereleased in movie theaters across the country and on a DVD. The distributors hope it provides a timely warning to end the war in Iraq.

These are war stories you couldn't tell your mother, one veteran said amid serial accounts of rape, torture, wanton shooting of civilians and deliberate destruction of vast areas of Vietnam. The 95-minute documentary shows portions of testimony by more than one hundred veterans at the Winter Soldier Investigation, sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, in Detroit, Michigan in 1971. The full transcript was read into the Congressional Record and triggered repercussions that were still reverberating in political at-

tacks on John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election campaign.

Along with Kerry and others, I was an organizer of that gruesome forum. It is still hard to fathom how the low-key counter-insurgency operations of the early 1960s morphed into "destroy the village to save it" mindless savagery. When I served in the Army in Vietnam in 1962-63, the official mission was to protect the Vietnamese people from a communist threat. Our actual mission was to spark a wider war. By 1965, as this film graphically details, the American military mission had shifted to attacking the people we had originally been sent to save.

To the credit of the veterans who spoke out about their experiences as Marine and Army grunts, helicopter pilots, medics, and prisoner-of-war interrogators, they wrestled with why this happened. They talked about how they had gone from eager viewers of Hollywood war heroics to brutalizing Vietnamese women, children and old men. What they did to Vietnamese young men, described in horrific detail, was more horrendous than the shock-

ing stories and photos of torture of suspects to filter out of Iraq.

They talked about how growing up in America prepared them to treat Vietnamese as less than human. They noted that in military training they were told to kill gooks—that all Vietnamese were gooks, and the only good gook is a dead gook. These are eerie echoes of the U.S. Army's campaigns against Native American Indians.

I saw the film at a showing at Lincoln Center that included a discussion with filmmakers and three of the featured veterans, Rusty Sachs, Scott Camil and Ken Campbell. The vets talked about how this event was a turning point in their lives. The power of the film comes from intensive interviews amid selections of testimony, in which we see anguished ex-soldiers struggle to regain a sense of humanity after engaging in murderous mayhem.

I'm still sorting out how I feel about having been in an exotic adventure that grew into a monstrous nightmare of our own making. Nothing I did at the time—resigning from West Point, writing

about the war, organizing antiwar veterans, working in various ways to end the war—ever seemed sufficient. Like many veterans, I've tried to live a better life than when I was a twenty-year-old GI armed by my government with the power of life and death.

More than a dozen filmmakers donated their time and skills to record rare moments of reflection by young men who visibly carried the weight of massive destruction on their shoulders. When released in 1972, "Winter Soldier" was widely shown in Europe and virtually banned in the United States. A small art-film distributor in New Jersey, Milliarium Zero, engineered the rerelease.

For more information, go to www.wintersoldierfilm.com.

This article was originally published in *Intervention Magazine* (www.interventionmag.com).



JAN BARRY IS A JOURNALIST AND THE AUTHOR OF A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS. HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

VA Review of PTSD Disability

RAY PARRISH

The VA, in its unending quest to balance the federal budget on the backs of veterans, will cut off benefits for thousands of veterans who have been rated as totally disabled by a service-connected mental disorder such as PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). The VA has an unlimited supply of lawyers who will review the claim files of these veterans to see if they can sever or reduce compensation payments. They will be looking to prove that the PTSD is not totally disabling or that the veteran has failed to prove to their satisfaction that anything traumatic happened during military service. Although each case will be unique, veterans need to be aware of their rights. The procedure is explained in 38 CFR Section 3.103–3.105 and in the VA’s Manual M21-1, Part VI, Chapter 9.

Veterans who are told their eligibility is under review should see a lawyer or a veterans service officer *immediately* in order to start looking for the evidence to satisfy the VA’s obsessive compulsion with documentation.

Failure to Prove Wartime Trauma

The VA’s rules to prove that a “stressor” actually occurred are confusing, even to VA adjudica-

tors. (Look at the remands.) One reason is that being in a war isn’t the same as being “engaged in combat” for the VA. Without med-

improvement in the disability, not simply “some” improvement. Since this judgment is open to the subjective determination of each

Veterans who are told their eligibility is under review should see a lawyer or a veterans service officer *immediately*.

als for valor or a Purple Heart or documented proof that you personally were involved in combat, the VA won’t take your word for what happened “in combat,” so you need “credible” supporting evidence from “witnesses.”

The VA inspector general’s quick review of PTSD claim files revealed that 25% of them failed to make a “legally sufficient” case. Most of these will likely focus on a technicality such as supporting “buddy statements” not being notarized or not starting with: “I swear the following to be true...”

No Longer Totally Disabled

First, the VA must find “material”

rating specialist, we can expect that many will need to be appealed through the Board of Veterans Appeals into the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

They must review the “entire history of the disability,” meaning that the review can’t be based upon a single new examination. They must find that there has been an “actual” change in the disability, not simply a more accurate evaluation. They have to find improvement in the “ordinary” conditions of life and work, not in a protected work or supportive living situation. It also has to be based upon a thorough examination, not the usual fifteen-minute “How are you doing?”

Appeal!

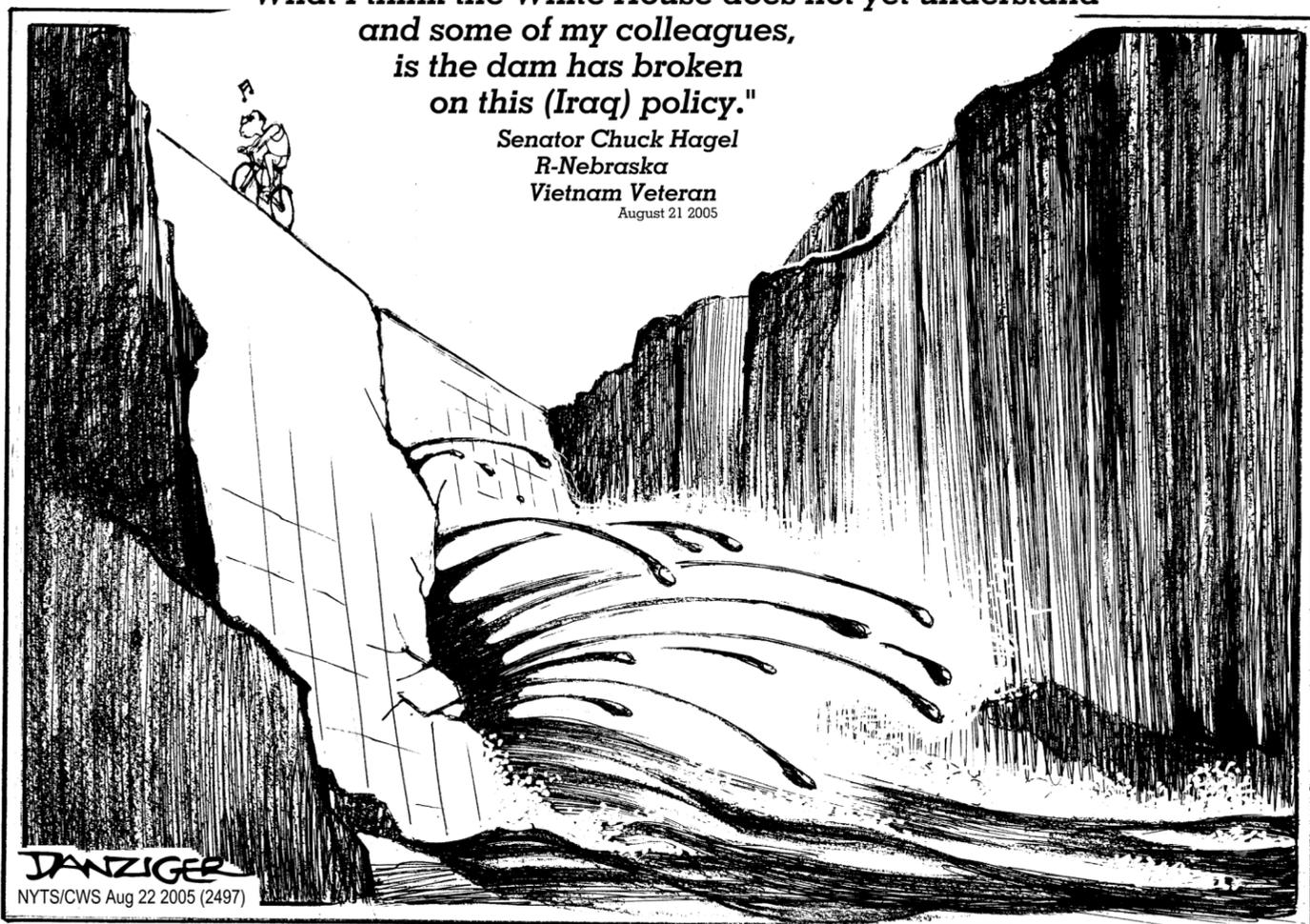
Once the VA has what they consider to be sufficient evidence (after the exam), they must notify the veteran of the proposed action. The veteran must then be given at least sixty days to submit additional evidence. If he or she doesn’t, the VA will then cut the benefits. More importantly, after the notice, the veteran has thirty days to request a “predetermination hearing.” After the hearing, the VA can’t cut the benefits until they have considered the evidence presented at the hearing or “developed as a result of the hearing” and have issued a “final determination concerning the proposed action.” At that point the veteran has another sixty days to present more evidence.



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 CAMBLUE@VVAW.ORG.

"What I think the White House does not yet understand and some of my colleagues, is the dam has broken on this (Iraq) policy."

Senator Chuck Hagel
R-Nebraska
Vietnam Veteran
August 21 2005



DANZIGER
NYTS/CWS Aug 22 2005 (2497)

Memorial Day in Chicago

P. STEWALL

We had a beautiful sunny day in Chicago for the annual ceremony where the Vietnam Veterans Memorial used to be. It seems that after it was moved for construction several years ago, it was misplaced and hasn't been found since. One has to wonder if Mayor Daley loses valuables like this often. Have you lost your bankbook or your wedding ring lately, Dick? But this article will address another incompetent politician and the way he "supports our troops."

The day's event began with local songwriter Anna Stange singing some old favorites like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," "If I Had a Hammer," and "This Land is Your Land," mixing in some original work, such as "There Ain't No War Unless There's Greed."

VVAW national coordinator Barry Romo welcomed the assembled veterans, families, friends, passersby, and media to the 35th annual Memorial Day ceremony, then he lambasted the Bush administration. Talking about the increasing co-pays and decreasing benefits for veterans, he said they "refuse to treat veterans decently. The only time they care about us is when they put wreaths on our graves."

David Curry spoke next, about the nineteen-page report he had just completed, "From Vietnam to Iraq: Ignoring the Veteran Health Care Crisis." The VA was already in crisis before starting a new war. The report illustrates that as of May 2005, over twelve thousand troops have been

wounded, not to mention the fact that practically everyone serving in Iraq is exposed to depleted uranium. Gulf War Syndrome was a mere headache to the VA; this is a tumor the size of Toledo. And George Bush's VA is increasing co-payments and instituting annual fees to help pay for his illegal invasion and occupation.

A Marine Corpsman and member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Charles Anderson, said this war is different. It was not a last resort; it is a war of conquest. And now we have veterans coming home not only physically scarred, but living with the demons of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many of those who do make it home can't find jobs and wind up homeless on the streets.

Paul and Pat Vogel of Military Families Speak Out talked about visiting their son in Iraq, and about how Donald Rumsfeld used the disgusting term "fungible" to describe our troops. Paul brought up the counter-recruiting scholarship they've organized: the Ploughshares Scholarship. Pat thanked the VVAW for everything they've done over the years and for being good and faithful friends of IVAW. She spoke eloquently about "patriots" and their empty flag-waving, the rhetoric they use to inoculate themselves, and their cheering for our armed forces as if they were a sports team. *That* is truly obscene. She longs for a day when soldiers' sense of duty is reciprocated.

Ray Parrish, VVAW's mili-



Charlie Anderson of IVAW on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005

tary counselor, spoke about standing on the corner in front of the VA hospital with friends every Friday and chanting, "Health care, not warfare." He's also been actively involved in counter-recruiting at local high schools and events like the Blues Fest and the Air and Water Show.

Teacher and Code Pink representative Ronnie Areola came up to the lectern with her daughter and spoke about the unique position women have in terms of war. They are left behind to fill the gaps when fathers go off to war, left to support their families. As military combatants, women are asked to sacrifice their lives, but are denied reproductive rights. Not only are they targets on the battlefield, but

they're also targets for rape. We need to prosecute rape as a war crime and a crime against humanity. In the end, women are left to start over after family members die.

Jackson Potter, a high-school teacher in a low-income, minority community, thought becoming a teacher would end his days of being called down to the principal's office, but he invited Barry Romo to his classroom to speak to his students and was accused of furthering his political agenda. His answer was "Damned straight!" He went on to say that the message these kids get is that the most neglected children's lives aren't worth anything unless they make an unusual sacrifice to their county: their lives. Some of his students are harassed daily to enlist. One of his students, senior Latoyia Kimbrough, spoke about being interested in the military because her father was in the Navy. But she refuses to join while Bush is in office; college is first on her agenda.

Anna Stange closed the event by singing "Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream" and "Amazing Grace" as those gathered placed flowers where the memorial used to be, in remembrance of veterans—those fallen, homeless, and hospitalized by the Bush cabal.

There was a moment of silence before the crowd dispersed.



P. STEWALL IS A MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO CHAPTER OF VVAW.



Dave Curry on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005

Chicago Public Schools Sell Out

JACKSON POTTER

This educational system of ours is a twisted mess. A teacher at Englewood High School once told me, “The farther away you get from kids, the greater the rewards.” He was speaking about area instructional officers, administrators and union officials, but could just as easily have been talking about the Chicago Board of Education’s 2010 strategy. As an educator, it has become increasingly obvious to me that the board’s attempt to shutter long-standing schools (under a myriad of excuses) and replace them with nonunion substitutes is against the best interests of students.

Englewood is a good example of all this. Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan labeled us “a culture of failure,” but did he provide any comprehensive assessments of where we failed? No, he presented test data and graduation-rate figures. Did people at the board offer a scientific approach to repairing our atrocious dropout percentage? No, their answer was to shut us down and ship our incoming freshman into other probation schools. So now already-discouraged students of color in schools like mine, who are getting labeled as failures by the very adults who have failed them, are sent into other chaotic environments. Where they will

miraculously succeed?

Here’s where the feds come in to make this picture prettier. We’ve got a No Child Left Behind law that requires schools to report the names and contact information of all our students to the military, starting junior year. We have a systemwide dropout rate of 50% for African-American youth and Mayor Daley wants a naval academy at Senn, and there are proposals to house an Air Force academy at Englewood.

What’s really going on? Just like with public housing, Social Security, pensions, or veterans’ health care, we have a nationwide effort to dismantle the welfare state. It’s not a great leap from making poor children homeless or semi-transient to depriving them of an education—after all, housing, health care, and education aren’t explicitly mentioned in the Constitution as rights of man. All fantasies about a meritocracy aside, if you are a poor and marginalized person, the mainstream mantra is that you aren’t owed anything. But there is salvation outside of starvation: pull yourself up and join the military, pay for college, get a bed to sleep in... hopefully not a body bag.

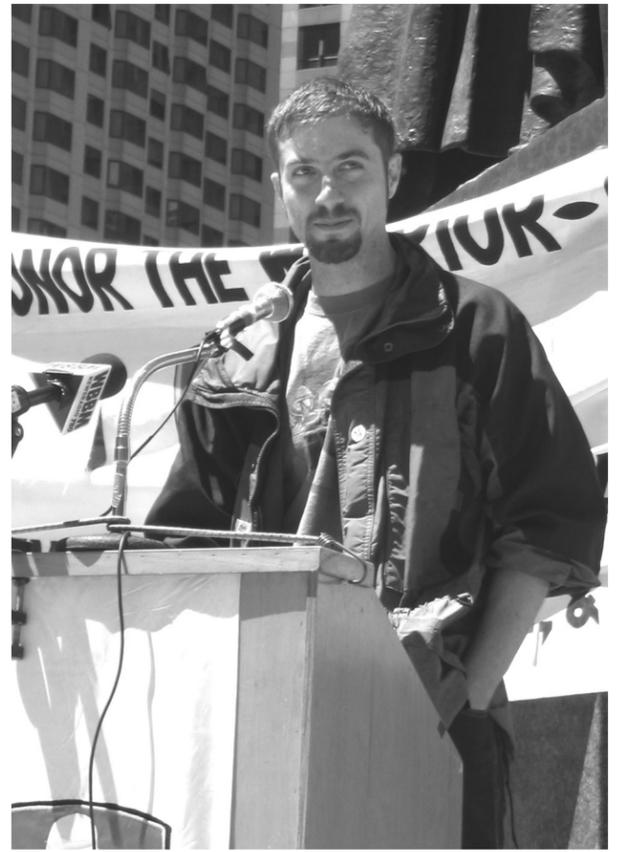
From the top officials in the land to the vassals like Michael Scott and Arne Duncan, we are

hearing the same message: that the lives of our most neglected children are only worth something if they make an unusual sacrifice on behalf of their nation—life itself. Even as Daley and company sell off our school system piecemeal to the likes of Microsoft, we would do well to remember that “philanthropists are those who give publicly and steal privately.” The corrupt are selling our kids to the highest bidder, and we all know the military is top dog on the public dole. I have one student, a senior, who is harassed on a daily basis by military recruiters to enlist. How come the government can’t send vigorous and dedicated college recruiters or unionized employers instead? Because they don’t care; they are servicing inhumane interests. The war on Iraq has been an unmitigated disaster—how can we challenge our youth to perse-

vere and pull themselves up out of poverty and despair, when we send them on ethically bankrupt suicide missions? The simple answer is: we can’t.



JACKSON POTTER IS A CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER AND LONG-TIME SUPPORTER OF VVAW.



Jackson Potter on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005



Pat Vogel of MFSO on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005



Latoyia Kimbrough on Memorial Day, Chicago, 2005

"Bring Them Home Now" Peace Rally

SUSAN RUGGLES

On Labor Day we held a successful "Bring Them Home Now" peace rally at Veterans Park in Milwaukee. The tour bus that stopped here was one of three that set out from Camp Casey on the last day of Cindy Sheehan's twenty-six-day vigil outside of Bush's ranch. The buses converged at a national antiwar rally in Washington, DC on September 24.

More than three hundred people in Milwaukee turned out to hear local speakers Roger Quindel, Milwaukee county supervisor; Tracey Sperko, executive director of Veterans and Military Families for Progress; John Zutz, representing Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW); and Fred Kessler, state representative. All of them spoke passionately about ending the war, bringing the troops home, and meeting the needs of people here at home.

John Zutz of VVAW got the crowd charged up with his "It Was a Lie" speech, which compared the Iraq War to Vietnam.

The veterans and their family members from the "Bring Them Home Now" bus tour spoke from firsthand experience about the devastating effects of the Iraq War. Their powerful and compelling stories brought the war home for everyone.

Speakers included Karen Meredith of Gold Star Families

for Peace, whose son, 1st Lt. Kenneth Ballard, was killed in action in Najaf, Iraq in May 2004; Al Zappala, Gold Star Families for Peace, whose son, Sgt. Sherwood Baker, was killed in Baghdad in April 2004—the first Pennsylvania National Guardsman to die in combat since World War II; Cody Camacho of Iraq Veterans Against the War, who served as an army specialist for four years, was deployed to Iraq from March 2003 to March 2004, and was honorably discharged in October 2004; Stacy Bannerman of Military Families Speak Out, whose husband in the Washington National Guard served an extended tour of duty in Iraq, and a stop-loss order forced him to serve longer than his twenty-year commitment; Sheri Glover of Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary and Military Families Speak Out, whose nineteen-year-old daughter has completed active-duty service in



(back) John Zutz, Annie Bailey, Dave Kettenhoffen, Pat Kettenhofen, Terry (front) Edie Zutz, Bob Riggie. Michael Winter, John Gladden

the U.S. Army and is eligible for callback, and whose son-in-law is currently serving in Iraq; and Tammara Rosenleaf of Military Families Speak Out, whose husband serves in the army and will be deploying to Iraq.

About a third of the crowd was made up of union people, including a contingent from AFT Local 212. The event was covered by a photographer from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, a reporter from the Mount Mary College newspaper, and by four television news programs. Channel 18 devoted a segment of their 9:00 p.m. news to the tour, including interviews with Sheri

Glover and with me. I would have preferred more time being spent talking to people on the bus, but the message got through.

Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans Against the War for setting up a peace camp in Veterans Park and for providing lunch for people on the tour.

For further information on the tour, including reports from the road, visit www.bringthemhomenowtour.org



SUSAN RUGGLES IS A MEMBER OF LABOR FOR PEACE IN MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN.

Bring Them Home Now Tour in Milwaukee

JOHN ZUTZ

The Bring Them Home Now Tour arrived in Milwaukee ahead of schedule, but the Milwaukee chapter of VVAW had lunch prepared and set up, and greeted the riders as they arrived.

After eating and giving interviews, the riders were the focus of a public rally. I assured the crowd of about three hundred that killing and dying in a hot, wet climate was amazingly similar to killing and dying in a hot, dry climate.

I explained that I am occasionally asked to speak to school classes, and asked the gathering to pretend they were in one of those classes. Then I roused the crowd by giving them a pop quiz on the similarities between the wars in Vietnam and Iraq—and the gathered people shouted the single answer, "It was a lie!" to each question.

The riders from Military



Families Speak Out, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Gold Star Families for Peace told the group why they needed to be on the bus.

After a three-hour stop, the bus traveled on to Chicago, with the ultimate goal of Washington, DC for the large September 24 rally.

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

VVAW Joins with VFP Members for Katrina Relief Work

WARD REILLY

When I left the Crawford, Texas demonstration, I didn't think I would see many of the people that were there again until September 24 in Washington, but I was wrong.

Bill Perry of VVAW was one of a handful of vets that escorted Cindy Sheehan to Crawford, on the "White Rose," the Impeachment Tour bus of Veterans for Peace (VFP) #116, a California chapter. The "White Rose" was scheduled to tour the south on the way to the demonstration in Washington, DC on September 24, but Hurricane Katrina changed their plans.

I live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and while we were hit fairly hard by Katrina, we got off easy compared to the areas of my state more to the south. At the same time that the Camp Casey demonstration was coming to an end in Crawford, Katrina hit and completely destroyed New Orleans



Volunteers at the distribution center for Katrina relief goods

still happening, VFP#116 teamed up with myself and hundreds of volunteers from all over the country in an unbelievable grassroots

relief goods.

VFP members Gordon Soderberg, Pat Tate, and Dennis Kyne (and a few others that I regretfully can't remember) have done an astonishing job of organizing a pipeline of communications and supplies. They have been treated with hostility and suspicion from FEMA and even the Red Cross, who sit around and do almost nothing, while our team of veterans and helpers do a remarkable job in getting real aid to real people in need.

Michael Moore even got involved and helped us raise much-needed money, money that red tape has denied us access to. Everything has been done "out of pocket," which is nothing new to this bunch of heroes.

Cindy Sheehan also altered her tour to lend support on September 14, and her presence alone was a real morale helper, as it had been in the upper 90s every day since Katrina struck, and the

work was hard. Woody Powell, the former executive director of VFP, also came down and pitched in for five days.

When this effort is all said and done, a proper thank-you will be forthcoming, but I just wanted to let you know that VVAW and VFP have gone above and beyond to help our wounded state, and we owe the volunteers much gratitude.

It will be months, if not years, before New Orleans recovers, but we will be back! Make Mardi Gras, not war!



Because 40% of Louisiana's National Guard troops and 75% of their equipment were in Iraq, there was no first response made by our National Guard.

with floodwaters when the levees failed in several places.

Imagine a city of about one million people losing every job and every business overnight, and only then can you begin to picture what has happened down here. I was lucky to be without power for only five days, and I was soon back online; only one tree came down in my backyard, missing my house by several feet. But New Orleans was wiped out completely.

Camp Casey had been well-supplied, and the VFP team decided to head to south Louisiana to help, bringing all the leftover supplies from the Crawford action with them. The "White Rose" had a satellite dish, and the VFP team headed for Covington, Louisiana, directly across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans, and established the first communications in the area.

Over the course of the next two weeks, in a relief effort that is

relief effort, completely bypassing the inept government and the \$50 billion wasted on Homeland Security that did *nothing*.

Because 40% of Louisiana's National Guard troops and 75% of their equipment were in Iraq, there was no first response made by our National Guard, and our citizens were literally left to die, stranded on off-ramps and rooftops as the Bush administration did *nothing* during the critical first four or five days.

To date, we have had 250 volunteers show up, distributing the more than 3,000 packages that have been mailed to me in Baton Rouge from every state in the union, getting food, clothing and untold quantities of dry goods directly to victims all over southeast Louisiana and southwest Mississippi. Tractor-trailers filled with goods from Chicago, California, New York, and elsewhere also brought enormous quantities of



Billy Kelly with Rev. Powell in Algiers, New Orleans

Building a Local IVAW Chapter

KELLY DOUGHERTY

A few months into my yearlong tour in Iraq, I wrote in my journal about how I saw my real commitment to my country not in the military contract I had signed, but in speaking out and becoming more politically involved. By honoring my military duty, I seemed to be going against my moral duty. When I joined the military, I didn't expect to be in Iraq fighting an illegal war of aggression, yet I felt unable to resist it. I saw the apathy and ignorance of so many Americans during the lead-up to the war, but I felt powerless to do anything about it. When I returned from Iraq, I wanted to become involved in the antiwar movement, but didn't know how. What changed everything for me was the Veterans for Peace (VFP) convention in Boston in July 2004, where I met other Iraq vets who were opposed to the war and who were starting a group called Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). It was exciting and reassuring to see that there were other Iraq vets who felt the same way about the war; now there would be an organized voice of opposition from those of us who had witnessed the war firsthand.

After the VFP convention, I felt energized and excited; I wanted to focus all of my energy on stopping the war. But after a few days back home, I started to lose the energy I had felt in Boston, where I had been surrounded by other like-minded people and everyone had been so hopeful and encouraging. I felt isolated and unsure of what to do.

IVAW is a national organization, and we have members across the country. A year ago, concentrated groups of members were only on the coasts, and I didn't know how to reach out to local vets. I seemed to be the lone Colorado member of IVAW for several months. Gradually, I started meeting more people who wanted to join or had already joined online. A friend from my



unit joined, and then an active-duty soldier, who was fed up with the war and with the way that the supposed all-volunteer army was using threats to force soldiers to re-enlist. I met another soldier who was returning home after serving a year in Iraq. Our numbers started to grow.

Now, a little over a year after the founding of IVAW, we have formed a Colorado Springs chapter. There are still organizational issues to take care of, but I feel that we have enough motivated members to really make our presence in this community known. Several of our members are still on active duty at the local army base, Ft. Carson, and will be a great resource for speaking to other active-duty soldiers and for seeing firsthand what is happening inside the base. We are planning to go into high schools and talk to students about the reality of military service and the war in Iraq. We are thinking of ways to help the overwhelming number of vets in our community that aren't getting the medical care they need. The tasks seem daunting at times, but I think that with everyone doing what they can, our chapter

will grow in size and in strength. Colorado Springs has a reputation for being a very conservative community, which makes building an antiwar veterans' chapter difficult, but it also makes it all the more necessary. The people who are most affected by this war are those in the military and their families, so military communities have the most need for a strong antiwar movement.

A very useful way to reach out to veterans has been through a group called Vets for Vets (V4V), a national peer-support group for Iraq veterans. I started a very successful chapter in Colorado Springs. Vets for Vets is separate from IVAW and welcomes all Iraq vets, regardless of their political views. It is an opportunity for veterans to get together in a safe space and talk about their experiences in the war and upon returning home. V4V is not meant to be a recruiting tool for IVAW, but many veterans are members of both organizations. I believe that the experience of talking to other vets is comforting and empowering.

A big obstacle to building a local IVAW chapter has been people's hesitance to become involved in such a controversial group. People who are on active duty are worried that their careers will be jeopardized or that the people they work with will turn against them. Even for those who are out of the military, there is strong pressure not to criticize the government or its policies. People

I've talked to are opposed to the war and to how veterans are being treated, but feel they don't have the right or the ability to speak against these wrongs. Another obstacle is the simple fact that people are busy, and many feel they just don't have the time to take on another responsibility.

I believe that as we Iraq veterans tell our stories and speak against the war, more veterans will follow. They will see others speaking truth to power and making a difference, and they will find the strength to do so themselves. Those on active duty can work behind the scenes. Active-duty soldiers may not be able to publicly speak against the administration, but they can tell their stories, and individual stories are the most powerful antiwar statements. We value every level of involvement and understand the everyday demands that people are faced with. Our local IVAW chapter is in its earliest stages of development, but I feel that the time is right and we will continue to grow, spreading our message of ending the war and taking care of our veterans. Iraq veterans are the ones who will lead the fight to bring our troops home, and people will listen.



KELLY DOUGHERTY IS A COFOUNDER OF IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. SHE SERVED EIGHT YEARS IN THE COLORADO ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AS A MEDIC AND MP, INCLUDING A YEAR IN IRAQ AND EIGHT MONTHS IN THE BALKANS.



Camp Casey in Washington, DC, September 24, 2005

Training a New Generation of Activists

JEN TAYABJI

On the fourth anniversary of 9/11, antiwar groups across the United States organized events to remember the 2001 tragedies and to bring much-needed attention to the tragedies committed in the name of 9/11, including racial profiling, the curtailment of civil liberties, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. At the University of Iowa, the UI Anti-War Coalition and the local chapter of the War Resisters League held Peacefest 2005 on Sunday, September 11.

In preparation for Peacefest, organizers invited members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War and the Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative (PRC) to lead a security workshop on Saturday, August 27. The PRC is a multi-issue, multi-tactical activist organization at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

VVAW has a long tradition of using security at its events to stop any trouble before it starts. Rocky Pomerance, the former chairman of the National Association of Police Chiefs, once said that VVAW was more disciplined

than the Florida State Police during the Republican National Convention of 1972. Organized security keeps people safe (both people attending the event and those opposing the event) and allows the event to run smoothly. Good security often means that only security volunteers know there has been a potential problem, because situations are dealt with quickly and without drawing attention away from the event. Most importantly, security is not there to cause violence or endanger anyone, but to do exactly the opposite.

At the security workshop in Iowa City (led by VVAW national coordinator Barry Romo), we started by going over the role of security volunteers, explaining how volunteers work in teams of three, called "affinity groups." We also discussed what to look for to prevent possible conflicts,



because just being observant can deter agitators. Another important tactic we practiced was how to talk to people who are upset and calm them down without causing a scene or provoking them. About fifteen people were in attendance for the all-afternoon workshop. During the final discussion, it seemed that those in attendance had learned a new approach to handling conflict at their events.

Peacefest 2005 was a success. The all-day event featured a myriad of speakers, including veterans, who emphasized that

many veterans do not support the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to speakers, there were politically-influenced musical performances and many local and regional organizations out showing their solidarity with the mission of the event.



JEN TAYABJI IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ILLINOIS DISCIPLES FOUNDATION.

"SOULstice Experience" Demonstration in New Orleans

WARD REILLY

On June 20, 2005, New Orleans hosted another in a series of antiwar demonstrations. The theme for this event was the "SOULstice Experience," referring to the summer solstice, and bringing home the fact that for those involved in war, *every day* is the longest day of the year.

A heavy rainstorm cleared just in time for the participants to gather at Louis Armstrong Park on Rampart Street, and the protesters marched through the historic French Quarter of New Orleans. VVAW member Bill Perry and his wife Terri flew all the way from Philly to join our humble gathering, which was led by Iraq Veterans Against the War members Michael Cuzzort (New Orleans) and Charlie Anderson (South Carolina) carrying the IVAW banner.

Other VVAW members in

attendance were Bob Smith, Pat Dooley and myself, and the keynote speaker was Cindy Sheehan, who flew in directly from the Conyers Hearings that she had attended in Washington, DC. Cindy had the whole crowd in tears as she read a poem written by her daughter, Carly, concerning the death of her brother Casey, who was killed in action in Iraq on April 4, 2004.

The Blue Nile club on Frenchman Street generously donated their building to use for speakers and bands, and Brian Stoltz of the famous New Orleans Funky Meters was one of several musicians to play for us between speakers.

Charlie Anderson, Pat Doolley, Bob Smith, Marty Rowland, and Megan Finn also spoke out against the wars in the Middle East, and in spite of the intense

Louisiana heat, a good time was had by all, and South Louisiana continued its strong antiwar effort.

The demonstration was sponsored by GSFP, IVAW, VVAW, VFP, CAWI of Baton Rouge, C3 of New Orleans, and the Louisiana Activist Network.



WARD REILLY IS THE SOUTHEAST NATIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW. HE WAS A VOLUNTEER INFANTRYMAN SERVING IN THE FAMED 1ST & 16TH (RANGERS) OF THE FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION FROM 1971-1974, SPENDING A THOUSAND STRAIGHT DAYS IN GERMANY WITH THE BIG RED ONE. HE JOINED VVAW ORIGINALLY IN 1972, AND RE-UPPED IN 2001.



Dennis Kyne, Ward Reilly, and Michael Cuzzort

Iraq Is Not Vietnam, but...

W. D. EHRHART

In August 1964, President Lyndon Johnson dramatically announced that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had attacked U.S. destroyers without provocation in international waters. In response, Congress passed a resolution giving Johnson authority to wage war in Vietnam by executive fiat. We learned only years later that the president knowingly lied about what had happened in the Gulf of Tonkin and why. In the meantime, the American people were told repeatedly that the United States would stay the course in Vietnam, that victory was slowly but surely being achieved, that we would prevail. Long after the war ended in American defeat and with 58,000 American dead, we learned that as early as March 1965, when there were still fewer than 300 American soldiers dead in Vietnam, Johnson was telling Senator Mike Mansfield that we could not win the war in Vietnam. Only in 1995 did former defense secretary Robert McNamara finally admit that "we were wrong, terribly wrong" in Vietnam, though we now know he had reservations about the wisdom of the war as early as 1966, the year I enlisted in the Marine Corps believing my government would neither lie to me nor ask for my life if it was not absolutely necessary.

In Vietnam, however, I found a military dictatorship rife with corruption, venality and repression, and devoid of popular support. I found the forced removal of thousands of people from their ancestral homelands to poverty-stricken, misery-laden shantytowns. I witnessed and participated in the reckless and sometimes deliberate destruction of men, women, children, crops, livestock, homes, and whole villages. I saw the terrible consequences of sending tens of thousands of young Americans—armed to the teeth, scared to death, and trusting no one but each other—into the midst of an alien world we had no chance of understanding or winning over. I found that the people we were supposedly defending hated us because we burned their fields and destroyed their forests, and called them gooks, chinks, slopes and zipperheads, turning their sons into shoeshine boys and their daughters into whores. What any of this had to do with preserving freedom, ours or that

of the Vietnamese, was exactly nothing.

A war begun under false pretenses by a government that insists it is fighting for freedom, slowly but surely winning, and determined to stay the course no matter what: does that sound familiar?

I'm not a believer in historical analogies. Iraq is not Vietnam, no matter how many similarities

Secretary of State Colin Powell told the whole world we had the evidence. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claimed he knew where those weapons of mass destruction were. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said Saddam could have a nuclear bomb within a year. Vice President Dick Cheney insisted there was overwhelming evidence of close ties between Iraq and al-Qaeda.

contempt for what is different, the fear masquerading as bravado have changed at all.

And with each death of a comrade, the anger grows, the bitterness, the desire to strike back at somebody, anybody. So far, over 1,500 Americans have died in Iraq, and there is no end in sight. Meanwhile, the newly elected Iraqi parliament is off to a rocky start, and Osama bin Laden, whom George W. Bush vowed to bring in "dead or alive," is still out there somewhere, planning God only knows what next.

I hope I'm wrong about all this. I hope we'll be able to look back thirty years from now and feel that this war was worth it after all, that the sacrifices of the dead and the maimed and the broken-in-spirit will not have been made for the wrong reasons and the wrong people. But I'm not betting on it.



W. D. EHRHART EARNED THE PURPLE HEART MEDAL, A NAVY COMBAT ACTION RIBBON, AND TWO PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATIONS IN VIETNAM. HE TEACHES AT THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL IN SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA.

Armed, frightened youngsters don't win hearts and minds any more effectively in 2005 than they did in 1965.

we might identify. But I should think my fellow citizens would have learned enough from the Vietnam War to be more skeptical of the present course of events than many of them seem to be.

Consider that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Saudi Arabians. None of them was Iraqi. But the United States remains a staunch ally of Saudi Arabia while invading Iraq. We had to invade Iraq because Saddam Hussein posed an imminent threat to us.

Now thousands of young Americans once again find themselves armed to the teeth, scared to death, and trusting no one but each other in the midst of an alien world they do not understand and aren't likely to win over, because armed, frightened youngsters don't win hearts and minds any more effectively in 2005 than they did in 1965. They've replaced gook, slope and dink with raghead, towelhead and sand nigger, but I doubt that the swagger, the

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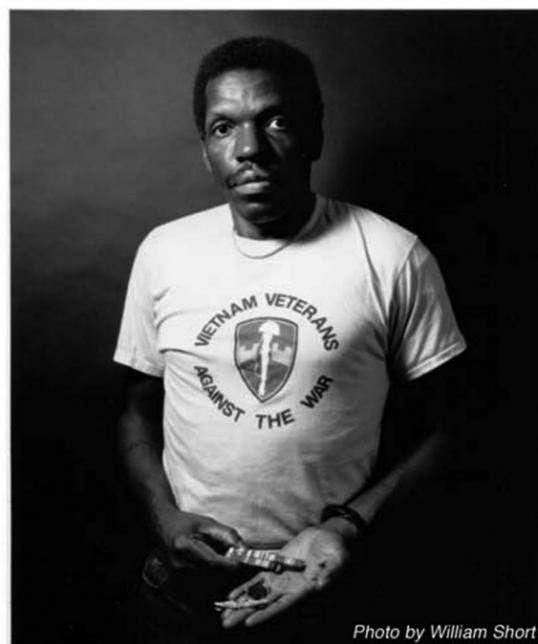


Photo by William Short

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.

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HORACE COLEMAN

“Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain on stage!”
—paraphrase from *The Wizard of Oz*

The cause of Gulf War I was obvious: control of and access to oil. Hussein invaded Kuwait, claiming Kuwait was slant-drilling Iraqi oil fields. And he claimed that Kuwait belonged to Iraq.

From the *CIA World Factbook 2005*:

Formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq was occupied by Britain during the course of World War I; in 1920, it was declared a League of Nations mandate under UK administration. In stages over the next dozen years, Iraq attained its independence as a kingdom in 1932. A “republic” was proclaimed in 1958, but in actuality a series of military strongmen ruled the country, the latest was SADDAM Husayn. Territorial disputes with Iran led to an inconclusive and costly eight-year war (1980-88). In August 1990, Iraq seized Kuwait, but was expelled by US-led, UN coalition forces during the Gulf War of January–February 1991. Following Kuwait’s liberation, the UN Security Council (UNSC) required Iraq to scrap all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and to allow

UN verification inspections. Continued Iraqi noncompliance with UNSC resolutions over a period of 12 years resulted in the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the ouster of the SADDAM Husayn regime. Coalition forces remain in Iraq, helping to restore degraded infrastructure and facilitating the establishment of a freely elected government, while simultaneously dealing with a robust insurgency.

That’s their story and they’re stickin’ to it.

Gulf War I was a wham-bam-thank-you-ma’am romp, although Patriot missiles didn’t work too well, rumblings were raised about depleted uranium, and we exposed ourselves to Hussein’s stockpile of ??? by blowing it up. No one knows exactly what caused Gulf War Syndrome; maybe it was the experimental vaccines our troops were required to take. But we felt good and bought SUVs.

As head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell advised against toppling Hussein—that would upset the neighborhood. Before Gulf War II, Secretary of State Powell presented the weak case for attacking Iraq and removing Hussein.

War-loving neocolonialists (who somehow missed out on military service) wanted to “democratize” the Middle East. Dubya used

post-9/11 fear and bloodlust to divert attention from his lackluster presidency and start a war that would eclipse Daddy’s.

On September 9, 2005, Colin Powell said on ABC’s *20/20* that there was no link between Saddam Hussein and the 9/11 terrorist attack. “I have never seen a connection. ... I can’t think otherwise, because I’d never seen evidence to suggest there was one.”

Secretary of State Powell told the UN that Hussein had WMDs and posed an imminent threat. Barbara Walters asked whether that dog-and-pony show would tarnish his reputation. “Of course it will,” Powell said. “It’s a blot. I’m the one who presented it on behalf of the United States to the world, and [it] will always be a part of my record. It was painful. It’s painful now.”

What does a career soldier know about honor, realpolitik, and necessity, though? Powell’s fatal flaw (to right-wing Republicans) is thinking that reality is more important than ideology.

People used to say that Democrats start wars and raise taxes. Republicans start useless wars and don’t fund them, expand bureaucracy, and spend more than Democrats while slashing or eliminating useful programs. But wait, there’s more! They cut taxes and redistribute wealth... from those who have less to those who never can get enough. They ignore supposedly outdated con-

cepts like “the common good” and “the long term.”

Gulf War II has diverted us from Afghanistan, leaving warlords in place and increasing opium’s importance as a cash crop there. Our military’s stretched so thin that National Guard troops had to be redeployed from overseas after Hurricane Katrina struck. Troops are so poorly trained that the interrogation and detention of actual and suspected “illegal combatants” is torturing our law, principles, language, and detainees.

Bloated Homeland Security and the dollars we’ve wasted have made us less able to deal with natural disasters. We probably wouldn’t do any better at dealing with a “terrorist” attack. No-bid contracts will be awarded to the same cronies. The same contractors will race to the trough, with the same lack of supervision, overruns, and inept results.

Does anyone in power know how to play this game? Patriotism is now more attitude than action. People “support our troops” by not becoming them, putting stickers on their vehicles, and going shopping. They get more upset over base closings (local jobs lost) than VA hospital closings (veterans’ bodies and minds being tended to). Batter up!



HORACE COLEMAN IS A VETERAN, POET AND WRITER. HE IS ALSO A VVAW CONTACT IN CALIFORNIA.



Washington, DC, September 24

VVAW Marches in DC

continued from page 1

as Dave Cline, Dennis Kyne of VFP, and a couple of others kept our cadence tight and loud, as only veterans can do.

In a strange way, one of the highlights of the weekend was the pro-war counter-rally organized by the Bush-Cheney lovers; even with their strong money and advertising campaign, a pathetic 400 people showed up to voice their approval of the administration, even though Uncurious George himself came out of his hiding place to say a few words. How embarrassed he must have been to see only a few hundred supporters after our quarter-million rallied against him. What majority there might have been at the start of the war on March 19, 2003 has dwindled to a very small minority. The pro-war folks were quoted in the *Washington Post* as still claiming to represent "the majority." They obviously live in the same dream world as the criminals in the White House do.

On Monday, 378 protesters were arrested for sitting in front of the White House, a house that we own. Among them were a VVAW member; IVAW members Michael Cuzzort of New Orleans and

Nick Przybyla, a documentary filmmaker from Los Angeles; and Gold Star Mom Cindy Sheehan of California.

On Friday night, George Galloway spoke loudly and clearly against both the British and U.S. governments. He is the British member of parliament who ripped our Congress last month by turning a Congressional witch-hunt hearing into a trial against his accusers by pointing out that he had met with Saddam Hussein exactly the same number of times that Donald Rumsfeld had, except that his role had been peaceful and political, while Rumsfeld's visit was to deliver millions of dollars worth of weaponry.

Galloway mentioned the Peace Train, organized by myself and Meredyth and Avery Friend, mother and daughter activists from south Louisiana. It was an Amtrak

train originally scheduled to leave from New Orleans to get southern activists to Washington, but after Katrina, it had to depart from Meridian, Mississippi instead.

The Peace Train traversed the south and east coasts, picking up activists along the way, and it was completely full when we arrived in DC. As we pulled into Charlottesville, Virginia, we were surprised to find a huge rally in our honor.

All in all, it was a great weekend for the antiwar movement.



Dave Kettenhofen at Camp Casey in Washington, DC

WARD REILLY IS THE SOUTHEAST NATIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW. HE WAS A VOLUNTEER INFANTRYMAN SERVING IN THE FAMED 1ST & 16TH (RANGERS) OF THE FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION FROM 1971-1974, SPENDING A THOUSAND STRAIGHT DAYS IN GERMANY WITH THE BIG RED ONE. HE JOINED VVAW ORIGINALLY IN 1972, AND RE-UPPED IN 2001.



Washington, DC, September 24

Thoughts from the Ditch

TONY DELCAVO

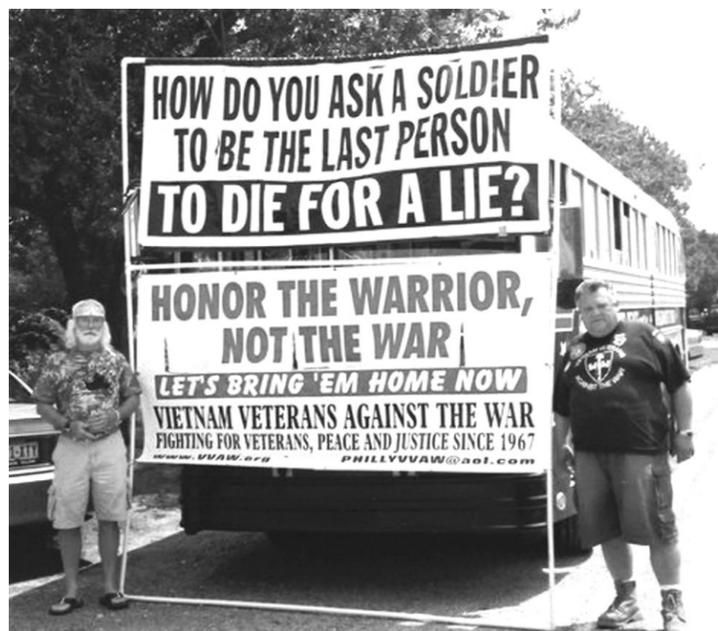
Two narrow farm roads meet on the flat Texas ranchlands and leave a triangle of grass at the intersection. You must stay off the grass, however. It is on private property. You have to stay opposite, in one of the weed-infested ditches that is public right-of-way. A hundred and fifty campers are squeezed into the ditches along one of the narrow roads, having made sure that the wheels of their vehicles are not touching the pavement.

Standing motionless, you sweat more in thirty minutes than you would running three miles in Colorado. Don't step in the tall grass. A local rancher has warned you about the rattlesnakes that are found there routinely. Don't put your fingers under the tarp when you lift it. The scorpions like the shade under there as much as you would. You can't see the bugs, but are constantly aware of their presence as you itch all over. Everyone you see is sunburned in spite of the SPF-30 they applied that morning.

Across one leg of the triangle, the CNN truck sits in its own ditch, waiting for history to happen. Another leg is crowded with booths occupied by groups with names like Veterans and Military Families Against the War, Veterans for Peace, Crawford Peace House, and Iraq Veterans Against the War. The last leg is a quarter-mile-long ditch that is marked with 1,800 crosses, 1,800 roses, 1,800 names, the grief of 1,800 families. You hear the muffled weeping of a newfound friend who has learned that her Army penpal has died in Iraq, even

as she keeps trying in her own way to stop the insanity. As you walk along reading the names, they somehow get too blurred to read, and now all you see is the names of your comrades in Vietnam who never came back.

In the back of your mind you wonder if one of the pickup trucks speeding by might be occupied by some moron who will want to desecrate this memorial to our brave soldiers who willingly fought in another unjust, unwinnable war at the behest of a corrupt government. You want nothing more than ten minutes alone with any one of the chickenhawks who sent naive, brave, and patriotic men and women to fight wars of conquest in foreign jungles and deserts, while they hid behind



Billy Kelly and Bill Perry, who accompanied Cindy Sheehan with several other vets on the first day to Bush's ranch

in her own quiet manner. She is Cindy Sheehan, whose son, Casey, was killed in Iraq, having thought

dreams. She reads a poem written by Casey's grieving sister, and now you are the one who can't hold the tears back.

At the end of the day Cindy remembers to check her schedule to see if she can fulfill your dream to have her visit Denver. Her calendar is clear on October 15, and she says she will be there. You go away with the hope that everyone in Colorado will connect with her, just like the residents of Camp Casey, who came from virtually every state and places like Belgium, Australia, and Korea. Just nine months ago it seemed that there was no hope that our country would come to its senses. Now you know that one woman has given the world hope, and you can't help but love her for it.



TONY DELCAVO IS AN AIR FORCE VIETNAM VET FROM COLORADO. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.

As you walk along reading the names, they somehow get too blurred to read, and now all you see is the names of your comrades in Vietnam who never came back.

their daddies' connections. They are literally above it all as they fly overhead in their air-conditioned helicopter, while you stand there with the tears and sweat running together on your cheeks. Another Vietnam vet walks by and silently offers a hug.

But there is no place on earth you would rather be on this day.

On this day a tall, soft-spoken, unassuming woman walks along the ditch, greeting everyone

it was his duty to answer the call of his country. She sits on the ground, holds your hand, and falls asleep almost instantly, even though she is doing a live interview on CNN in fifteen minutes. Later she leads a candlelight vigil while holding the hand of an Iraq veteran, imagining it is Casey's hand. When reality floods back in, she cannot hold back the tears, knowing she will never again hold Casey's hand, hear his voice, or listen to his



First day in Crawford, Texas

Scholarship Fund Honors Sgt. Shawna Morrison

PAMELA CREWS

On September 5, 2004, Sgt. Shawna Morrison, my friend and co-worker, was killed outside Baghdad when her barracks was attacked with mortar rounds. She was U.S. casualty number 983. She served with the National Guard's 1544th Transportation Company, based in Paris, Illinois. At the time of their return this February, the 1544th alone had suffered 50% of all the casualties of Illinois National Guard units. Seventy of them were wounded.

I remember being incredulous when I heard Shawna was in the army. She had neither the disposition nor the appearance that I associated with a soldier. She was unbelievably delicate and would cry over things that seemed inconsequential in the grand scheme of things—but she was just as unbelievably strong. She was brave enough to endear herself to a restaurant full of liberals, defending her choice to be in the military at all costs, even when the military was not living up to its part of the bargain, even when some of us attacked her mercilessly for what we thought was misdirected energy and conviction.

She often said that we were all lucky there were people like her who were willing to be soldiers. When she was told of her unit's activation, she faced it with characteristic honesty. Though she was afraid of being killed in action, she told me that it would be an honor to die while protecting our freedoms. It was not until she had been in Iraq—which she would come to call “the litterbox”—that it seemed her conviction might be waning, but this wearing down of spirit only seemed to be the result of living at the most basic level of survival. When your world becomes kill-or-be-killed, it is difficult to hang onto altruism.

When we found out about Shawna's death, those of us who worked with her at Radio Maria almost immediately decided we needed to do something in her name that would resonate with our grief and with our disgust over her death. We established the Shawna Morrison Education Fund in the hope of offering an alternative to a student who was looking at the military as an option for funding his or her secondary

education. Lately I have often been asked whether this goal might offend Shawna herself. The truth is that it might.

Shawna was proud of her service, and the service that she willingly signed up for should not be denigrated. She was devoted to her unit and her mission. I didn't know her when she enlisted in the regular army as a junior in high school. I don't know if the recruiter's promise of a fully funded education was the main motivator for her enlisting. I have friends and family who are currently serving. Some of them signed up because the benefits looked great on paper; some of them joined up during the patriotic fervor that followed the attacks of 9/11. While I support those who have chosen that path and respect them for taking on a difficult job, I also believe that there should be no



so much that she had almost no free time; and she was sent out of the country to serve in what is basically the occupation of a foreign country—something I don't

We established the Shawna Morrison Education Fund in the hope of offering an alternative to a student who was looking at the military as an option for funding his or her secondary education.

place in a military currently involved in warfare for people who have been lured by the promises of education and career. Shawna was promised training so that she could eventually serve as an intelligence officer. She was promised money for an education that would also further that goal. What she got was training as a truck driver and satellite communications specialist, and encumbered tuition that kept her out of school at the time the 1544th was activated.

By the time I met her, Shawna was beyond frustrated with the military holding up her tuition money. She had already served in the first Gulf War and had willingly signed up for the Guard. She wasn't receiving her tuition money; she was working

believe is the National Guard's purpose. Shortly before her death, a promised furlough was revoked, even after the 1544th had already suffered more mortar attacks than anyone believed they would. Shawna wasn't the only one who was sorely looking forward to that quick trip out of the war zone. I know she was not the only one to find that the military's promises are not always honored.

Those of us who created the fund believe that people who simply want an education or job training should not feel compelled into military service, especially during wartime. Even the principal of Shawna's high school, who advised many teenagers that the army was a good way to pay for college, has reconsidered that

position. High-school students especially need to understand that the recruiters who come to their classes with promises of safety and money don't have the power to honor those promises—never have, never will. And, while we need soldiers to serve, we also need to insure that our children are educated and informed before they sign a contract, especially one that will put them in harm's way.

To date, the Shawna Morrison Education Fund has raised roughly \$10,000, due in large part to the support of the Champaign-Urbana community. In addition to monetary donations, we are now seeking advisors. We would like to become a nonprofit organization and need an attorney's help. We would also like to hear from anyone who has experience creating and endowing scholarship funds.

If you're interested in donating to our fund in any way, please contact either Pamela Crews (pcrews@shout.net) or Leslie Bettridge (elf6485@hotmail.com), or send checks made out to the Shawna Morrison Education Fund in care of Radio Maria, 119 N. Walnut St., Champaign, IL 61820.



PAMELA CREWS AND LESLIE BETTRIDGE ARE CO-ORGANIZERS OF THE SHAWNA MORRISON EDUCATION FUND. THEY BOTH LIVE AND WORK IN CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, ILLINOIS.

Hope Rises from the Ashes of My Lai

MIKE BOEHM

My tour in Vietnam during the war was not traumatic for me, or so I thought at the time; I never saw a body or fired a gun. I was stationed first in Dau Tieng and then in Cu Chi, where I worked in an office in the 25th Division headquarters. My weapon was a telephone. I drifted through my eighteen months in Vietnam. Still clueless when I came home, I applied for a job with the Badger Ammunition Plant outside of Baraboo, Wisconsin.

It didn't take many more years, however, to catch on to what I had been party to in Vietnam. The rage that arose from that knowledge—that I had been duped to participate in evil—is something I struggle with to this day. From 1976 to 1978 I attended the Madison Area Technical College (MATC) on the GI Bill. The summer between those two years was when everything fell into place for me; I went to my mother's house, went up to the attic, and took my uniform, medals, and everything from my time in the military and tossed it. When in the fall of 1977 I returned to MATC, I went to the veterans' rep and told him I wouldn't accept the GI Bill money anymore, because it was blood money. But other than that small gesture, I felt there was nothing I could do or undo about my part in the Vietnam war. That all changed

in 1992 when I returned to Vietnam with eleven other veterans to build a small primary school in the south.

Going back to Vietnam showed me that despite my lack of combat during the war, I still had unresolved issues with the war. By the end of my two months there in 1992, I had undergone a life-changing experience which led to a lifelong commitment to doing humanitarian work in Vietnam.

The first project I became involved in was raising money for a loan fund in My Lai. These funds are based on the Grameen Bank concept, where small amounts of money are loaned to poor women. They establish businesses for themselves and pay back the loans, which are then given to another set of poor women. Since the establishment of that first loan fund in My Lai in January 1994, we have funded loan programs in sixteen villages and have provided almost three thousand loans for poor women. All but one village are in Quang Ngai province.

The story of Mrs. Pham Thi Huong illustrates the impact of these funds. Mrs. Huong lives in Truong Khanh. Her village suffered a massacre by a unit of the Americal Division in April 1969. Shortly after we funded the loan program in Truong Khanh, we visited a number of women who had

received loans. One of these women was Mrs. Huong, and as we talked with her in her cow pen, our project coordinator, Mr. Phan Van Do, asked her if she had been in the village during the massacre. I watched as she replied in Vietnamese and then burst into tears. She said yes, she had been there during the massacre, and her aunt and two of her children had been killed. The massacre in My Lai started and finished in four hours. The massacre at Truong Khanh took place over a period of two days, with the GIs returning again and again to hide the evidence. It took days before the villagers felt safe enough to come out of hiding and unearth the bodies to inter them properly. Bodies rot quickly in tropical heat, and the last thing Mrs. Huong said before she burst into tears was, "I cannot forget the smell of the decomposing bodies of my children." We spent more time with Mrs. Huong, and from what I could see, she had died that day. She was walking and talking, but dead inside.

I was wrong, though, because two years later, Do and I returned to Truong Khanh to check on the progress of the loan fund, and we met with Mrs. Huong again. She and Mrs. Du were on a motorcycle a mile outside the village, eagerly awaiting our arrival so they could take us around the village and

show us the improvements that had taken place over the previous two years. The change in Mrs. Huong was amazing—almost unbelievable. She was smiling, laughing, and talking, just vibrant with new life. Do asked her neighbors what had happened to transform her, and they said that once she had started raising calves and selling them, the crushing burden of poverty she had been living under finally lifted enough for her to begin to heal.

Our other projects include building a series of primary schools for My Lai (three so far); building two peace parks, one north of Hanoi and one in My Lai; facilitating projects for ethnic minorities; the Art Penpals project (an exchange of artwork between the children of My Lai and Madison); and the Sisters Meeting Sisters project, which will bring together the women of Vietnam and El Salvador to discuss the ways they have rebuilt their families, communities, and countries after war.

Think about how often My Lai has been evoked over the years—but what has been done to help the people there? The closed loop of recrimination in which most Americans have been caught over the years has left the people of My Lai out in the cold. I certainly carry my share of grief, and hatred for my government over what happened to the people in My Lai and elsewhere in Vietnam. But I also feel strongly that we cannot walk away from the people there, that our obligations to the people do not end with the ending of the war. So does VVAW. For years now, John Zutz, through the Blessing of the Bock fundraising event, has been a major contributor to our projects in My Lai.

For more information about these projects, visit www.mylaipeacepark.org.



VIETNAM VETERAN MIKE BOEHM HAS BEEN WORKING ON BEHALF OF THE MADISON QUAKERS TO ESTABLISH HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS IN MY LAI AND ELSEWHERE IN VIETNAM SINCE 1992. BOEHM HAS TRAVELED TO VIETNAM FOURTEEN TIMES SINCE THEN TO FACILITATE THESE PROJECTS. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.



Washington, DC, September 24, 2005

The Lexicon of War and Violence

CHARLEY TRUJILLO

War is the “good guys” against the “bad guys.” It is easy to identify the good guys; they are, of course, the ones on your side. I often hear statements made in video clips of U.S. military personnel in Iraq referring to the “bad guys,” as in “The bad guys are hiding in those buildings.” Objectivity from the media, politicians, and other purveyors of political culture should be a given. One would expect the information reported by them to be unbiased, going beyond the notion of good guys vs. bad guys, but unfortunately, such is not the case. After reading numerous magazine and newspaper articles, and after listening to a copious amount of political rhetoric, I have detected a selective and prejudiced use of terminology in the Iraq war. The objective use of vocabulary is now a rare occurrence, rather than the norm. Is that what we want, or what we should expect from the media and politicians?

Words can invoke strong emotional and psychological cues to help steer the populace into accepting the unacceptable morality of killing. For instance, when the bad guys are accused of possessing “weapons of mass destruction,” objectively it would be appropriate to read a newspaper headline like “U.S. Department of Defense Increases its Weapons of Mass Destruction.” Instead, the head-

line usually reads something like “Department of Defense Increases its Weapons Program.” This deletion of the word “destruction” seems to imply that the nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons possessed by the United States are not harmful or destructive, and that only the weapons possessed by the “bad guys” are destructive. This notion of “weapons of mass destruction” is so powerful that in the case of Iraq, their weapons are extremely destructive, even when none are present.

Logic would have it that any nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon is destructive to human life, the environment, and more importantly, to some property, no matter who possesses or uses it. By deleting the word “destruction,” it implies that weapons used by the United States have somehow hyperphysically metamorphosed into something constructive. Using this reasoning, it is now *constructive destruction*. We can thus have such logic as “We destroyed the village in order to save it,” or even the idea that there is such a thing as “friendly fire.” Words do not change the lethal outcomes of weapons, no matter the moral intentions of the “good guys.” Weapons do not have morals; they are thoroughly objective and destructive. Any type of killing is savage and brutal, regardless of

what type of weapon is employed or by whom.

The selective-use lexicon is also evident when it is the bad guys who use violence, while the good guys use force. Yet “force” in Iraq has brought about tens of thousands of dead and wounded—the majority of them civilians—with no end in sight. The salient belief behind this is that force is not violence because civilized people are not violent. A recent subheading of a headline from a major newspaper concerning American international relations with Europe over the Middle East read: “Analysis: Deep Strains Over Use of Force, Diplomacy.” It read “force” instead of “violence.” What is the difference, from a physical point of view? Conventional and mainstream rhetoric usually answers this in moral terms, not in the reality of the act and its physical consequences.

In my travels around the country, I have often heard people from myriad backgrounds shrug off the war by simply saying, “People get killed in a war, you know.” This biased use of words has a history in U.S. history and its conflicts. For example, when the indigenous people of the continent defeated the U.S. military on the battlefield, it was called a massacre; however, when the U.S. military won, it was a victory...and it

was usually glorious.

Ironically, although Iraq is often touted as part of the cradle of Western civilization, according to many politicians and the media, Iraqis are a barbaric people. For example, decapitations are savage acts when committed by the Iraqi resistance (which they certainly are), but when people are decapitated, blown apart, or literally vaporized by laser-guided missiles and other high-tech destructive weapons of defense, it’s not seen as savage at all. According to this thinking, technology brings about clean and surgical casualties. This is refined killing, brought about by surgical strikes, precision bombing, and Patriot missiles, as well as other civilized weapons.

To test if my assertions are valid or accurate, apply them to future newspaper or magazine articles you read, or to the political rhetoric you hear.



CHARLEY TRUJILLO IS THE AUTHOR OF SOLDADOS: CHICANOS IN VIET NAM AND THE CO-DIRECTOR/PRODUCER OF A P.O.V. DOCUMENTARY OF THE SAME NAME THAT WAS BROADCASTED NATIONALLY ON PBS. YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION ON CHARLEY AT WWW.CHUSMAHOUSE.COM.

Questions We Never Thought We'd Hear Again



More at Peace with the Past

PAUL WIENKE (REVIEWER)

Vietnam: Reflections

Billy Bang

(Justin Time, 2005)

I must start out by saying that I am not a musician, so don't expect this review to be a note-by-note musical analysis of this disc. However, my background does include nearly thirty years of recording jazz and producing shows, and I have a lifelong love of the music and the musicians. This CD is definitely one in the "love" column.

Vietnam: Reflections is Billy Bang's second release with fellow Vietnam veteran sidemen and their Vietnam experiences as a base for the musical ideas expressed. It is of a very different mood than the first CD in this series; *Vietnam: The Aftermath*, reviewed a few years ago in these pages by Lisa Boucher (herself a fine fiddler).

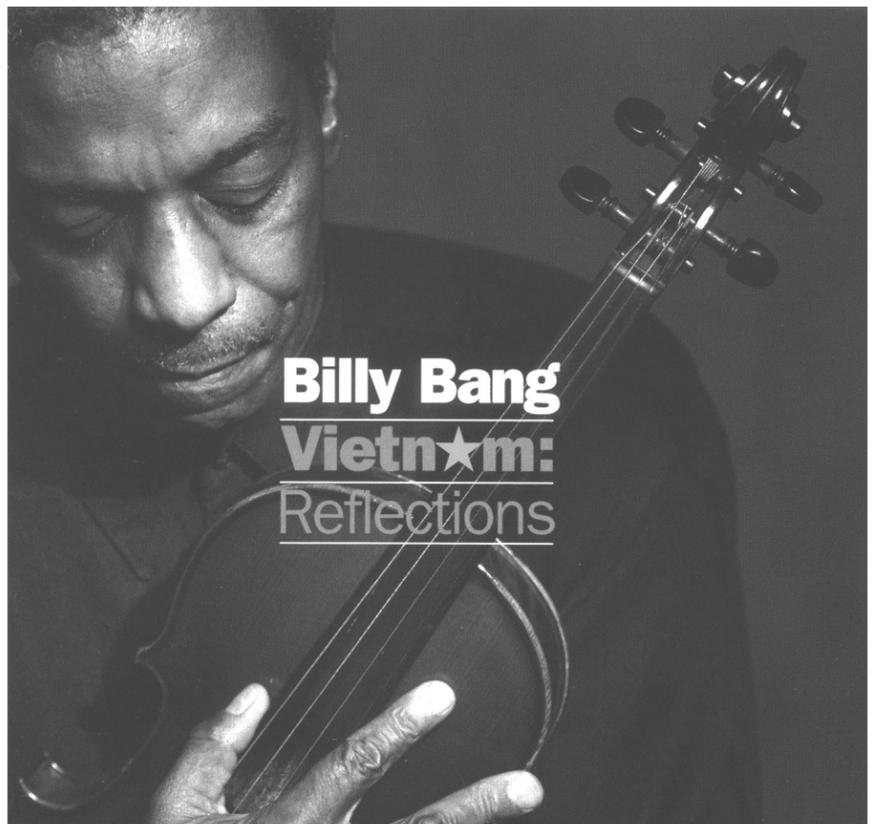
While *Aftermath* is a look back at the hell that was the Vietnam experience and the pain and passion of that war through the experiences of Mr. Bang (AKA Sgt. William Walker), this new recording is a different thing entirely.

The differences start with the cover art. *Aftermath* has Bang with an M-60 across his shoulders, looking young and tough with dog tags hanging around his neck, taken in-country. *Vietnam: Reflec-*

tions shows him caressing his violin in a more introspectively peaceful mood. On the back there is a picture of a peace sign hanging in a jungle scene. The music mirrors this; it too is much more introspective. Making the *Aftermath* CD helped Billy Bang to let go of some of the demons that had a hold of him since those days, whereas *Reflections* sounds much more at peace with the past. The healing process that these two releases provided is evident here. This is not to say that there is no edge to this music—anyone familiar with Bang's recordings knows he always has a truly amazing edge to his playing and writing.

Bang's catharsis in getting past the past so he can exist in the present (and maybe even the future) has, to a certain extent, been accomplished; he has plans for an orchestral work to complete the process. This CD is more about the cultural experience of Vietnam and less of a military "looking back." This different perspective is expressed in his compositions and selection of musicians: some fellow veterans and some Vietnamese-born Americans.

"Ru Con" is violin, *dan tranh* (Vietnamese dulcimer), and vocals on a traditional Vietnamese lullaby in a straight reading of the tune. "Ly Ngua O," a traditional folk



song about a wedding carriage drawn by a black horse, has vocals, drums, and dulcimer with Bang's violin floating over the top. "Doi Moi" starts with Bang and the rhythm section in a very sentimental mood in this mournful ballad, which is named after Vietnam's "open door" foreign policy of the 1980s. "Waltz of the Water Puppets" is named for an amazing art form originating in Vietnam. The song floats on a beautiful melody with wonderful solos by Henry Threadgill on flute followed by Bang and Hicks. "Trong Com" is Vietnamese for "rice drum" and is the last of the traditional folk songs featuring Bang on plucked violin, Nhan Thanh Ngo on dulcimer, Co Boi Nguyen on vocals, and (I believe) Ron Brown on percussion. The folk tunes work as a nice juxtaposition to Bang's original compositions. The participation of vocalist Co Boi Nguyen and Nhan Thanh Ngo on *dan tranh* show that there is more to reflect upon than just the war: the people and the culture in which they live.

The title tune, "Reflections," is a post-bop tune with an Asian flavor, especially at the violin's entrance and the coda, with great solos throughout. It sets the tone for this recording in its pure beauty and majesty; it can melt your heart to listen to the violinist's gut-wrenching sound and soulful melody. The tunes titled "Reconciliation 1" and "Reconciliation 2" are not simply alternate takes, but expressions of different emotions. "Reconciliation 1" starts with Butch Morris doing the con-

duction, which means he sets the form and picks who plays when, but it is up to the musicians to pick the notes they choose to play. Sounding very Asian with vocals, dulcimer, and drums, the building continues as the other instruments are added in a processional feeling. The instruments come and go in a very mysterious-sounding piece woven together by Butch Morris. "Reconciliation 2" starts out as a burning post-bop tune with a blues feel with just the rhythm section. Then Bang strides in with an Asian melody over the top, before settling back into the blues. There is no mystery in this reconciliation; it is fueled by strength and power, and the solos by Bang and Ted Daniel are much more self-assured that the reconciliation is being accomplished. We finally end up with one more taste of Asia at the coda, which is more dynamic and powerful, and more certain that the reconciliation is working.

My recommendation is to buy this CD, and buy many of Billy Bang's CDs. (Hell, also buy the other works of the veteran participants on this recording.) By all means, get out and hear them whenever you can. Support veteran musicians and artists in all forms, for their sacrifice is an ongoing event we should all understand.



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



Washington, DC, September 24, 2005

A Warrior's Voice

TIM BAGWELL (REVIEWER)

David M. Shoup: A Warrior against War

By Howard Jablon

(Rowman & Littlefield, 2005)

"When the war is over, you pick up your gear, walk down the hill and back into the world, where people smile, congratulate you, and secretly hope you won't be a burden on society now what you've done the dirty work they shun."

So wrote Iraq war veteran John Crawford of Tallahassee, Florida in a recent column in the *New York Times* (Sunday, August 14, 2005, p. 12).

Combat veterans of any war—but particularly we of the American war in Vietnam—know exactly the "dirty work" to which Crawford is referring: killing people who are politically inconvenient to one's government. From time immemorial, such dirty work has been the task of soldiers, whether careerists, mercenaries, or draftees. For those of us who have consciously turned our backs on war as legitimate foreign policy, Crawford's words resonate against older and even more resolute statements made by warriors against war.

David M. Shoup, a former commandant of the Marine Corps and a bearer of the Congressional Medal of Honor, is one that particularly comes to mind, as a new biography of him has been written

by Howard Jablon, a professor at Purdue University in Indiana. From the perspective of VVAW and other antiwar-veteran organizations, Shoup is best known for the following quotation, voiced in 1966 at Pierce College outside Los Angeles about a year after the antiwar movement arose on U.S. college campuses:

"I don't think," he told his audience then, "the whole of Southeast Asia, as related to the present and future safety and freedom of the people of this country, is worth the life or limb of a single American [and] I believe that if we had and would keep our dirty bloody dollar crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of

Shoup was not the only ex-general voicing concerns about the Vietnam War, but as Jablon points out so clearly, his battlefield credentials were stunningly impressive at first glance (a former Marine commandant, he was the only recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor who survived the 72-hour battle of Tarawa in World War II—a battle, by the way, that caused considerable antiwar sentiment in the middle of World War II because of its extremely high American casualties) as were his political connections.

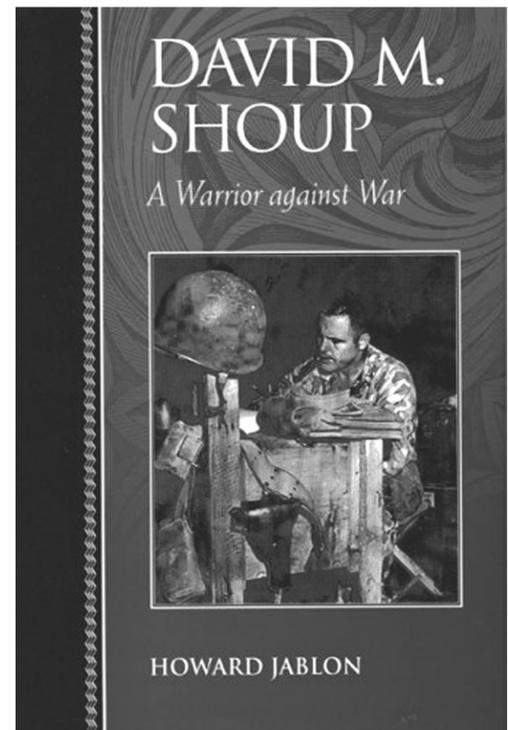
Shoup's antiwar voice is truly a permanent landmark for all antiwar veterans.

their own design and want, that they fight and work for. And if, unfortunately, their revolution must be of the violent type...at least what they get will be their own and not the American style, which they don't want...crammed down their throat" (p. 101).

The basis of Shoup's antiwar sentiment was twofold: his experiences as a second lieutenant in China in the 1920s, and his later Vietnam-era understanding that the communists in Southeast Asia were never a threat to U.S. national integrity.

Writes Jablon about Shoup's lessons in U.S. foreign policy in China in 1927: "Like the peace progressives, he believed the deployment was unjustified and imperialistic. He complained in his journal 'that China has many Americans, or those who propose to be Americans, inhabiting her country and in many cases exploiting her peoples. Yet they claim their right to protection from the U.S. some 10,000 miles away.' Furthermore, he did not believe that protecting American citizens was the reason for the deployment. Shoup shared the view of the Marine commanding general, Smedley Butler, that their true mission was to win a commercial war in China" (p. 18-19).

While I remain committed to the sentiment underlying Shoup's antiwar position—a position, by the way, from which he



never wavered for the rest of his life—there is much about Shoup that is far too military for me to easily gloss over.

"Shoup was not a gentle reformer. His style was abrasive and often cruel" (p. 69).

"On one occasion, when an assistant naval attaché...paid a courtesy call on the commandant, he appeared before Shoup wearing dirty and frayed combat ribbons. Shoup yanked the ribbons from his uniform and gave him a severe tongue-lashing" (p. 114).

"His MOH from Tarawa was for Marine Corps political reasons for planning and overseeing that island battle; the three other MOH recipients were for battlefield bravery that cost them their lives. In *Utmost Savagery: The Three Days of Tarawa*, author Joseph Alexander explains that Marine Maj. Gen. Julian C. Smith chose Shoup to receive the MOH over Shoup's XO Merritt ("Red Mike") Edson because Edson "already had a Medal of Honor (from Guadalcanal), (and) Shoup had next to nothing, and it had been on Shoup's broad shoulders that the battle of Tarawa balanced so precariously those first thirty-six hours" (p. 260).

Still, Shoup's antiwar voice is truly a permanent landmark for all antiwar veterans as we strive to make this nation less militaristic and more oriented to its espoused ideals.



TIM BAGWELL IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA.

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The Blues and the Iraq War

BILL HOMANS

I was in Lawrence, Kansas for a gig at a biker bar. I had showered and dressed for the gig at the motel, and I was heading out the lobby door to my van to go load in at the club. On their way across the parking lot to check in at the motel were five very young men. Four were walking, and one with no legs was wheeling himself along. None of the five had four whole limbs.

I said hello, and then apologized but had to ask, "Did you fellas lose your legs and arms in Iraq?"

One of the brothers answered that yes, they had. And then he volunteered, "But it's okay."

I did not lose my temper completely, but I told the brothers, "No, it's not okay! Your government sent you into a war based on a pack of lies, you gave what you gave, and now you have to live with it. God bless you for your honorable service, but your

government is fucked!"

The brothers hadn't heard anything like this before, I guess. There were sickly smiles all around; there were cordial goodbyes. Out in the parking lot there was a large RV marked *VETSRIDE, INC.* These fellas were headed for Washington, DC, for some reason I didn't know. But I had one VVAW button with me, and I gave it to the thirty-fiveish, portly driver and asked him to pass it on to the young brothers in the motel.

And I called George Bush, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Don Rumsfeld several unprintable names.

May God bless us all and keep those young brothers from getting a terminal dose of the blues.



BILL HOMANS, AKA "WATERMELON SLIM," IS A VVAW CONTACT IN OKLAHOMA.

Marine Species Extinctions Feared

A headline quote:
 "Marine Species Extinctions Feared"—
 Undersea life in peril
 From profiteering,

The writer wrote.
 Floating dead fish had appeared
 In seas polluted sterile.
 My eyes were blurring.

Again I read
 That terrifying banner line.
 Undersea predation?
 Or desert dying?

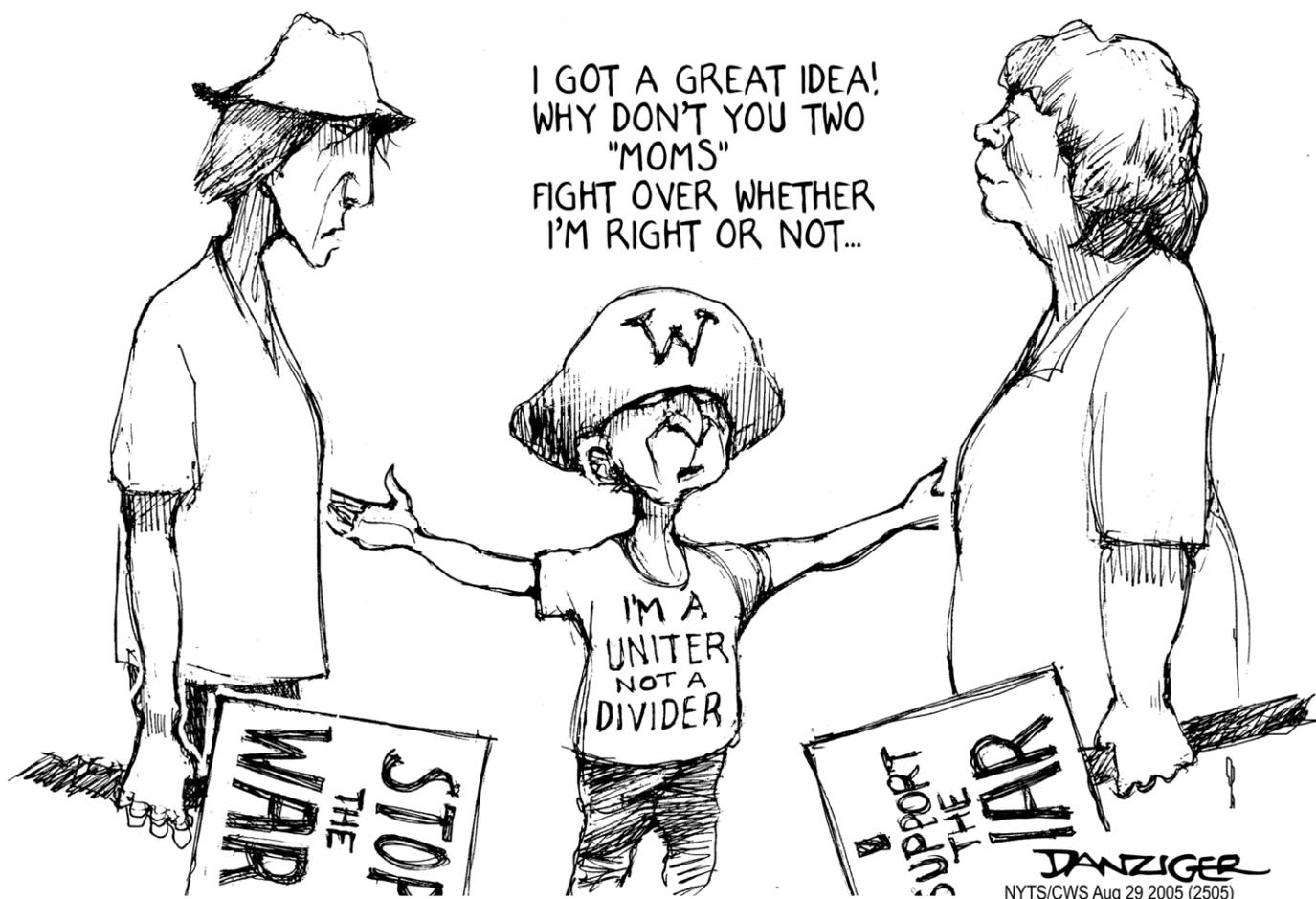
Young warriors dead
 In dry Iraq, like fish in brine,
 From cold exploitation
 And falsifying.

None will return,
 Those brave and dead Marines of ours,
 Purposeless brigades
 Forever linked.

Mourn with concern
 Any deaths that greed devours.
 Break down the barricades—
 Or go extinct.

—Sandra J. Fulton

"Mom" Sheehan Meets "Mom" Pruett



Torture Is an American Value: Reality vs. the Rhetoric

S. BRIAN WILLSON

I became aware of torture as a U.S. policy in 1969 when I was serving as a USAF combat security officer working near Can Tho City in Vietnam's Mekong Delta. I was informed about the CIA's Phong Dinh Province Interrogation Center (PIC) at the Can Tho Army airfield where supposedly "significant members" of the VCI (Viet Cong infrastructure) were taken for torture as part of the Phoenix Pacification Program. A huge French-built prison nearby was also apparently utilized for torture of suspects from the Delta region. Many were routinely murdered.

Naive, I was shocked! The Agency for International Development (AID) working with Southern Illinois University, for example, trained Vietnamese police and prison officials in the art of torture ("interrogations") under cover of "public safety." American officials believed they were teaching "better methods," often making suggestions during torture sessions conducted by Vietnamese police.

Instead of the recent euphemism "illegal combatants," the United State in Vietnam claimed prisoners were "criminal" and therefore exempt from Geneva Convention protections.

The use of torture as a function of terror, or its equivalent in sadistic behavior, has been historic de facto U.S. policy.

Our European ancestors' shameful, sadistic treatment of the indigenous inhabitants based on an ethos of arrogance and violence has become ingrained in our values. "Manifest destiny" has rationalized as a religion the elimination or assimilation of those perceived to be blocking American progress—at home or abroad—a belief that expansion of the nation, including subjugation of natives and others, is divinely ordained, that our "superior race" is obligated to "civilize" those who stand in the way.

When examining my roots in New York and New England, I discovered that Indian captives were skinned alive and dragged through the streets of New Amsterdam (New York City) in the 1640s. Scalping enabled Indian bounty hunters to be paid.

Captains Underhill and Endicott, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony governed by John

Winthrop, spent their time "burning and spoiling the country" of Indians in Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1636–37, while sparing the children and women as slaves.

My hometown of Geneva in the Finger Lakes region of New York State was once home to the Seneca Nation with its flourishing farms, orchards, and sturdy houses. In one two-week period in September 1779, General George Washington's orders

The plight of prisoners in the USA is strikingly similar to the plight of the Iraqis who were abused by American GIs.

"to lay waste...that the country...be...destroyed," instilling "terror" among the Indians, were dutifully carried out by General Sullivan, who promised that "the Indians shall see that there is malice enough in our hearts to destroy everything that contributes to their support." Sullivan's campaign has been described as a ruthless policy of scorched earth, bearing comparison with Sherman's march to the sea or the search-and-destroy missions of U.S. soldiers in Vietnam.

In northern California, where I now live, the same grueling history exists. Bret Harte wrote in 1860 that little children and old women were mercilessly stabbed and their skulls crushed by axes: "Old women...lay weltering in blood, their brains dashed out...while infants...with their faces cloven with hatchets and their bodies ghastly wounds" lay nearby.

In 1920, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) investigated the conduct of U.S. troops who had occupied Haiti since 1915. More than 3,000 Haitians were killed by U.S. Marines, many having been tortured.

When indigenous Nicaraguan resistance fought against the occupying U.S. forces in the late 1920s, the Marines launched counterinsurgency war. U.S. policymakers insisted on "stabilizing"

the country to enforce loan repayments to U.S. banks. They defined the resistance forces as "bandits," an earlier equivalent to the "criminal prisoners" in Vietnam and "illegal combatants" in Iraq. Since the United States claimed not to be fighting a legitimate military force, any Nicaraguan perceived as interfering with the occupiers was commonly subjected to beatings, tortures, and beheadings. When the Somoza dictatorship (installed by the United States) was

overthrown in 1979, the Somoza torture centers were immediately destroyed.

In 1946, the U.S. Army institutionalized teaching torture techniques to Latin American militaries with the opening of its School of the Americas (SOA), which continues today as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC).

Torture has been a historical U.S. practice in police stations and prisons—and via countless vigilante crimes of sadistic torture and mutilation against black Americans.

The Wickersham Commission's 1931 Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement concluded that "the third degree is the employment of methods which inflict suffering, physical or mental, upon a person, in order to obtain from that person information about a crime... The third degree is widespread. The third degree is a secret and illegal practice."

Seventy years later, the 2002 Human Rights Watch World Report documented systematic use of torture by U.S. police: "thousands of allegations of police abuse, including excessive use of force, such as unjustified shootings, beatings, fatal chokings, and rough treatment."

My studies of brutality in Massachusetts prisons in 1981 concluded (in "Walpole State Pris-

on, Massachusetts: An Exercise in Torture") by noting "a clear pattern and history of systematic torture including withholding water, heat, bedding, medical care, and showers; imposition of hazards such as flooding cells, placing foreign matter in food, igniting clothes and bedding, spraying with mace and tear gas; regular physical assaults and beatings; and forcing prisoners to lie face down, naked and handcuffed to one another...on freezing...outdoor ground while being kicked and beaten." This was two decades before the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo revelations.

Terry Kupers, a psychiatrist, has testified about human rights abuses in U.S. prisons. "The plight of prisoners in the USA is strikingly similar to the plight of the Iraqis who were abused by American GIs. Prisoners are maced, raped, beaten, starved, left naked in freezing cold cells and otherwise abused in too many American prisons, as substantiated by findings in many courts..."

It would behoove us to attempt to understand the underlying psychological defenses that seem to have afflicted us like a cultural mental illness since our origins.



S. BRIAN WILLSON WAS HEAD OF A USAF COMBAT SECURITY UNIT IN VIETNAM. A LAWYER BY TRAINING, AND A WRITER (WWW.BRIANWILLSON.COM), HE IS A MEMBER OF HUMBOLDT BAY VETERANS FOR PEACE, A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONTACT FOR VVAW, AND A MEMBER OF THE ARCATA NUCLEAR FREE ZONE AND PEACE COMMISSION.



created by Robert Spicher



Sheldon Ramsdell Archive

I have 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 twofold: (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

nonprofit book project based on his photography with any proceeds going to support organizations like VVAW, the Alexander Hamilton and Bob Basker American Legion Posts, and the AIDS education organizations.

Please contact me directly with any questions or 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@comcast.net
 (415) 819-3760



Cindy Sheehan and others at Camp Casey, Washington, DC, September 24, 2005

Freeing Iraq, or Diverting America?

Patriotism? They say it; you pay it.
Although ending up in a body bag,
even under a new flag, doesn't
make your sad folks brag. But
you do more than some Jody Grinder
sitting in a sports bar, keeping score.

You're riding a Humvee in misery.
Looking over your shoulder,
trying to get older, as
politicians and schemers think
they're tougher and bolder.

Not under SandLand stars, faded folks
fly faded flags on cars. As heroes
pull triggers on shadowy figures,
CEOs stretch their checks
by a few more zeros.
They never answered the call—
or had a homecoming stalled.

When you signed up, you gave up choice—
and voice—but not your mind.
The “real” patriots “support our troops”
by ignoring the bureaucratic hoops and
red-tape loops you must escape and evade.

So you ask this:
To get some armor for my body,
it's my family I have to lobby?

The stay-at-homes' smarts
went on loan with their hearts
as they okayed another war's start:
“We're #1!” and second to none—
at jiving ourselves.

The WWE will set who free?
John Q & Jane Public?
No law can make those patriots act.

You do more. They just snored, ignored
the body count, lazily rooted for the
home team, chased overpriced dreams.

For them, life's a spectator sport played
on someone else's court. They shop
—while you drop.

As busy camouflaged elves dust
the nation's overseas shelves,
The Grand REMF has plans
needing fresh flesh fertilizer
and more blood on more sands.

So you duck RPGs, snipers and IEDs.
Please, it's no big thing.
It's just you in the ring,
slouching toward Bethlehem.
You know, putting on a reality show
as mall rats—and Washington brats—
flick their clickers quicker.

It's such an easy war—
let's have some more and
24/7, send 'em to heaven.
Take over, make over, do over.
And armchair warriors,
safe in their think tanks,
don't even say thanks
to those in the ranks.

—Horace Coleman



Anna Stange on Memorial Day, Chicago 2005

Bodies Do Count: A Cautionary Tale

BILLY KELLY

Tap An Bac, Quang Ngai, Vietnam.

I am probably the only American alive who knows this hamlet's name. On March 15, 1969, I was involved in an all-day battle in this very area—mercifully, the only one of my brief military career. The combat took place within a two-kilometer by four-kilometer area.

I remember the name because I received a few citations with this hamlet's name printed on them, and the date of the action was noted. I was also slightly wounded on two separate occasions that day. I kept the military map of the area.

Over the years, I have come to fully understand the terrible reality of my people's involvement in the affairs of the Vietnamese. Beginning in 1968, the majority of my fellow countrymen designated our Vietnam adventure as a "mistake." The poll numbers now are in the 60–75% range.

I bridle at that term, for I think of a mistake as something akin to forgetting to pick up the laundry on the way home from work. Millions dead and a land nearly obliterated calls for a term less facile than "mistake."

On that day in 1969, I led a company of infantry "grunts" to what appeared to be a resounding success. At the time, the "score" was approximately thirty Vietnamese killed, and our side suffered not a single loss of life. The numbers belie the difficulty of the engagement.

Our opponents, initially caught off-guard, soon regrouped and hunkered down for a fight. It was very close, and movement by either side seemed to be suicidal. Finally sanity prevailed, and a troop of cavalry was brought in. They quickly brought their firepower and strength to bear, and all resistance was crushed as the tracks and tanks, followed by an infantry company, moved forward.

Months later I was told that captured documents indicated the Vietnamese losses might have been much greater, for many had been buried as the APCs and the tanks did their work. The following day, we retraced our path, and the stench from burned and decomposing bodies lent credence to that new information.

My feelings were numb. I can only remember the fear—that

"pissing in your pants" fear. There was no elation, but at least we were alive. In a military sense, it was a big win. Our opponents were uniform-wearing, arms-bearing soldiers—soldiers intent on killing us!

I will always remember that day. It was a day when I personally killed four Vietnamese. And as the CO, I was also responsible for the deaths of many others, only a day shy of a year from Calley's handiwork at My Lai and only forty kilometers south of that bludgeoned village.

After thirty-five years of reflection, I have come to the unassailable conclusion that our presence in Vietnam was at best a cruel misuse of power, and at worst a near-genocide. I was a part of the war machine, the technological juggernaut that would annihilate all in its path.

I killed for this machine, but I gave myself a personal pass, for I did not partake in any civilian mistreatment. There was no burning of hootches; no killing of livestock; no shooting into free-fire zones. I acted morally and honorably.

This March, I was in Quang Ngai to honor the victims of My Lai. Arriving a few days before that anniversary on March 16, I decided to visit Tap An Bac and its neighboring hamlets on "my anniversary." With a map, I strolled about the lanes and pathways. There is a martyrs' monument for the township, something to be

found in every hamlet, village, or city in Vietnam.

I stopped to observe. Together with the sculpture, there was a rectangular structure marked with the names and dates of birth and death of all the soldiers buried in that graveyard. The total came to 584, in a grouping of hamlets that probably never had more than a thousand inhabitants at any one time. An amount equal to one-fifth the casualties suffered in New York City on September 11, 2001.

I walked amidst the headstones and read the names and dates. When I first saw a name with "my" date upon it, I was hit with that fabled epiphanous thunderbolt. Now I knew the name of someone whose death I was responsible for. Suddenly my pass no longer worked. Dead is dead! Does it really matter how that death was accomplished? We humans have no Christs to bring back all those Lazaruses.

To most soldiers, My Lai seems incomprehensible. But in the grand scheme of things, does it really matter whether the death is of a noncombatant or a young soldier? Or if it comes in a gratuitously brutal way or in a fair fight?

The conclusion I have reached, with enormous personal pain and sorrow, is this: If the end is immoral, unlawful and dishonorable, then whatever the means used to reach it is equally immoral,

unlawful and dishonorable.

There are no free passes. No shrink in the world can undo what I did. I killed other human beings who were fighting against me for what is now recognized as an honorable and just end. My opponents were fighting for their freedom, liberty and independence. The Vietnamese had a goal. A justifiable end might permit a justifiable homicide.

I envy them. All wars suck, but some might be deemed just or necessary. Our opponents took up arms to defend their homeland from an aggressive invader who was occupying their land, an occupier who was intent on imposing his will upon the will of another by use of brute force. To resist that is a person's duty and obligation.

Sadly, I now know that I was the neighborhood bully.

I mentioned that this is a cautionary tale. By that I intend to convey the message that we, the veterans of our nation's last great debacle, must seek out and listen to our troops returning from Iraq. I have no doubt that all will be suffering from experiences and realizations like mine and those of so many others who fought in Vietnam.



BILLY KELLY IS A "GRUNT" OFFICER VET OF THE 11TH LIB BASED IN DUC PHO, '68-'69. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW, VFP, VFW, "ETC."



From left: "Freddy" of VFP, Ward Reilly of VVAW, and Dennis Kyne of VFP march in Washington (photo courtesy of Charles Jenks, Traprock Peace Center)

Brotherhood of the Lottery

JOHN LUCAS

There is one day in my life that I will never forget: the day I returned—alive and well—from Vietnam. When I think about it, there is a rush of feeling and remembrance of the sights, smells and sounds of that wondrous day.

Getting off that plane in Washington State with everything so green and the air so fresh, about a hundred and fifty young men returned from Vietnam. Some kissed the ground; others were yelling crazy things; but everyone was so high you would have thought they had just won the lottery—which, of course, they had.

These boys were the very happy, very lucky members of the Brotherhood of the Lottery.

Despite the sadness, it always comforts me when I meet or hear about a fellow brother whose life has turned south on him, for I know that for at least one day in his life, anything was possible. There are many in this world who will never have a day like that, and there are many who lost in that lottery.

When you go into the military, you sign a contract. Once you take that step, you are theirs, but even then, when it comes to assignments, the military has a certain set of rules it is supposed to follow. When I was in the army, they sent you to Vietnam for twelve months, and if you were a Marine, it was thirteen months. You knew what you had to do and you tried to make the best of it.

When President Bush went on television and said, "Bring it on," I knew exactly what he meant. He had rammed tax cuts through the Republican-controlled Congress to the benefit of the wealthiest Americans, and now not only would the rest of America have to carry a greater burden paying for his stupid war in Iraq, but their sons and daughters would have to fight it for him. I did not think I could get angrier, but I was wrong.

I saw a story about a reservist infantryman named Justin from Portland, Oregon. He was a good kid who joined the reserves to make some money to go to school.

Time went very slowly for Justin in Iraq. There were times he was scared, but there was also boredom. His life had taken on a surreal quality, as happens to all soldiers, but he did his duty.

He knew the date he was supposed to go home. Every day, he crossed out a day on his short-timer's calendar. Toward the end, his buddies tried to keep him as safe as possible.

When it came time for Justin to go home, Uncle Sam said, "Sorry, Justin, your stay here is extended." In less than a month, Justin became a losing member in the Brotherhood of the Lottery. In spite of doing everything he was supposed to do, he was denied a day he would have remembered for the rest of his life. There are certain rules when you are a short-

timer. They had changed the rules

in midstream.

They do not have enough soldiers. If this war in Iraq is such an important war, where are the wealthiest Americans' kids, like Bush's daughters? The tax cuts made sure they go to good schools like Yale or the University of Texas.

Those schools force you to take a course called Critical Thinking. They knew that if Saddam Hussein could not even control the northern part of his own country, he couldn't be a threat to us. They knew that the inspectors were in Iraq and were doing their job when the president ordered the invasion, and that they had not found any WMDs.

They knew that Bin Laden was a religious fanatic and that Saddam was a secular tyrant who was more scared of him than he was of us, and there is no way they would work together. In other words, their only source of news was not the "liberal media," whose only source seems to be the Bush White House.

I would like to blame the president and his crew, but they really believe in what they are doing. They really believed our soldiers would be met with flowers. They actually said it. They

should be drug-tested. This Iraq policy was designed by Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Perle, Rumsfeld, etc. Not one was a member of the Brotherhood of the Lottery. Bush, of course, dishonored himself by using political pull to get out of the draft and into the Air Guard, forcing someone else to become a member of the Brotherhood.

They are supported in this insanity by their soulmates Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Dennis Miller, and the ever-popular Michael Savage. None of these ideologues are members of the

but the real choice is tyranny or journalistic integrity. When Tim Russert interviewed the president, he could have asked him about Ben Barnes getting him into the National Guard ahead of a hundred and fifty others. Russert knew the truth.

The *New York Times* has apologized for not investigating the WMD reports coming out of the administration. Has ABC, NBC, or CBS done the same? The number of people who believe there is a connection between Saddam and al-Qaeda is amazing. Reports show that they were blood enemies and could never work together.

In this world of mass media, the number of lies and distortions of the truth is staggering. It is time for the media to get back to doing its job, which is to try to search for the truth. No one can be completely objective, but it is in the trying that journalism has proven its great value in a free society.

If the media had been doing its job, Bush would have lost the election, we would not have invaded Iraq, and Justin would not be a losing member of the Brotherhood of the Lottery; he would be going to school in Portland, Oregon.



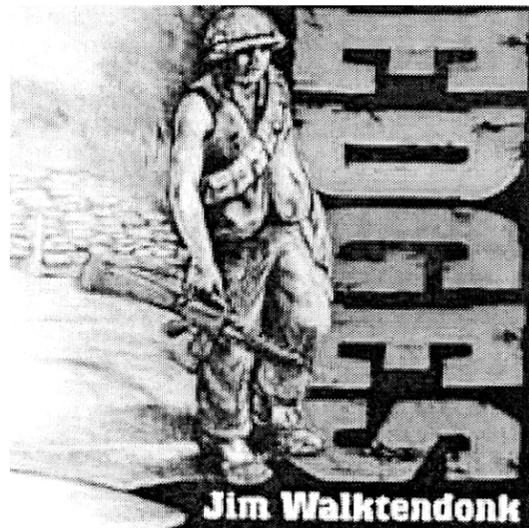
JOHN LUCAS IS AN ARMY VET WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.

When you go into the military, you sign a contract. Once you take that step, you are theirs.

Brotherhood either. The macho act these blowhards put up is getting a little old, especially when all they do is talk the talk and let the boys and girls of the second America walk the walk.

The problem is the media. I am not talking about the *New York Post* or Fox News; they make no pretense of journalistic integrity. We like to bash lawyers, but the real choice is lawyers or guns. We love to bash reporters,

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Enlisted Single Tour All but Ignored

JOE HARTY

It goes without saying that the majority—perhaps as much as 80%—of the manpower supplied to American armed forces are in and out of duty, while the few benefits remaining focus on lifers and officers. I contend that all veterans deserve benefits for having served. I base this on all historical reports of the aftereffects documented in mental-health and prison data which bear witness to how the encounter between American young people has instant (job placement) and lifelong effects (to be old getting into the market, late to get married) that cut back competing with their peers that do not serve.

I make this point for veterans to convey this bit of information to their civilian relatives and public sources who seek to understand the intricate weave that the military has woven for us who serve. To draw them into our dilemma of doing the ugly jobs, suffering insulting pay, little recognition and disrespect by corporations

who pay millions, cut from veterans' benefits to give money to subcontractors, who get \$100,000 yearly to do the same job we do—who are also protected from punishment when atrocities like Abu Graibh surface. I believe veterans should put aside their politics for everything but veterans' issue and home defense, so as to save what little there is available and to take care of our brothers.

The last five years of anti-military behavior by a GOP-ruled House and Senate, coupled with the passing of the PATRIOT Act I and II and their getting ready to install rules so they can violate the 1887 Posse Comitatus Act is a doomsday warning. See, the Posse Comitatus Act is supposed to stop the use of our troops inside of America, against our own people. For history buffs, I suggest reading "Seven Days in May," a book made into a movie about the international corporate conspiracy with our military to exercise a coup d'état on our federal system, in

effect bringing us under a police state.

I believe that it makes the argument and shows the outline of things the civilian population has no knowledge of that can happen, which has only been known by those who serve up until now. Failing to get anyone to read this book, I would aim their interest to a speech by a Republican, Ike, who warned us in the late 1950s about the growing danger of the military-industrial complex, even then a bulging mutant growing geometrically since the end of World War II. Every veteran should explain the military appraisals of the recent acts in comparison with how we operate overseas.

It is this veteran's greatest fear that the rights of *E Pluribus Unum* days are numbered, that soon troops will be in control of cities, will regulate movement across state borders, that politically left and Democratic persons will be put in a pound for special treatment; secular schools, prisons

and the military will be inundated with Christian dogma in place of science and debate.

As veterans, we all took an oath to protect this country against all enemies, foreign or domestic: it says that as well in the first paragraph of the preamble of the Constitution.

Rights, once lost, are rarely reinstated by a dictatorship, which is what a police state is: the seizing of all enforcement of the law by the military. Unlike civilian rule, it's a little short on due process; it requires none, being arbitrary and rigid in its determination of guilt. Please read this book, or at least read Ike's last speech. It could save our youth from having to trust anyone over twenty, while saving their lives! Knowledge is power; let's see if our knowledge can help other voters to think a little clearer.



JOE HARTY SERVED IN THE AIR FORCE. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.

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.



Nick Egnatz at the Bud Billiken Parade in Chicago

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Up Close & Personal

My Daughter's Two Birthdays

continued from page 32

about six months together. She was pregnant and I was heading off to WestPac again. I would not be back until well after the birth of our first child. But we all know the military's response to this sort of thing. "If the government had wanted you to have a wife and family, they would have issued you one."

By late October, following ORI (Operational Readiness Inspection) in and around the Hawaiian Islands, the "Tico" again arrived off the coast of Vietnam, first to "Dixie" station in the south.

We then steamed toward "Yankee" station in the north sometime in November—in the so-called hazardous duty (combat) zone. This gave everyone a little extra pay and free mail privileges. It also meant that communications were solely directed toward flight ops and the general operational needs of the carrier. In fact, I recently realized that we were probably "on line," that is on station, during the major battle in the Ia Drang Valley. Though we were further north, I expect that our aircraft may have been even busier as a

result. And here I was awaiting some word about the birth of our first child, in the midst of nearly nonstop war activity when no war had been declared. I had no way of knowing what was going on back home.

Finally, on November 19, 1965, a delayed telegram (dated November 12) from my dad was handed to me. The printed words shouted to me: I was now the father of a healthy and beautiful baby girl, Lisa Ellen Hui-mei Miller. Baby and mother were doing just fine. Lisa and I would not meet until February 1966, when she was three months old.

That is why I always feel

my daughter has two birthdays, because she was born to the world one full week before she was "born" to me. So on November 12 and 19, I shall again say to my daughter "Happy Birthday, Lisa!" Both times!

(For those who may not know, Lisa is on the National Office staff of VVAW and is the copy editor and fact checker for The Veteran and other VVAW publications.)



JOE MILLER IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW AND A MEMBER OF VVAW'S CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, ILLINOIS CHAPTER.

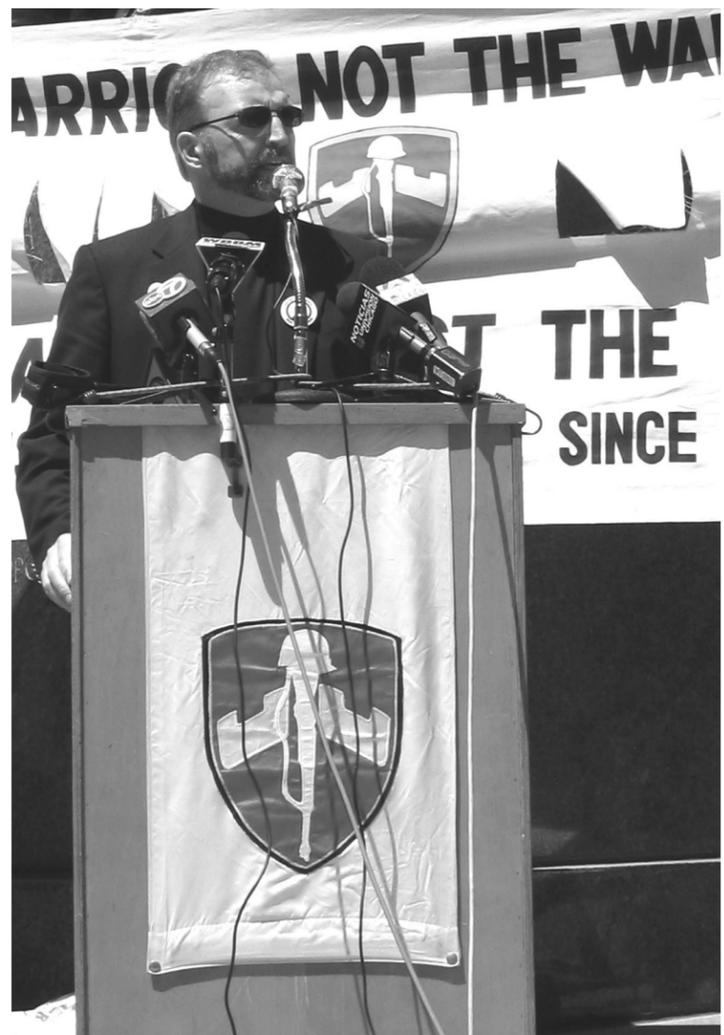
Dear Vietnam Veterans Against the War,

Some of your members were with me at "Camp Casey," including member Bill Perry, from the start. Other members of your organization played a part in the first week, such as Ward Reilly, who was part of my legal team (as an investigator), Mike Hastie, Dave Cline, Billy Kelly, Dave Collins, and several others I don't know personally.

During the entire month of August 2005, many of your members, and members of Veterans for Peace, were with us, and all played helpful roles in making "Camp Casey" at Crawford, Texas a huge success.

My personal thanks for your support,

Cindy Sheehan, cofounder
Gold Star Families For Peace



Paul Vogel of MFSO at Memorial Day, Chicago 2005

In Memoriam: Lawrence D. Graves (12/10/40–5/12/05)

Lawrence, a thirty-plus-year member of the Milwaukee chapter, died this summer while working around his house.

Lawrence, nicknamed "Harkuf," was so smart that he easily could have been a multimillionaire. Instead, he chose to spend his brain capital on the community. He was a linguist (fluent in nine languages and always learning more), an Egyptologist, an astronomer, a teacher, a mentor and a veteran. He loved sailing, making music, and the world in which he found himself. He hated war, poverty, racism, injustice, and that same world that had created

these conditions.

Harkuf was a member of VVAW, the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Mensa, and the local chapter of the National Association of Black Veterans. Civil rights and education were the name of the game, and he always took any opportunity he had to advance either cause. Even though he was smart, he never made anyone else feel dumb. He was this author's sounding board for thirty years, and he gave me the confidence to put ideas out there and be ready for the feedback, whether positive or negative.

Harkuf was the pharaoh's

admiral (buried in the Valley of the Kings). As we navigate the political waters, I will present my ideas for progress in the struggle for peace and justice, as my dear friend, Lawrence "Harkuf" Graves, always encouraged.

Lawrence is survived by JoAnna, his "old lady" of 37 years.

—Annie Bailey



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 U.S. 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 aftereffects 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

My Daughter's Two Birthdays

JOE MILLER

While I was stationed with the Naval Security Group (NSG) at Lin Kou Air Station on Taiwan in 1963, I met and fell in love with Hui-fang. (Linda was the western name she chose when she began work at the Taiwan Defense Command's EM Club in downtown Taipei.) After nearly six months of dating, the exposure of our secret relationship (by a so-called buddy) resulted in the determination that there was a potential "security risk." We in the NSG were not allowed to develop personal relationships with individuals or families among the local population. Since I was not willing to give up this relationship, I was removed from intelligence work in early 1964 and posted to Sung Shan Airport as a courier while awaiting orders for transfer to "regular" Navy duty.

Hui-fang and I decided that we would go ahead with the rather tedious process of obtaining permission to marry. We were successful in fighting through all the obstacles the Navy (and some corrupt Chinese cops) put in front of us, and we were married on June 9, 1964 by a Canadian missionary, a day and a half before I shipped out for sea duty with the USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14).

While I was at sea with the carrier group, sailing up and down the Western Pacific (WestPac) from Japan to the Philippines and off the coast of Vietnam (North and South), Hui-fang completed all the paperwork for her move to the States. By November, she was settled in with my folks near Chicago until our ship returned to San Diego from WestPac in December 1964.

The Ticonderoga was scheduled for an extended dry-dock period at Hunters Point, San Francisco from January to July of 1965. Hui-fang and I decided that she would fly out to the West Coast so that we could spend that period living together. We got a great little flat a block and a half from Chinatown.

To this day, though Hui-fang and I split up in the 1980s, I recall the wonderful time we spent together in San Francisco. In late February 1965, we learned that she was pregnant with our first child. The doctor told us the baby would likely be born toward the end of October or early November. Our ship wasn't due to redeploy to WestPac until after that time, so I expected to be around for the birth of our first child. Hui-fang and I were ecstatic with the anticipation

and excitement.

However, the growing war in Vietnam was getting in the way. Rolling Thunder began in February '65, requiring more carriers on station, but none of us in the Ticonderoga's crew expected that to change our deployment date. Then the first official combat units landed near Danang in March. Soon we were informed that the "Tico" could expect to head back toward WestPac in late September or early October. *Damn!* There weren't many on board who were very happy to hear this news.

The temporary household that Hui-fang and I had enjoyed for nearly six months was coming to an end. I took some leave, and in early June, we boarded a train to Chicago. We spent three days together traveling across the country, without pressures of work or other military trappings. We even celebrated our first wedding anniversary on that train, rolling somewhere through the western plains. We had less than a month together at my folks' place, where Hui-fang would stay until my re-



Joe, Hui-fang and Lisa
(at one year), late 1966

turn, now scheduled for sometime in early 1966—we hoped.

On the afternoon of my flight from O'Hare back to San Diego (where the ship was now waiting), Hui-fang came along in my dad's car. When we arrived at the airport parking lot and I pulled my sea bag from the trunk, she started to cry. Deep sobs mixed with anguished cries that I should not leave. She would not leave the car to accompany me to the departure gate. I choked back my own tears and swallowed the anger that I felt at being pulled from her. By this time, we had been married just over a year, and we had spent

continued on page 30

Toward Two Thousand

