



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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## VVAW Supports All the Troops

As veterans who have experienced an illegal and immoral war, there is little doubt among members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War that the war in Iraq is illegal and immoral. Orders to prosecute that war are therefore illegal and immoral.

The Uniform Code of Military Justice requires all members

of the military to refuse illegal orders.

Nevertheless, VVAW is fairly sure that our brothers and sisters who refuse those orders will be convicted and will face extensive, strict punishment.

As former members of the military, we understand the courage it takes to face “military

justice” after defying orders. We also understand that these cases may carry more-than-average risk, since they have high profiles and political ramifications.

VVAW respects the courage of the many service members who have refused deployment and thanks those who have exposed the atrocities of this war. We hope

their sacrifices will illuminate the true character of the war and help to bring a swift end to this shameful chapter of our history.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War salutes all those in uniform who decide to stand by their principles and follow their consciences. We appreciate their gallant actions.

## Agent Orange: A Continuing Legacy of the War

DAVID CLINE

Severe health problems associated with the US military’s use of a chemical defoliant during the Vietnam War have long been an issue of concern for the veterans’ community. Popularly known as Agent Orange, this herbicide was heavily contaminated with tetrachlorodibenzoparadioxin (TCDD), one of the most deadly carcinogens known to man.

Over many years, Vietnam veterans began to get sick and have children with birth defects, and many died. Veterans have struggled to have the VA provide testing, treatment, and compensation for those affected.

This struggle began in the 1970s and went through many twists and turns as the chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange—and the US government, who ordered and deployed it—tried to deny any responsibility and even claimed that it was harmless.

In 1984, the chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange agreed to pay \$180 million in damages to veterans. In 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, recognizing the negative health effects of this defoliant and acknowledging certain conditions for VA medical treatment and disability compensation. Since that time, more conditions have been acknowledged, but many others are still not recognized. Veterans who served in the South Korean, Australian, and New Zealand militaries under US command have also brought lawsuits.

But the largest group of people affected by Agent Orange have never received any form of justice. They are the people



Some of the children being cared for at the Cu Chi hospice run by the Catholic Church

of Vietnam, both NVA/VC and ARVN soldiers and many times more civilians who were trapped in the war zones.

In 2004, the suffering Vietnamese formed the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) and initiated a lawsuit in US courts against the companies who manufactured the chemical poison. The case is scheduled to be heard in a federal appellate court in New York City this fall.

In support of the Vietnamese victims, we have formed the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign and are working with them and other Agent Orange victims throughout the world to continue this struggle until all those affected receive some justice.

At the end of March, I took a delegation of four other US veterans who are Agent Orange victims (Joan Duffy, Ralph Steele, Dan Shea, and Frank Corcoran) to Hanoi for an international conference on Agent Orange that included participants from Australia, South

Korea, New Zealand, and Canada, along with support groups from France, England, and several other European countries.

After that, we traveled to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Cu Chi, and Hue, where we were hosted by VAVA chapters, met with victims, and visited hospices and friendship villages where some of the many thousands of the most seriously deformed Agent Orange children are tended. They are run by the support of international veterans, the Catholic church, or

local governments and hospitals.

This issue is an ongoing and unresolved legacy of the US war in Vietnam and is something that needs to be addressed and resolved if we are ever going to heal the wounds of that period in our nation’s history.

To find out more and to get involved in the campaign in the United States, contact the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, PO Box 303, Prince Station, New York, NY 10012 or visit the website at [www.vn-agentorange.org](http://www.vn-agentorange.org).



DAVID CLINE IS A DISABLED COMBAT VETERAN WHO SERVED WITH THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN VIETNAM DURING 1967. UPON HIS RETURN, HE JOINED THE GI ANTIWAR MOVEMENT AND HELPED PUBLISH THE UNDERGROUND FATIGUE PRESS AT FORT HOOD, TEXAS. IN 1970, HE JOINED VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, AND HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER EVER SINCE. HE IS CURRENTLY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF VETERANS FOR PEACE.



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# From the National Office

BARRY ROMO

President Bush and the neocons said we were going into Iraq to stop torture and to make Iraqi lives better. The Iraqi people are paying for these pipe dreams with blood and tears. Newest reports show an average of five hundred Iraqis killed a day.

It is estimated that 2% of the population has been killed since we invaded that poor country. Amnesty International says that torture is now at a higher level than it was under Saddam Hussein. Iraq is the new Vietnam only worse.

And, as Seymour Hersch has said in the New Yorker, they are planning to attack Iran. The same people in the Department of Defense who made up the Iraq Crisis Committee form the Iran Crisis Committee.

A UN spokesman and an atomic energy expert monitor agreed that Iran is not even close to being able to make a bomb. Of 100% capability, they are only at 3%. You would not know this by just paying attention to the "liberal press."

We can only hope that there is a change in congressional committee chairs. At this point we have to pull out. Each death, each mutilation, each wound, mental, physical

and moral is not "for nothing." Nothing is an auto-accident. Our suffering is in an evil cause.

If this wasn't bad enough in the middle of this war we give carte blanche to Israel to fight three wars. One against Hezbollah, one against the totally innocent Lebanese government and people, and finally their continued smashing of the Palestinians.

Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas have been kidnapping each others people for decades. In fact the Israelis have kidnapped over fifty Palestinian civilians, legislators not soldiers. During a war capturing soldiers is expected.

Israel's response to both Hezbollah and Hamas, let alone innocent Lebanon, is completely out of proportion. Hezbollah fired WWII Katushkas into Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister Barak said these caused fifty military deaths and fifty civilian deaths, while Israeli forces probably killed two thousand Lebanese civilians.

Israel was so out of control that they even bombed Christian communities that had been their allies. In fact we saw stunned Lebanese Christians asking, "Why the hell us?"

Why didn't Israeli troops

fight better? Because they have spent so much time policing and oppressing Palestinians, most of whom could not fight back, that they lost their edge as a military fighting machine. Good god, Hezbollah even took on their navy; they hit their ship, killed Israeli sailors and kept them away from the shore. Their tank units, the sons of veterans of the Six Day War that defeated armored Arab divisions, could not penetrate Hezbollah territory without heavy casualties.

Western pundits seem to be saying that Hezbollah merely survived. But Hezbollah fighters with RPGs, without tanks, helicopters, or a navy were able to fight Israel to a standstill.

For every one Israeli citizen that Hezbollah killed, forty Lebanese civilians died. So who are the terrorists? Katushkas cause random deaths, half civilian, half military. The Israelis, with radar, smart bombs, pinpoint weapons and total control of the sky, were either totally incompetent, the three stooges in jet fighters, or they were deliberately trying to break the back of the civilian government and the will of the people in Lebanon.

The Bush administration's

position was there for all to see. While the entire world cried out for a cease fire, the United States was resupplying Israel so that they could go on bombing as long as they wanted .

We should really be careful about saying that one government has the right to attack the citizens of its neighbor because a third party not under that's governments control attacks the first.

The terrorists from Pakistan have been bombing India for decades. India has one of the highest rates of terrorist incidents in the world. If Israel gets to attack Lebanon, why shouldn't India get to attack Pakistan?

Recently at the UN, we saw a tiff between the Afghan president and the Pakistani president. The Taliban and al Qaeda fighters are coming out of Pakistan. Need I go on?

A final word please. During the rocket attacks the Israeli military and media made a lot out of the fact that Hezbollah rocket attacks hit Jewish and Arab homes equally. But they don't get equal help from Israel's government. Unfortunately for the Arabs they are getting even less help than the Katrina victims.

*continued on page 5*

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 Dan Shea, Ken Nielsen, Marty Webster, Bill Perry, Ward Reilly, Mark Hartford, Ame Meyers, Bill Branson, Claudia Lennhoff, Stanley Campbell, John Zutz, Ben Chitty, Mike Gillen, Mike Newland and others for contributing photos.

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

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# Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

We recently experienced the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and all of the television shows and speechifying that went along with it. Of course, Bush had to have his airtime. The timing was perfect: a fifth anniversary speech, two months before elections in which Republicans would be in trouble. In his continual exploitation of people's patriotism, he used the 9/11 speech to try to justify our presence in Iraq and let us know that we can count on Republicans to secure our nation. The historical record shows that in the hours immediately after the 9/11 attacks, Rumsfeld and others in the White House wanted to invade Iraq in retaliation against the alleged perpetrators. It didn't happen immediately, because they couldn't make the connection. A year and a half later, they got their way. They did it by claiming Saddam had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and was tied to al-Qaeda. Patriotism in Americans became deeper and more widespread because of 9/11. Because the president made the connections to al-Qaeda and WMD, there was support for the invasion of Iraq.

The only problem was that Bush lied, the CIA fumbled, and we ended up bogged down in Iraq—which had no connection to 9/11. There were no WMD, and Saddam was not al-Qaeda. This year, on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, Bush made a speech that went back to the well of patriotism to ask for support for that war. This time he said it was to prevent the rise of terrorist states in the Middle

East. (He never mentioned oil.) Once again, this deceitful president tried to exploit the sincere patriotism of Americans in his anniversary speech.

In addition to their renewed call to patriotism on the eve of the 2006 elections, Bush and company tried to put a new spin on their

vesting classes. For this to happen would involve eliminating many civil and political rights. It would mean suppressing the activities of trade unionists, community organizers, and political, religious, and other activists who stood up for ordinary folks. Some fascist dictators like Franco in Spain took it to

**The object was the suppression of wages and quality of life for the working masses to benefit the investing classes.**

ineptitude. They started to use a different name for the enemy in the alleged "war on terrorism." Now they would be called Islamofascists, who, like the Nazis, needed to be defeated if we were to be secure. They must have figured that their fading support for the war might be rekindled if they used the right words.

Everybody knows that fascism is a bad thing. Just look at World War II. Hitler executed millions, so nobody likes fascists. Actually, Hitler gave fascism a bad name. Before World War II, there were fascists in the United States as well as in European countries. They were not nice people, but they were not advocates of mass murder. Their program, in general, was a form of gonzo capitalism: the triumph of the strongest. The object was the suppression of wages and quality of life for the working masses to benefit the in-

the point of killing a few thousand of these activists. Franco killed them for what they did, as opposed to Hitler, who killed millions for who they were. Because of these activities, fascism went out of style after World War II.

It is ironic that Bush and company are accusing the terrorists of being fascists, because Bush and company subscribe to neoliberal economic theory, which is basically the program of the European fascist parties of seventy years ago. It favors the investor class—the wealthy. The wealthy get tax cuts, while money for Medicaid, schools, veterans' benefits, and the like get cut. Wealth gets transferred from the poor and middle class to the rich. Wages and life quality fall. It's exactly what the likes of Franco would have wanted.

The methods have changed over time. Things are more so-

phisticated now. Instead of lining people up against the wall, they use the law, or presidential signing statements, or corruption and lobbying of officials, or "family values." The process is a little slower, but the results are the same. State power is used to aid the accumulation of wealth. All talk of safety nets is in the past. The Christo-fascists have won. While Bush is trying to put a good spin on the war, events in Iraq are spinning away toward acknowledged civil war and the eventual breakup of that country. And don't forget Afghanistan, where the victory is no closer now than it was five years ago. Afghanistan is the place where arguably the second most powerful army in history was defeated by the locals back in the eighties. Is this a lesson?

Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon kept the Vietnam War going because neither wanted to be the first American president to lose a war, and many people died because of it. George W. Bush is probably thinking along the same lines, only he's thinking that he has the potential to become the first president to lose two wars. So he's not going to shut it down, and many more will die while we wait for new leadership. Bush is losing or has lost popular support for the war; thus the return to 9/11 and spin doctors, but he isn't fooling anybody anymore. He won't do it, but his only chance for victory is to declare it and bring the troops home.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR AND VVAW MEMBER.

## Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I was sitting around the table at the Tuscola Kiwanis Club recently, and someone made mention of that ubiquitous "liberal media." In Tuscola, you have to understand, "liberal media" is one word. As Old Blue Eyes used to croon, you can't have one without the other. As luck would have it, I had recently picked up a copy of the Decatur Herald, which I have to say has one of the finer sports sections in east central Illinois. Barry Romo doesn't know what that means, but trust me, it does.

If we may assume that the Iraq war is the most prominent issue on the minds of most Americans (forget health care and poverty, because there isn't

enough spare change on hand after Iraq to do anything about them, even if anyone cared), we may expect front-page coverage of it. Unless, of course, nothing much is going on worth reporting. That doesn't appear to be the case. On page nine—of a ten-page news section—there was a short blurb on Iraq. The headline was "Insurgency Heightens," and the article went on to mention that a hundred and fifty Iraqis had been killed in the last seventy-two hours, most of them found bound, tortured, and executed in irrigation ditches around Baghdad. This doesn't appear to come under the heading of "nothing much going on."

Forget "liberal media."

Wouldn't one expect that even a moderate media would have put this a little closer to page one? I admit there were some pretty important stories between pages one and nine. A serial killer in Massachusetts (wouldn't you have guessed?) fessed up to some pretty erotic ill-doings, and Jon Benet Ramsey still made it onto page five. I was especially interested in the Brad Pitt-Jennifer Somebody story on page three. But "Insurgency Heightens" had to suck it up and settle for the penultimate page. Even relegated to the cheap seats, though, that liberal media just keeps stirring up shit.

Here's my second (but not entirely unrelated) soapbox dia-

tribe. I have a sixty-two-year-old neighbor who works at a sweatshop thirty miles from here. The pay is decent, and they offer a great benefits package. He also gets a lot of overtime, which translates into pretty big bucks. Leaving aside the sweatshop part, the downside is that this place "offers" mandatory twelve-hour shifts. None of this "Hey Joe, you wanna work some OT today?" Oh no. Four or five twelve-hour shifts in a row: take it or hit the road. Joe's sixty-two, as I said, so there really ain't no other road to hit. There is no CEO offer waiting in the wings.

While this has nothing to

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## My View

JOHN ZUTZ

It's time to remember the lessons of Vietnam.

Over the past thirty years or so, we've all heard people talk about "learning the lessons of Vietnam." There are those who would have us believe that those lessons concerned how the media and the protesters undermined the military's valiant efforts.

Many who interpret the lessons in that way never set foot in-country, and many more of them avoided service altogether. It's time for Vietnam veterans, who have seen, felt, tasted, and smelled the war, to set out the lessons so that others can learn what we know. I'll start. This isn't meant to be an all-inclusive list; there isn't room on this page for that. It does illustrate a few of the lessons we should have learned

but apparently didn't.

One of the main things we in VVAW have learned is that normally good boys and girls can do bad things. The Winter Soldier hearings documented hundreds of incidents of large and small atrocities committed by US troops. A younger John Kerry testified before Congress and informed them of our findings.

There are those who have tried to discredit the Winter Soldier revelations, and some have smeared Kerry as well. But nobody can deny the existence of the Tiger Force, as nobody denies My Lai. However, those were not isolated incidents by rogue GIs. Formerly classified Army documents show they were neither the worst nor the longest lasting of the string of atrocities committed in Vietnam.

Another important lesson is that free-fire zones don't work. Military force may subdue a population for a while, but killing every moving man, woman, child, or animal in a given area is not the way to win hearts and minds.

As a subtext to that lesson, I'll add that it's hard to kill the enemy if you can't identify the target. In a guerilla war, friend and enemy are indistinguishable. If you can't definitely identify a target as an enemy, you shouldn't pull the trigger. And for god's sake, look at what's around the target to avoid "collateral damage."

Perhaps the most important lesson we need to teach is that only Congress can declare war, and only Congress can end a war. Both Richard Nixon in the past and George Bush today have been

heavily invested in their wars. Vietnam went from being LBJ's war to being Nixon's. Nobody can deny that Iraq is W's war. Each of those presidents has been leery of changing course, fearing it would make them look weak.

Congress ended the war in Vietnam by refusing to pay any more to continue the bombing. And it's Congress that ultimately controls the length of the war in Iraq. The sooner Congress changes, the sooner the war will end. If we can't change their minds, we need to change their names. Be sure to vote.



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

## Notes from the Boonies

*continued from page 4*

do with his predicament, I would note that Joe was a fighter pilot in Vietnam, with two tours and two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He also has thirteen air medals, although I have no idea what that means. I obviously don't expect his employer to give two shits

about the fact that my friend is a legitimate war hero, and I understand that such status doesn't turn out any more of what this factory produces down on the floor. But this is a vets' paper, so it should count for something, at least among our readers.

It need not be said that Joe's factory has not hooked onto the union label. But I do recall that—Bill Davis will confirm this—in 1937, John L. Lewis, head of the CIO, sat down with US Steel and won the right to the eight-hour day. 1937. Sixty-nine years ago. That's really sad.

Come to think of it, it can't

be that sad after all. I haven't read one word about it in the liberal-media.



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

## From the National Office

*continued from page 2*

Arab casualties were higher because, unlike Jewish homes, their homes had no bomb shelters. When rebuilding, Arab citizens only get 40% of the compensation that Jewish citizens get.

Arab-Israeli citizens suffer other abuses. The Industry and Trade Ministry got around the law requiring use of local construction companies to rebuild the local economy by refusing to authorize most Arab companies eligible for contracts. Environmental Minister Gideron Ezra suggested that Israeli-Arab towns be made ineligible for any aid.

The only way that there will be peace in the Middle East is if Israel, its neighbors the Palestinians and its own citizens are treated with dignity and respect. The two state solution is the only answer. Back to the 1967 borders.



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



Jane Fonda and Barry Romo at October 2006 showing of Sir! No Sir!

### VVAW's 40th Anniversary Celebration

Vietnam Veterans Against the War invites all members, former members, supporters and historians to attend VVAW's 40th Anniversary Celebration in Chicago next year, the weekend of August 18th, 2007.

A weekend of interesting speakers and events hosted by the Chicago Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

Save the date! More details to come...

# New VVAW Chapter Moving Forward in Cincinnati

MARTY WEBSTER

Marching through the streets of Cincinnati on the Fourth of July was an awesome and emotional experience. We received an overwhelming reception of cheers, thumbs up, and peace signs. When people saw our banner, they actually were coming down off of their porches and joining others along the parade route to give us standing ovations. I have never experienced anything like it in my life.

At the formation area, we met a 'Nam vet named Paul, who was part of the peace and justice contingent. He hadn't realized we were still around. I told him we were forming the VVAW Ohio Valley Regional Chapter and invited him to join. About a third of the way through the parade, he was standing and waiting for us. "I belong with you guys," he said. Paul marched the rest of the parade route with us. He had just had a hip replacement, and he marched with crutches. He wore a T-shirt that said: "Every Step for Peace." Paul has agreed to become a member of the VVAW Ohio Valley Regional Chapter.

On June 10, MUSE (Cincinnati's women's choir) hosted "peace mom" Cindy Sheehan, Holly Near, and Muslim Mothers Against Violence for a series of workshops and the 23rd Annual MUSE Spring Concert at the New Thought Unity Center.

Earlier in the day, Cindy Sheehan was available for a book signing at Shake It Records. She was very warm and welcoming and expressed heartfelt gratitude for the role VVAW was playing in the peace movement. A very large crowd had arrived to greet her respectfully. As we observed the proceedings, we were overtaken by the aura of this humble woman.

VVAW joined with thousands of MoveOn members from around the country on June 28 for a National Day of Action to demand an "oil-free future." We met with MoveOn members and others at the Shell and BP gas stations at the intersection of Galbraith and Reading Roads in Reading, Ohio, a small, blue-collar suburb north of Cincinnati. A feisty crowd had an endless chorus of horn response from the passing autos.

On August 6, we were invited to participate in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Candlelight Vigil and Meditation Walk at International Friendship Park, past the Hiroshi-

ma panels. It was a very emotional evening, and all remembered those who had lost their lives because of nuclear weapons and war.

Earlier in the week, I visited the local CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) office to introduce myself and our organization. When they saw a picture of the banner in the parade, they asked if we would participate in a candlelight vigil for peace at a local mosque with our banner. I immediately committed to doing so. And on August 7, VVAW participated in the Candlelight Vigil for a Ceasefire and Peace in the Middle East at the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati in West Chester, Ohio. The candlelight vigil coincided with Amnesty International's other Ceasefire Vigils in the United States and in other countries. Other cosponsoring organizations were CAIR, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, Peace Village, and the St. Monica-St. George Parish Newman Center.

On August 8 at the Cincinnati Public Library atrium, Ohio Valley VVAW members attended a forum on veterans' issues with Ohio congressman Sherrod Brown and former senator Max Cleland. Brown led off the evening with a spirited presentation on providing adequate health care for all veterans.

On September 14, we were invited to attend a Forum on the Iraq War, sponsored by Democracy for Cincinnati, at the Clifton United Methodist Church in Cincinnati.

The Declaration of Peace Coalition sponsored a town hall meeting on September 18 entitled

"The Local Impact of the War in Iraq." Around 200 people attended the event at St. Monica-St. George Church in downtown Cincinnati. Georgine Getty, executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, moderated a panel composed of Ohio District 1 and District 2 congressional candidates Victoria Wulson and John Cranley. Representatives of congresspersons Schmidt and Chabot were in attendance.

I made a presentation on the domestic costs of militarism and the war in Iraq in relation to the VA and the overall effect on veterans' health care needs. Also attending were Peggy and Jerry Logue, who are the parents of a Marine who lost his life in Iraq. While he was home, he suffered greatly from the effects of the war. I quickly bonded with these people, and we talked at length about PTSD.

I mentioned to the Logues that I had spoken with a police officer a few weeks earlier about returning Iraq veterans and the many problems they are facing, including PTSD. He had said that the police were being called to bars late at night, and often it was an Iraq veteran who had been drinking heavily and getting involved in a disturbance. He had said that some of the police officers had been talking, and they felt the country was not ready for the impact when they all come home. Think about it: if we are not here for these guys, who will be? It's sort of like AA (another fine group I belong to). Anytime any veteran anywhere reaches out for help, the extended hand of VVAW must always be there, and for that I am responsible.

I also was invited by the Intercommunity Justice and Peace

Center to participate in a press conference, with all of the major Cincinnati media, about the Declaration of Peace.

Briefly, the Declaration of Peace is a nationwide campaign inviting people to pledge to declare peace by taking action to bring all US troops home from Iraq. A comprehensive, concrete, and rapid plan was established for an end to the US war in Iraq, calling for all troops to be home by March 19, 2007. Peace was declared by people engaging in nonviolent action in cities and towns across the United States, leading up to and especially during the week of September 21-28. The VVAW Ohio Valley Regional Chapter is participating in coordinated, nonviolent activities that will continue on a regular basis until the United States withdraws from Iraq.

On September 22, VVAW participated in a Peace Bell Gathering vigil in Northern Kentucky. On September 23 and 24, we showed the video *Sir! No Sir!* I also gave a presentation comparing the war in Vietnam with the war in Iraq. These were well received. There were many hugs, and tears were shed. Three 'Nam vets said they were interested in joining VVAW and the Ohio Valley Regional Chapter.

As soon as the Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati becomes available, we will be holding a major rally. The Freedom Center's mission is to inspire people to speak up in the face of injustice and for the spirit of freedom, just as so many people of all backgrounds did during the era of the Underground Railroad.

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Marty Webster, Paul Davis & Jerry Smith at the end of the 4th of July parade in Cincinnati. This is the first time VVAW has had representation in the parade in over 30 years.

## Camp Democracy Takes Aim At the Bush Administration

MICHAEL RINAMAN

Surrounded by the shadows of the monuments on the Mall in DC, Camp Democracy claimed its own ground. This year, the camp had an impressive itinerary of speeches, discussions, and protests scheduled for its seventeen-day run, beginning on September 5. All of it was aimed at accomplishing peace, democracy, and the rule of law.

Camp Democracy began last year when individuals participating in Camp Casey ventured from their protest site in Crawford, Texas, and congregated in Washington DC. The protesters seek to create a dialogue on many issues, including the war in Iraq, military policy, and immigration.

Participants in the camp were able to get out their messages using a combination of political protest and the distribution of information.

Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace participated in a sit-in on

September 12. The individuals, all participants in Camp Democracy, delivered a letter to Oregon congressman Peter DeFazio's office. It documented the telephone numbers of Suzanne Swift's chain of command.

Swift, who served in Iraq and was sexually harassed by three of her commanding officers, has been attempting to report the incident to the proper authorities. Until now, she has been disregarded, and she even faces court-martial after suffering a PTSD-induced breakdown that caused her to go absent without leave.

The protesters refused to leave DeFazio's office until he took appropriate actions concerning Swift's case. They scored a victory against sexual harassment in the military when the congressman agreed to meet with Swift's mother and to hold an official press conference immediately following the discussion.

A protest held on September

11 was not so lucky. Four Iraq War veterans and another supporter attended the first open house at the Pentagon since the attacks, then left pamphlets at the chapel containing information about the effects of depleted uranium on soldiers. While the arrest cannot be seen as positive, the arrested protesters were able to gain the spotlight in order to denounce the military's illegal use of depleted

uranium in weapons.

Each day of the camp has a different theme. While many veterans have been given the chance to speak, the camp presents a multifaceted look at the effects of the current administration's policies and the war in Iraq.



MICHAEL RINAMAN PROVIDES STAFFING ASSISTANCE FOR VVAW IN CHICAGO.



## VVAW at the Kentucky State Fair

CAROL RAWERT TRAINER

VVAW was well represented at the Kentucky State Fair from August 17 to 26, 2006. As a Vietnam-era vet and the wife of a Vietnam vet, I participated in the Louisville Peace Action Community booth, whose theme was "Support the Troops: Stop the War." On each day of the fair, our booth had volunteer veterans working in shifts from morning to night. We distributed VVAW and IVAW brochures along with other related materials.

For the most part, we were supported and thanked by the public, including active-duty military and veterans, but of course, there were a few disparaging statements.

We displayed the names of the fifty-two soldiers who died in the Iraq War. One wife of a soldier who was killed took offense and demanded that her husband's name be removed. Out of respect, we turned over all of the names, so they could not be viewed, even

though some families had called and asked us to display their family members' names.

Veterans are a very active part of the local peace movement in Louisville. We collected about 4,000 signatures on our petition to stop the war. Many GIs and their family members were afraid to sign the petition, even though they supported our efforts.

We played DVDs from Eyes Wide Open and Military Families Speak Out, which were

well received and informative. Kentucky has many veterans, but as far as I know, there is no organized group of veterans against the war. I would be interested in information to help find or form such a group. (Contact me at [crawerttrainer@gmail.com](mailto:crawerttrainer@gmail.com).)



CAROL RAWERT TRAINER IS A VIETNAM-ERA VET (USAF, AIC, 1965-68) AND A MEMBER OF VVAW.

## New VVAW Chapter

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Brother Army Steiber, the VVAW regional contact from Michigan, visited Cincinnati recently and told me that as he reflected on the center, he began to see a number of parallels between slavery and war. The rich are profiteering, and people are being brutalized. The effects never go away, families are torn apart, laws make it legal, and preachers use the bible to justify it.

I cannot think of a better place for a rally. More information on

this event will be posted on [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org) when it becomes available. All are welcome to attend and participate.



MARTY WEBSTER IS THE VVAW OHIO REGIONAL CONTACT FOR CINCINNATI. HE IS CURRENTLY THE COORDINATOR OF THE OHIO VALLEY REGIONAL CHAPTER OF VVAW.



Jerry Smith (VVAW), Paul Davis (VFP), the newest VVAW Ohio Valley Regional Chapter member, and Marty Webster (VVAW) at a showing of Sir! No Sir! in Cincinnati on September 24

# Camouflaged Blues

RAY PARRISH

Thinking of enlisting in the military?

I'm the military and veterans' counselor at VVAW. I started doing veterans' counseling in 1976. My father, my mother, and I were NCOs in the USAF. I've also been a mental health caseworker and an American Legion veterans' service officer.

The most important advice I can give you is to follow your conscience. That's what I tell the soldiers who call me for help. I've learned that the veterans with the most disabling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the ones with guilty consciences. In order to survive combat, they were forced to do things that they now think were wrong. You need to listen to these veterans, learn from their experience, and avoid a guilty conscience and a lifetime of nightmares. A wiser man once said, "Recovering from war is an ascent from hell."

The decision to enlist in the military is the most important decision that you will ever make. It will determine the course of the rest of your life. I wish that you had another decade of life experiences that you could look at, so that your decision could be better informed. You don't, so listen to the veterans. Think about what it would be like to have to take orders from everybody with more rank. To have your schedule decided for you twenty-four hours a day. To be in situations where you feel forced to commit evil.

First of all, President Bush thinks that everyone who enlists is willing to kill and die at his command. Are you? Do you really want to be a part of his wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, or his perpetual "global war on terror," with future attacks on Iran and Venezuela? If so, go! But be careful, and remember that you can always call me if you need help of any kind. If current American foreign policy makes you uneasy, you should wait for it to change before enlisting.

After listening to thousands of vets, I know that all veterans say that they enlisted to defend our freedoms and families and that this is the only cause worth killing and dying for. Since the last real world war—sixty years ago—American GIs have been discovering that the real reason for their particular conflict, "police action," "humanitarian relief," or

war had nothing to do with protecting our country. We were deceived by our leaders into sacrificing our lives for their personal, political, or economic gain. Now we warn the next generation to beware.

After a lifetime of military training and conditioning and my father's second year in Vietnam, I was a seventeen-year-old warrior wannabe. I became disillusioned after the students were killed at Kent State and Jackson State. I realized I was just cannon fodder after heart-to-heart conversations with Vietnam vets I met while I was doing volunteer work at a medical-evacuation hospital in Japan, where I went to high school. It wasn't the horror stories that they told me that hit me. It was them! They had been changed from my older schoolmates, who had marched off to war to protect me, into zombies. They were guilt-ridden and filled with rage and violence. They convinced me that theirs was a group that I didn't want to belong to! So I joined the USAF, got trained in Russian, and worked as an intelligence analyst for the National Security Agency. I served in Turkey during their war with Greece over Cyprus and the 1973 Arab-Israeli war.

Even with the GI Bill and free tuition, I needed a part-time job to make it through college, and the VA's work-study program would do it. I used my motorcycle to do "outreach" to Vietnam vets hiding from life in the Shawnee National Forest, and I taught myself veterans' counseling. Helping combat vets, like my new brother-in-law at that time, was very rewarding, but it was also draining. By 1981, just as many Vietnam vets had committed suicide as had been killed in the war. Why? Because combat-induced post-traumatic stress disorder was only finally recognized as a disability by the medical establishment that year. It would be years before veterans (and their children born with birth defects) got treatment and compensation for the diseases caused by exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange, which was used in Vietnam.

Vets felt abandoned and couldn't get help from anybody but themselves. While the war was still going on, it was VVAW that set up veterans' "rap groups" so that vets could deal with PTSD. These later became the VA's "vet centers," which handled only men-

tal health problems. And VVAW was the only veterans' group to support the VA worker who blew the whistle on the VA's Agent Orange cover-up. The government knew for years that Agent Orange was killing vets and causing birth defects in their children.

If you do go, be prepared to pay a heavy price. You will bear most of the costs of this war personally, and it may take years for some of the bills to come due. First, 56% of the 1991 Persian Gulf War veterans are already on disability, and 11% have died. There are a lot of reasons why today's wars are causing such widespread and severe physical and mental injuries to the soldiers who fight them. In addition to dying or being maimed in combat or accidents, deadly pesticides and chemicals and experimental anti-malarial and anti-chemical-weapon drugs sometimes disable or kill. The deadliest killers are DU and PTSD. Second, Bush is selling bonds to finance the war that won't come due for payment for thirty years.

DU is depleted uranium. It's the still-radioactive remains of fuel rods from nuclear power plants that are no longer hot enough to boil water. It kills and causes birth defects. Armor-piercing shells are coated with it, and it's used in the armor on American vehicles. Millions of tons of this cancer-causing element have been released into the air. Millions of people in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo have inhaled and ingested particles of it, and thousands have died or become disabled by it. The military's cover-up continues.

Half of all deployed veterans need treatment for combat- or rape-induced PTSD or other service-connected mental disorders. Despite expectations of a 25% increase in new requests for PTSD treatment, the VA is budgeting for a 3% increase this year and cutbacks for the next four. The severity of the depression or anxiety can be disabling. There are veterans who haven't had a decent night's sleep for thirty, forty, or fifty years because of the memories. And there are many who aren't around because they couldn't stand the nightmares for another day.

PTSD comes from what was done to you and what you did. It comes from enduring the threat of death 24/7 for months on end. It comes from seeing buddies get injured or die horrible deaths. It

comes from surviving. It comes from killing an innocent civilian accidentally or as part of "collateral damage." It comes from realizing that killing anyone for lies, oil, and politics is a sin and may be seen by the world as a war crime. It comes from being raped by a fellow GI. It comes from regretting that you didn't do more to stop an atrocity. It comes when you realize that "even a cook" contributes to the bloodshed. It comes from seeing a future for yourself without an arm or a leg. It comes from being involuntarily activated after being out of the military for years. It comes from being kept on active duty past the date on your enlistment contract because of "military necessity," or from thinking that the only way home is in a body bag. It comes from not being allowed to use your educational benefits because your commander thinks you're too busy. It comes from worrying about how your family is worrying about you and suffering because of your absence. It comes from not being allowed to take care of family problems because the military "needs you more." It comes from being denied help by the local VA because they can't find your military medical records, or they can't figure out what's causing your medical problems, or they're just too busy.

When you hear some veterans say that we should "stay the course," remember that they are a minority. Reliable polls show that 72% of the troops in Iraq say we should get out by the end of 2006, and the media rarely shows troops who don't support the war.

I realize that after you finish reading this, there will still be plenty of reasons to enlist. If nothing else, think of your family. Your family will have to deal with their worries during your service—and if you don't survive, the empty chair at the dinner table will remind them every day. When I was in basic training, my father supported my efforts to stay out of Vietnam, but not because he no longer supported the war. He said that his major concern was not forcing my mother to endure another year of worrying.



RAY PARRISH (SGT., USAF, 72-75)  
IS VVAW'S MILITARY COUNSELOR.  
IF YOU NEED HELP, CALL HIM AT  
773-561-VVAW OR EMAIL HIM AT  
CAMIBLUE@VVAW.ORG.

# Standing With Military War Resisters

WARD REILLY

Six hundred veterans attending the Veterans for Peace national convention in Seattle, including dozens of VVAW members, had the great honor and pleasure to stand with Lt. Ehren Watada and Sgt. Ricky Clousing during a four-day weekend of resistance, planning, and organizational workshops. Watada spoke on Saturday, August 12, as did, among others, Dahr Jamail (outstanding independent journalist), Ray McGovern (CIA analyst for twenty-seven years, cofounder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity), and John Perkins (economist and author of *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*).

Lt. Watada is the first West Point officer to refuse to be deployed to Iraq, and what makes his case even more intriguing is that he has challenged the legality of the Iraq invasion, also a first. Watada is not acting as a consci-



Jane Fonda at the Vets 4 Vets meeting

entious objector, which is a much more common (but not common enough) reason to refuse deployment to Iraq.

Much to Watada's surprise, he received a standing ovation before he even spoke, and that

thrill was doubled when at least forty members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) followed him onstage in an emotional and spontaneous show of solidarity.

We also had the honor of standing with Iraq combat veteran Sgt. Ricky Clousing, who had been AWOL for a year and a half prior to his press conference at the convention. On August 11, Clousing held a press conference to announce that he was turning himself in to military authorities at Fort Lewis, Washington. Clousing is a twenty-four-year-old Army sergeant and interrogator from Seattle who left Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 2005 after returning from Iraq. He was with the 82nd Airborne Division.

At the press conference, Clousing stated, "In Iraq, I operated as an interrogator and was attached to tactical infantry units during daily patrol operations. As an interrogator, I spoke to Iraqis each day. This gave me an idea of what local civilians thought of coalition forces. Throughout my training, very appropriate guidelines for the treatment of prisoners were set. However, I witnessed our baseless incarceration of civilians. I saw civilians physically harassed. I saw an innocent Iraqi killed before me by US troops. I saw the abuse of power that goes without accountability. Being attached to a tactical infantry unit and being exposed to the brutalities of war, I began to doubt and reconsider my beliefs."

On August 13, about 150 US military veterans boarded buses for Peace Arch Park on the US-Canadian border to celebrate resistance to current and past aggressive US invasions with US troops currently taking refuge in



VVAW members Ward Reilly and Brian Willson, together in support of Lt. Ehren Watada

Canada.

Retired US Army colonel Ann Wright embraced twenty-two-year-old Iraq veteran-turned-refugee Kyle Snyder at the border. Of his resistance to the war, Col. Wright said, "It is part of military tradition that you can refuse illegal orders," she said. "They have the courage to stand up and say ... 'I'm not going to have this war on my conscience.'"

Back in Seattle, Sarah Rich, mother of formerly AWOL, now imprisoned US Army soldier Suzanne Swift, blasted the Army for jailing her daughter at Fort Lewis for refusing orders to return to Iraq. Speaking to a jam-packed news conference at the convention, Rich said her daughter was repeatedly subjected to sexual harassment by US soldiers during her first deployment to Iraq.

"She was arrested, stripped, treated like a common criminal, while the criminals who assaulted her go free," Rich said. "Suzanne was my hero when she went to Iraq, my hero when she came home, and my hero when she

went AWOL. Right now, soldiers are being raped. It's an epidemic. There are twenty-two task forces on military sexual assault, yet the perpetrators go free," she charged. "Free my daughter, and stop military sexual assault now!"

Jane Fonda showed up to support our work, and she attended a Vets 4 Vets session on Friday the eleventh. It was nice to meet Ms. Fonda in person and to see her still supporting antiwar work.

Some of the VVAW members in attendance were: Bill Perry, Dave Cline, Mike Hastie, Brian Willson, Ray Parrish, Billy Kelly, Doug Zachary, Jim Driscoll, Lane Anderson, Thomas Brinson, Elliott Adams, and myself. Many others were also there.

All in all, it was an incredible weekend of resistance, peace, and solidarity against the unjust and illegal wars in the Middle East.



WARD REILLY IS THE SOUTHEAST NATIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW.



Lt. Ehren Watada, with forty IVAW members behind him, speaking to 600 veterans at the VFP convention in Seattle

# Taking Back Our Schools

JIM MURPHY

“Taking Back Our Schools” was a full-day workshop and teach-in centered on community education on the issues of counter-recruiting and the presence of the military in our public schools. It was presented as a two-part event on the same day, September 9, 2006, at West Side High School in New York City. The morning session was for veterans only, focusing on how to present our personal stories to high-school students within a classroom or assembly setting. This session was attended by twenty-five veterans spanning World War II to the Iraq War. A training DVD that shows two veterans doing this kind of presentation is ready for distribution and will be distributed to chapters

of VVAW and Veterans for Peace upon request. We focused on how we tell our story while continually interjecting the improbable truths that are currently discussed by military recruiters in their schools. Given that we generally work within forty- to fifty-minute time periods, we realize that we have to be concise and thorough, all at the same time. Our favorite presentations are when we debate recruiters before high school assemblies. During the past semester, we reached over 15,000 students in over sixty high schools. We are both retired teachers, so we know how to work a classroom and how to keep students’ attention. The DVD models specific strategies.

The afternoon session was

geared to networking community groups, teacher-student teams, and parents with veterans. We discussed legal rights, how to approach high-school administrators to get veterans who are counter-recruiters in their schools as presenters, and how to implement opt-out letters in the public schools. We purposely didn’t over-structure this session, hoping for more cross-dialogue between the several groups that were present, which included borough and neighborhood groups (Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn), unions, educators (NYCORE), veterans, and our friends from Code Pink. After discussing our approaches to leading class discussions on enlisting

in the military, each group made a short presentation, telling who they were, the materials they used, and their ideas about how to alter our approaches to fighting the current, well-financed campaign to entice kids to go into the military services. The rest was about eating and schmoozing!

For more information, visit New York Veterans Speak Out: [www.veteransforpeace.org/vfpnyvso.htm](http://www.veteransforpeace.org/vfpnyvso.htm)



JIM MURPHY SERVED IN VIETNAM (1968–69) AND PARTICIPATED IN THE VVAW TAKEOVER OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY IN 1971.

# Louisiana State University Protests Cheney Visit

WARD REILLY

Vice President (and chief US war criminal) “Little Dick” Cheney was greeted “warmly” (but only because of the ninety-eight-degree temperature) at Louisiana State University on Friday, May 26, 2006 by angry military veterans, students, citizens, and professors when he showed up in his very well-armored limousine to speak to LSU graduates.

Thousands of faculty members and students refused to stand or applaud during Cheney’s speech, in which he stated that “America is winning the war on terror.” He also mentioned LSU’s national championship in football. (Uh, Dick? That was three years ago.) He rambled on and on about what a great job the administration did during Katrina and how the Gulf Coast could count on him to “be there” for us.

Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and several other organizations attended the demonstration at the Pete Maravich Assem-



bly Center in support of students, who thought that the university could have found a better speaker, considering the amazingly great job the administration did during Hurricane Katrina here in south Louisiana.

With an 18% approval rating, we are sure it was really hard to book “Little Dick” as a speaker. (Not!) Coincidentally, Cheney spoke in the same building that was

used as the Katrina triage center after the disaster—another huge chunk of irony.

Some students showed up to receive their diplomas while wearing hunters’ orange vests, and I handed out hundreds of pins that said “Jail Bush and Cheney” and “Make Levees, Not War.”



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 1971–74, SPENDING A THOUSAND STRAIGHT DAYS IN GERMANY WITH THE BIG RED ONE. HE JOINED VVAW ORIGINALLY IN 1972 AND RE-UPPED IN 2001.



Rep. Karen Yarborough, Veterans Day 2005, Chicago



Mark Hartford, Veterans Day 2005, Veterans' Plaza, Columbus, Ohio

# Statement on Behalf of Lt. Ehren Watada

FRANCIS A. BOYLE

Since the US Supreme Court's installation of George W. Bush as president in January 2001, the peoples of the world have witnessed a government in the United States of America that demonstrates little (if any) respect for fundamental considerations of international law, international organizations, and human rights, let alone appreciation of the requirements for maintaining international peace and security. What the world has watched instead is a comprehensive and malicious assault upon the integrity of the international legal order by a group of men and women who are thoroughly Machiavellian in their perception of international relations and in their conduct of both foreign policy and domestic affairs. This is not simply a question of giving or withholding the benefit of the doubt when it comes to complicated matters of foreign affairs and defense policies to a US government charged with the security of both its own citizens and those of its allies in Europe, the western hemisphere, and the Pacific. Rather, the Bush administration's foreign policies represent a gross deviation from those basic rules of international deportment and civilized behavior that the United States government had traditionally played the pioneer role in promoting for the entire world community. Even more seriously, in many instances, specific components of the Bush administration's foreign policies constitute ongoing criminal activity under well-recognized principles of both international law and US domestic law, and in particular the Nuremberg Charter, the Nuremberg Judgment, and the Nuremberg Principles.

Depending upon the substantive issues involved, those international crimes typically include but are not limited to the Nuremberg offenses of crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as grave breaches of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 1907 Hague Regulations on land warfare, torture, disappearances, and assassinations. In addition, various members of the Bush administration committed numerous inchoate crimes incidental to these substantive offenses that under the Nuremberg Charter, Judgment, and Principles were international crimes in their own right: planning, preparation,

solicitation, incitement, conspiracy, complicity, attempt, aiding and abetting, etc. Of course, the great irony of today's situation is that six decades ago at Nuremberg, representatives of the US government participated in the prosecution, punishment, and execution of Nazi government officials for committing some of the same types of heinous international crimes that members of the Bush administration currently inflict upon people all around the world. To be sure, I personally oppose the imposition of capital punishment upon any person for any reason, no matter how monstrous their crimes: George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Vladimir Putin, Ariel Sharon, etc.

Furthermore, according to basic principles of international criminal law, all high-level civilian officials and military officers in the US government who either knew or should have known that soldiers or civilians under their control committed or were about to commit international crimes, and failed to take the measures necessary to stop them, or to punish them, or both, are likewise personally responsible for the commission of international crimes. This category of officialdom who actually knew (or at least should have known) of the commission of such substantive or inchoate international crimes under their jurisdiction and failed to do anything about it typically includes the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Director of Central Intelligence, the National Security Adviser, the Attorney General, the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff and regional CINCs, and the President and Vice-President. These US government officials and their immediate subordinates, among others, were personally responsible for the commission of (or at least complicity in the commission of) crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes as specified by the Nuremberg Charter, Judgment, and Principles—at a minimum.

One generation ago, the peoples of the world asked themselves: Where were the "good" Germans? Well, there were some good Germans. The Lutheran theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the foremost exemplar of someone who led a



*Lt. Ehren Watada*

life of principled opposition to the Nazi terror state, even unto death.

Today the peoples of the world are likewise asking themselves: Where are the "good" Americans? Well, there are some good Americans. They are getting prosecuted for protesting against illegal US military interventions and war crimes around the world. First Lieutenant Ehren Watada is America's equivalent to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Václav Havel, Andrei Sakharov, Wei Jingsheng, Aung San Suu Kyi, and others. He is the archetypal American hero whom we should be bringing into our schools and teaching our children to emulate, instead of those wholesale purveyors of gratuitous violence and bloodshed adulated by the US government, America's power elite, and the mainstream corporate news media and its interlocked entertainment industry.

In international legal terms, the Bush administration itself should now be viewed as constituting an ongoing criminal conspiracy under international criminal law in violation of the Nuremberg Charter, the Nuremberg Judgment, and the Nuremberg Principles, because of its

formulation and undertaking of wars of aggression, crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes that are legally akin to those perpetrated by the former Nazi regime in Germany.

As a consequence, American citizens and soldiers such as Lieutenant Watada possess the basic right under international law and the United States domestic law, including the US Constitution, to engage in acts of civil resistance in order to prevent, impede, thwart, or terminate ongoing criminal activities perpetrated by US government officials in their conduct of foreign affairs policies and military operations purported to relate to defense and counter-terrorism.

If not so restrained, the Bush administration could very well precipitate a third world war.



*FRANCIS BOYLE IS A PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN. HE HAS WORKED ON MANY CASES OF MILITARY RESISTERS OVER THE YEARS AND HAS LONG BEEN A SUPPORTER OF VVAW.*

# Memorial Day 2006, Chicago

KEN NIELSEN

This spring, VVAW's annual Memorial Day ceremony in Chicago was held in Chicago's new (disgracefully located) Vietnam Veterans Memorial, of which plenty was said in the last issue of the *Veteran*. Nevertheless, it was a successful event, with a wide range of speakers and attendees from diverse backgrounds. We were extremely fortunate to have among our presenters Cassie Elliot, an Iraq War veteran who served in Iraq for six months with the Marines. Longtime VVAW member Bill Davis also gave a very emotional speech that was well received. State representative Karen Yarborough, who sponsored the impeachment resolution in the Illinois house, appealed to the crowd to support her resolution. (Many thanks to Carl Nyberg, who coordinated the effort to get Representative Yarborough to attend the ceremony.) Code Pink was represented by Pat Hunt, who provided the crowd with an array of information about the

counter-recruitment happening in Chicago-area high schools. A Hyde Park doctor and World War II veteran, Al Klinger, offered a long and engaging diatribe, concluding with one of his poems. VVAW member Cesar Ruvalcaba spoke about immigrants' rights. One of the most emotional and unplanned set of speakers was Iraq War veteran Dave Adams and Kosovo War veteran Adam Navarro. Adam and Dave both served in the 101st.

In what has become something of a tradition, VVAW's GI counselor, Ray Parrish, concluded the ceremony with a talk about the state of veterans' benefits and about groups organizing around the issues of returning Iraq War veterans. Ray had these stirring final words: "We've got to remember our veterans. That's what today's all about: memories, the memories we have of our war experiences. Just like Brother Klinger got done telling us today, those are with us forever. The war will never end for the veterans who



Bill Davis of VVAW at Memorial Day, Chicago

were in that war. So don't worry. It's working. We are saving our veterans, one person at a time."



KEN NIELSEN SERVED IN THE US ARMY FROM 1991 TO 1993 (4TH BATTALION, 9TH DIVISION, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION). HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND VFP.

## Feeling the Pain (Memorial Day, Chicago)

ADAM NAVARRO-LOWERY

A few things stick out in my mind from that hot day in May. I remember it being a bit somber as veterans and veterans' supporters began congregating at the memorial site. I arrived not knowing any event was taking place, but nonetheless, I showed up wearing my BDU top, along with all of my badges and regalia that I earned during my term of service to our country. Other veterans filtered onto the site, wearing the same. We embraced one another, sharing our pain, allowing ourselves to be healed by touch and mutual understanding of what we had experienced while serving our great nation in the US military. I remember it clearly. I coincidentally ran into Dave Adams, who served with me at the 101st Airborne Division. We were friends there, and we always related to each other on many topics—mostly asking ourselves why we were there, taking orders from some sergeant who'd barely graduated high school (or did not, putting it as nicely as I can.) Dave and I froze for a moment as we looked into each other's eyes and then immediately embraced each other. We were shocked, mostly from the fact that we were just happy to see we were both alive

and in one piece, and not killed or mangled. We stayed next to each other for the duration of the day.

Dave and I always seemed to share the same sentiments. Perhaps it was because we came from similar backgrounds, were from major US cities (Chicago and Detroit); or maybe it's because our states are blue ones, or possibly because we both were somewhat educated (Dave is now a senior at SIU, and I am a junior at DePaul University). Who knows for sure? But one thing that is most significant now is the fact that we are both against this senseless war. Both of us have seen the impact firsthand, Dave in Iraq and I in Kosovo. We have seen our friends' names show up among the dead. We have seen many come back missing limbs, mangled, their lives forever changed. We have one friend who was lost in a series of makeshift field hospitals, which worsened his injuries and condition before they "found" him. His wife left him, saying that she "would not take care of a retard." Many sad stories like this have come about because of the deception that was used to get the American people to somehow support this war.

After Senator Yarborough



Dave Adams and Adam Navarro-Lowery at Memorial Day, Chicago

addressed the crowd of veterans and media, Dave and I were asked to speak as veterans of the recent conflicts and to honor those who had fallen. I noticed that all the media outlets like NBC and CBS had packed up and left. I was shocked by that. It sent a very clear message to me. I realized that Americans do not want to listen, hear, or see what is going on over there in Iraq and Afghanistan. They couldn't care less. I do not understand this country. Why do we not honor those who sacrifice themselves? The only ones who remained to listen to the story were the other veterans, veterans of Vietnam,

World War II, the Korean War, and other conflicts such as Somalia, Grenada, Lebanon, Bosnia, and Kosovo. They remained standing with us. Feeling the pain.



ADAM C. NAVARRO-LOWERY SERVED PROUDLY FOR OVER THREE YEARS IN THE US ARMY MILITARY POLICE CORPS, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION, DEPLOYED TO KOSOVO FOR A SIX-MONTH TOUR, AND WAS HONORABLY DISCHARGED IN 2003. HE IS A SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE FOR AN ONLINE COMPANY HEADQUARTERED IN CHICAGO AND A FULL-TIME ECONOMICS STUDENT AT DEPAUL UNIVERSITY.

## VVAW Member Visits Iran

STANLEY CAMPBELL

The second Fellowship of Reconciliation ([www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org)) delegation to Iran met with human-rights educators, environmentalists, students, women's groups, religious leaders, and veterans. Twenty-three American peace activists, myself included, landed in Tehran for a whirlwind tour: five cities in twelve days, in an "Axis of Evil" country on the verge of acquiring nuclear reactors. Three of us were veterans; I was the only VVAW member.

First, let me say that the Iranian people send you their love. Their new president just sent a letter to Bush outlining grievances but offering dialogue. This hit the news as we arrived in Tehran. Iranians consistently asked, "What do you think of Bush?" "Will he read the letter?" and "What do you think of our nuclear program?" I apologized for my president, saying that I doubted he would read the letter. I said that nuclear power is too expensive and that I don't trust governments to keep it safe. We also said that the United States must stop producing nuclear weapons and that the rest of the

world, instead of trying to acquire them, should abolish nukes.

Our peace delegation was well received, and we went to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Qom (the Vatican of the Shiites, although it looked more like Vegas). In Natanz, we visited an orphanage and saw a nuclear facility surrounded by anti-aircraft artillery.

Because of the Iranian president's letter, we were interviewed by the BBC, CNN, Reuters, and the Associated Press. (Democracy Now ran a clip—thanks, Amy!) We met more officials than expected; most of them began with religious litanies and exhortations to become Shiite. Those guys are more evangelical than Billy Graham!

On the way home, the US secretary of state said she was going to hire more Farsi-speaking experts. About time! Our government hasn't had diplomatic relations with Iran since 1979, except for trading arms for hostages. I gave my five-CD collection of "Basic Farsi" to Condi. It was the least I could do to get my government to talk peace.



Stanley Campbell and Moksan Maksani

In Tehran, we visited the International Centre for Training and Treatment of the Victims of Chemical Warfare. Most of them had been injured during the ten-year Iran-Iraq war. Iran, led by fanatical mullahs who didn't know military tactics from morning prayers, sent wave after wave of young, idealistic cannon fodder. It was the longest stalemate

since World War I, and Iraq used chemical weapons.

Moksan Maksani, one of Iran's soldiers, threw himself on the front. He had lost two hands and was chemically blinded, but he sat before us, twenty-three American peace activists who'd just gotten off the plane. Iranian

*continued on page 15*

## VVAW Joins Antiwar Groups on Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young Tour

MICHAEL RINAMAN

This summer, from July 6 to September 10, Vietnam Veterans Against the War joined other veterans and military families for an outreach program on the Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young (CSNY) "Freedom of Speech '06" tour.

At concerts in over thirty cities across the United States (and two in Canada) VVAW, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Veterans For Peace, Military Families Speak Out, and Gold Star Families for Peace took turns distributing information to the crowd.

Cooperating with the tour and the band (an idea of Veterans For Peace) allowed for a new space to debate issues that have recently been pushed to the side. "We were on the margins of debate at the start of the Iraq War," said Washington DC VVAW contact Patrick McCann, "and the tour allowed us to be at the center." McCann, also a member of Veterans For Peace, served as the liaison between the veterans'

groups in each tour city and the CSNY outreach program's leadership.

VVAW and IVAW had strong turnouts at many of the arenas, including those in Montreal, Denver, Portland, Fresno, Concord, Irving, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee. During shows in these cities, local members turned out to staff a designated table stocked with free literature, buttons, a sign-up sheet, and a donation bucket. They were also on hand to discuss veterans' issues and antiwar sentiments with the crowd throughout the evening.

The tour, featuring the music of seventies artists Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, was the perfect venue for the veterans' groups to convey their messages. "That's our age group. That's our political base," said McCann. With thousands of members of that base on hand for the concert, the volunteers were able to share information, get the attention of a massive group of interested listeners, and get people invested in the cause.

"The tour really motivated our members. They were pumped up," McCann said. "The response was overwhelmingly positive." Not only did the tour stoke the ambitions of group members, but it also resulted in numerous people signing up to volunteer.

The CSNY tour was the first in what McCann hopes to be many similar ventures. "This summer allowed these organizations to deepen their working relationship. It is a

growing working alliance."

In the future, the organizers of the outreach program would like to work with another tour; names like Springsteen are being thrown into the mix. They hope to process the feedback from this summer's work and continue to get the message out about the war and its effects.



MICHAEL RINAMAN PROVIDES STAFFING ASSISTANCE FOR VVAW IN CHICAGO.



Tracey Sperko & John Zutz provide information from the veteran's table at the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young "Freedom of Speech" concert in Milwaukee.

## A Slice of History

DAVE KETTENHOFEN (REVIEWER)

### Winter Soldier

Directed by Michael Lesser

(Milliarium Zero and Winterfilm, 2005)

[www.wintersoldierfilm.com](http://www.wintersoldierfilm.com)

It's hard to shake the brutal honesty of this film. So many young men baring their souls in the hopes that their country would come to its senses and stop the murderous war in Vietnam. Originally released in 1972, this account of the Winter Soldier Investigation, an inquiry into American war crimes, is now available in the DVD format and is an instant classic.

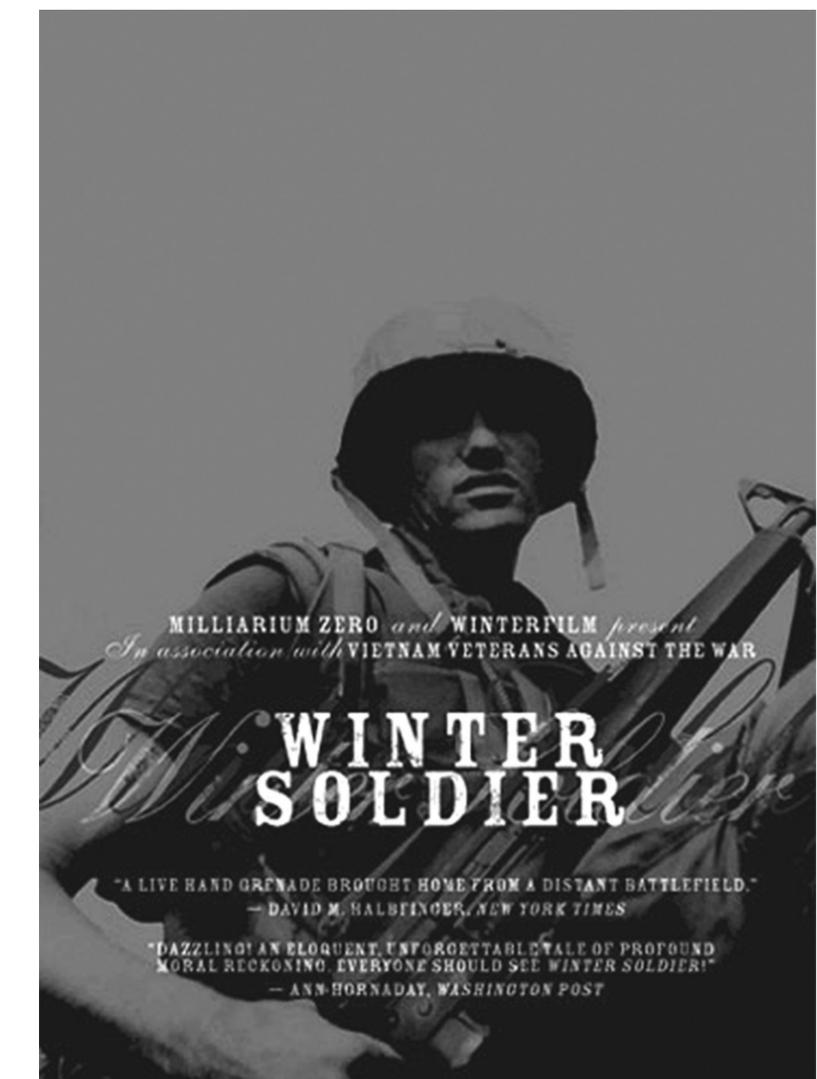
The Winter Soldier Investigation took place in Detroit, Michigan on January 31 and February 1 and 2, 1971. More than 100 veterans testified to war crimes they had committed or witnessed in Vietnam. Their testimonies attempted to show the inhumanity of war, illustrating how they were trained to see the enemy as less than human, so that brutalizing them wouldn't seem quite so bad. Atrocities were shown not to be just isolated incidents but the norm in many units.

This film is mesmerizing and flows naturally. One by one, these veterans relate their personal stories of torture, racism, free-fire zones, the burning of hamlets, carpet bombings, etc. It is an ex-

tremely moving experience; there is really nothing to add—the testimonies tell it all. It's about innocence lost. It's about taking a stand against what is morally wrong. It is about being a patriot!

There are some out there (Swift Boat liars and the like) who have attacked the Winter Soldier Investigation and its participants as lacking credibility and being fraudulent. Anyone drawing that conclusion after viewing the heartfelt testimonies portrayed here is either wearing blinders or is a total idiot with no conscience. This film is truth.

The DVD contains many bonus features that really make it a complete package. There's a discussion with the filmmakers in which they relate their feelings and perceptions while making the film and in the present. The testimonies of veterans from the Americal Division and the First Marine Division are shown in separate shorts. Scott Camil is profiled, including a recent interview with him. "The Winter Soldier Files," which are several historical documents, are downloadable on DVD-ROM. And what I found to be best of all was a stills gallery of many incredible, candid photos from Operation RAW, the Winter Soldier Investigation, and Dewey Canyon III by VVAW photogra-



pher Sheldon Ramsdell.

I feel that the Winter Soldier Investigation is an iconic event in the histories of both VVAW and the antiwar movement in general. Its stories must be preserved and its message must be passed on. Honor the courage of the veterans who put it all on the line here. Add this

DVD to your collection.



DAVE KETTENHOFEN IS A VIETNAM VETERAN (1970–71), A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR, AND A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER OF VVAW.

## World's Biggest Litter Box

BOB RIGGLE (REVIEWER)

### A Line In The Sand

By Robert Serocki, Jr.

(One World Press, 2006)

VVAW member Robert Serocki grew up and lived his life in the same way many of us did: playing war games with his buddies, protecting his little sister from bullies, and being being bullied quite often himself. And like us, he survived. Upon graduating from high school, he did what many of us also did. For whatever crazy reasons, he enlisted in the military. Robert Serocki was going to be a Marine!

Serocki shares moments of his introduction to the "Marine Corps way" during his time in boot camp. You know, like getting poked in the eye with the rounded end of a coat hanger. Getting punched to the ground by your DI, only to have him yell at you to get the fuck up, 'cause he never

gave you permission to fall down. Yeah, they seem a bit humorous now, but they were guaranteed to fill a scared young man's boxers with a decent-sized load.

In August 1990, he and his unit were one of the first to arrive in (and ultimately one of the very last to leave) Saudi Arabia in preparation for what would become Desert Storm. It was a land he lovingly came to refer to as "the world's biggest litter box. Nothing but sand, shit, and bugs

that eat shit."

Robert's inclusion of letters to and from home really help to emphasize the urgency, dread, and fear he must have felt. They detail daytime temperatures of up to 130 degrees, "rats as big as a man's foot," and living through dysentery and food poisoning simultaneously.

"I had been turned into someone else. I was a bloodthirsty killer. I have lived with death's odor.... I have given my life for freedom....

I was nothing but a shell filled with death, hate and despair and was about to be unleashed into the real world." These were Robert Serocki's thoughts and state of mind after returning from the Gulf. While this is Robert Serocki's story, I can't help feel that it could also be any one of ours.



BOB RIGGLE IS A VVAW MEMBER AND THE CONTACT FOR CAVE CREEK, ARIZONA.



Eyes Wide Open, Ohio

# Mandatory Viewing for Potential Enlistees

DAVE KETTENHOFEN (REVIEWER)

## Sir! No Sir!

Directed by David Zeiger

(Displaced Films, 2006)

www.sirnosir.com

Wow, this film must be subversive! How dare anyone challenge the popular, ongoing efforts to rewrite the history of the Vietnam War? Writer, producer, and director David Zeiger does just that. He has put together a comprehensive, tightly woven look at the GI resistance to the war, and one that doesn't cast the dissenting soldiers as traitors.

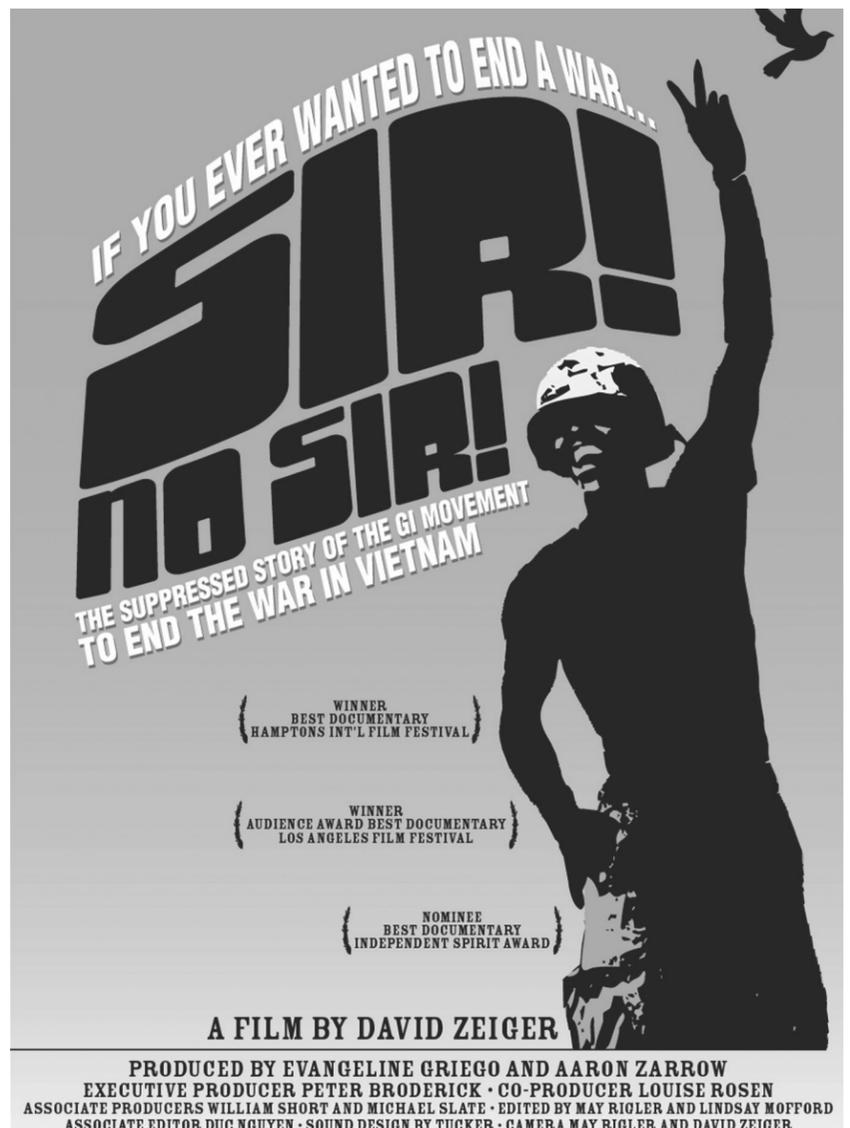
Most of those who came to resist the war effort were disillusioned young people who initially felt they were doing the right thing. Donald Duncan, ex-Green Beret, sets the tone early on by stating, "I was really proud of what I thought I was doing. The problem I had was realizing what I was doing was not good. I was doing it right, but I wasn't doing right." What many troops experienced or witnessed forced them to follow their consciences and take stances against the war. There were others who came to this realization even before going to Vietnam. All are portrayed here.

Dave Cline, after relating a very traumatic combat experience, says, "When you just went through an experience of that nature, and you find out that it's all lies, and that it's lying to the American people, and your silence means that you're part of keeping that lie going, I couldn't stop. I mean, I couldn't be silent. You know, I felt that I had a responsibility to my

friends and the country in general and to the Vietnamese." Many returning soldiers, like Cline, went on to educate new recruits to the reality of the war. They took part in rap sessions at the coffeehouses located outside military installations and published underground newspapers. Through these and other efforts, the GI resistance rapidly expanded to installations throughout the world.

The film touches all the bases. It covers the prosecution of those who refused to go to Vietnam, the deserters, the jail inmate rebellions, fraggings, mutinies, GI coffeehouses, underground newspapers, Jane Fonda's FTA tours, VVAW's Winter Soldier Investigation and Dewey Canyon III, the black soldiers' solidarity movement, general insubordination, and more. Various landmark events are highlighted as the war resistance grows larger and more powerful through the years. Also shown is the government's reaction and often violent response to the movement. This history has been largely ignored. Commenting on the foggy memory of many historians for events of this period, Jerry Lembcke says, "This is an important piece we're talking about. How memory about the war has been rewritten, has been reconstructed. This is gone. This has been erased. This has been displaced."

Zeiger's award-winning documentary is a collection of film and photos from Vietnam and other locales interspersed with present-day interviews of



veterans who were part of the antiwar movement. The editing job is wonderful; the film flows effortlessly and is never boring. Though not stated, this film draws very obvious parallels to the war in Iraq and the growing GI and veteran resistance to it. A powerful counter-recruiting tool, this movie should be mandatory for anyone considering a venture into the military ranks.

Also included on this DVD is a largely animated short, the Ruckus Society's Punk Ass Crusade. It

is a counter-recruiting video that compares statistical data from the Vietnam and Iraq wars, urging us to "starve the beast," with great hip-hop accompaniment by the Coup.



DAVE KETTENHOFEN IS A VIETNAM VETERAN (1970-71), A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR, AND A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER OF VVAW.

## VVAW Member Visits Iran

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dignitaries watched our response. Moksan spoke softly in self-taught English. He was "defending his country," but war "had bitter consequences" and there must be a better way. "Americans have helped the world," he said, and he counts as his heroes Jefferson and Washington. He said that "Americans support individual rights" and "the US should lead the world to peace."

He spoke as if he were a VVAW member—from the heart. I gave Moksan a VVAW pin and a baseball cap with Chicago Bulls NBA championship insignia. He mentioned how unfortunate it was

that the Bulls had lost Michael Jordan. I wish I could bring Moksan to America to speak about how veterans can lead their countries away from the battlefield.



DIRECTOR OF ROCKFORD URBAN MINISTRIES FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, VVAW MEMBER STANLEY CAMPBELL HAS TRAVELED TO NICARAGUA (1985), TO GUATEMALA (1986), WITH VVAW TO VIETNAM (1987), TO OCCUPIED PALESTINE, AND TO COLUMBIA AS A VVAW REP (BOTH 1988). CAMPBELL ALSO MET WITH VETERANS IN SARAJEVO IN 1996.



Stephen Fryburg, veteran and director of the Dayton Peace Museum, Frank Gatti of NJ Vets For Peace, and Stanley Campbell (VVAW) salute the Iran veterans cemetery and vow no more war.

# Speech to International Agent Orange Conference in Vietnam, March 29, 2006

DAVID CLINE

First, let me thank the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin for organizing this international conference, and the Agent Orange vets from Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada who have traveled here to participate. The US delegation I am leading is made up of Agent Orange vets Frank Corcoran, Joan Duffy, Ralph Steele, and Dan Shea.

I was an infantryman with the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi and Tay Ninh in 1967 and was wounded three times, but I do not suffer from dioxin-related health conditions myself.

When I came back from the war, I had knowledge of the use of Agent Orange from having seen sprayed areas. I knew that it destroyed nature, but I had no knowledge of the negative effects this defoliant had on human beings.

In 1969, a veteran I knew named Jeff Sharlett died of cancer at age twenty-seven in the Miami, Florida, veterans' hospital, and I remember thinking it was strange that someone so young had cancer.

Over the years, other friends of mine got sick or had deformed children, or sometimes died. Mike Keegan and John Miffin, who died, and John and Rena Kopystenski, who had several children with birth defects, are among them. So this issue has always been personal for me.

In 1977, a woman named Maude DeVictor, who worked as a claims representative at the Veterans Administration in Chicago, was the first person to really put two and two together when she witnessed the VA higher-ups denying veterans' claims and covering up their health problems and the

connection to dioxin exposure.

The next year, 1978, a veteran named Paul Reutershan, who was sick with cancer, got on television and said, "My government killed me in Vietnam, and I didn't even know it." He began a lawsuit against the chemical companies who manufactured Agent Orange, Blue, White, Purple, etc., but he never lived to see that lawsuit completed, because he died within the year.

The reason that this lawsuit was started was because the VA was denying veterans' claims for medical treatment and compensation, and according to US law, citizens cannot sue the government for these types of claims. From 1978 to 1984, the lawsuit continued, and it was eventually settled, although many veterans opposed the settlement for millions of dollars. Sadly, many veterans got very little of that money, since the army of lawyers who got involved got a good portion of it in legal fees.

I have been a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War since 1970, and that organization played a critical role in launching the movement for justice for Agent Orange vets, supporting Maude DeVictor, who became the godmother of the movement, recruiting veterans to join the lawsuit, and raising general public awareness of this issue.

But we always believed that, while the chemical companies had responsibility and should be held liable, the primary responsibility lay with the US government, which ordered and continued to use these poisons after they were becoming aware of the negative effects on people. Instead of changing course, they covered up the facts and kept using them until

1971. After that, they gave their remaining supplies to the former army of the Republic of Vietnam, who continued to use them until 1975, when that regime ceased to exist.

In VVAW, our demand has always been for testing, treatment, and compensation for Agent Orange victims. We never thought the lawsuit against the chemical companies was the answer, but rather a way to continue putting pressure on the US government.

Finally, progress was made on that front when in 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, acknowledging several conditions as being dioxin-related for purposes of medical treatment and disability compensation. It also established a mechanism for the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine to review new studies and make recommendations to the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs for expanding the recognized conditions.

Currently, there are thirteen conditions acknowledged by the VA, including two conditions among veterans' children. But over twenty-seven conditions have been rejected, since the Institute of Medicine found insufficient scientific research to indicate a connection to dioxin exposure.

So many veterans are still not being treated with any fairness. And how does someone give justice to all those who have died? The hidden casualties of the Vietnam War continue to grow, but the struggle continues as well.

And today we need to talk about the other side of the coin: not just American, Korean, Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian veterans, but the people of Vietnam as well. Remember also that these chemicals were also used in parts of Cambodia and Laos, as well as along the DMZ in Korea and in Panama.

In the United States, we began the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign to support the efforts of VAVA and to join with concerned veterans and people in other countries to demand Justice for all Agent Orange victims.

While the campaign is sponsored by Veterans for Peace, it is made up of war veterans, Vietnamese Americans, peace activists, environmentalists, and

other friends of Vietnam. We are supporting the international petition drive in support of the VAVA lawsuit, and we recently sponsored a ten-city speaking tour by four VAVA members.

We are also planning to encourage sympathetic representatives and senators to introduce legislation in Congress for the US government to step up to the plate and provide compensation and medical assistance, if not for political reasons, then for moral and humanitarian purposes. It is time to really heal the wounds of that war, not to ignore them or let them fade into history.

Let me make one last point. This is a struggle to expose and end the use of chemical weapons by all nations, but especially by my government. This is not just about something that happened over thirty years ago. Today, the Bush administration has led our country and the world into another invasion and occupation, this time in Iraq, and is now using depleted uranium that will, in time, poison US troops and Iraqi citizens. They have also used white phosphorous bombs against whole cities, like Fallujah.

It is time for humanity to demand an end to these weapons as part of our efforts to abolish war. That is what Veterans for Peace is pledged to work for. That will only come through the determined efforts of all of us, throughout the world.

The great American abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

With that as our watchword, let's make this conference a call to all the people of the world. Justice for all Agent Orange victims!



DAVID CLINE IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



Dave Cline, Ralph Steele, Joan Duffy, Frank Corcoran, and Dan Shea behind Mrs. Vietnam 2005, Doan Thi Kim Hong, performing songs for children at a hospice near Cu Chi

# VVAW in Action



Marty Webster VVAW & Jerry Smith VVAW met with a high school Students Against the War group in Cincinnati in August



Ben Chitty and Dayl Wise joined a contingent of about sixty members of VVAW, Veterans For Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, and Military Families Speak Out at a march and rally at the United Nations to protest the president's speech on September 19, 2006. For more info about VVAW activities in the New York metro area, leave a message for Ben Chitty at (212) 726-0557



Ray Parrish at Air & Water Show, Chicago



VVAW member Jerry Smith and Cindy Sheehan at a book signing in Cincinnati on June 10th



Mike Newland, Eyes Wide Open, Columbus, Ohio



Barry Romo, Memorial Day 2006, Chicago



David Cline at recent press conference

# Iraq Veterans Against the War: New Board, New Projects

HANNAH FRISCH

At the Veterans For Peace convention in August, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) replaced its temporary board (made up half of Iraq veterans and half of older vets) and elected a nine-member board, including Kelly Dougherty, president; Jose Vasquez, vice-president; Patrick Resta, secretary; Joe Hatcher, treasurer; and directors Joshua Castel, Tim Goodrich, Tomas Young, Charlie Anderson, and Garrett Reppenhagen. The board will have its first meeting on September 24 in Philadelphia. They plan to hire a full-time executive director from among the IVAW membership.

This August, IVAW again participated in Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas, outside Bush's ranch. They count it as a success that Camp Casey kept Bush from having his normal five-week vacation there. IVAW members also traveled to nearby Fort Hood, where they held antiwar demonstrations and reached out to the active-duty soldiers on the base. When they leafleted soldiers there, they got positive responses 80–90% of the time. They handed out hundreds of cards with the GI Rights Hotline number and did an intensive sticker campaign. It was impossible to buy gas, order food, or use a public washroom in the town without seeing the sticker with the GI Rights Hotline phone number. The hotline has reported an upsurge in calls from Fort Hood as a result. IVAW is making plans to do more long-term outreach at Fort Hood.

Outside Fort Hood, IVAW showed *Sir! No Sir!*, the new documentary about the GI resistance during the Vietnam War. The showing was attended by some active-duty personnel from the base. At Camp Casey, antiwar soldier Mark Wilkerson publicly turned himself in after being AWOL for eighteen months. IVAW is supporting Mark, Sgt. Rick Clousing, Lt. Ehren Watada, Spc. Agustin Aguayo (who refused to deploy to Iraq from Germany), and Susan Swift (who went AWOL as a result of sexual assault).

In August, six female IVAW members went to the Code Pink retreat in Austin, Texas. They were able to get to know the Code Pink members and discuss common issues.



As the *Veteran* goes to press, IVAW members are participating in Camp Democracy in Washington DC.

IVAW members participated in a team that went to New Orleans to help rebuild after the damage from Hurricane Katrina. More members will go throughout the fall, including a November group in which Iraq veterans will be paired with inner-city youth from Los Angeles. There are plans to hold a retreat that will include both veterans' peer counseling and work on rebuilding New Orleans. IVAW is seeking financial support to enable members to travel to New Orleans. (Send checks to IVAW, PO Box 8296, Philadelphia, PA 19101.)

Members have also started a political action committee, Iraq Veterans for Progress, that will support antiwar candidates in the November elections. Candidates must favor starting an immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq, to be completed within six months, and they must favor mandatory funding for the VA. The PAC will not send money directly to the candidates but will use money collected to send Iraq veterans to work on the campaigns. Races in California and Iowa are the first races that the PAC will support.

IVAW is supporting the "Appeal for Redress," a signature campaign for active-duty, reserve, and National Guard members calling on Congress to support a speedy withdrawal from Iraq. They are also planning a return of medals. Events may include returning one medal to congressional representatives and a medal-throwing like

the one done by VVAW during the Vietnam War.

Board member Joe Hatcher is working on getting an IVAW bus or van to tour with different bands and do outreach to veterans. A counter-recruitment tour of several bands is already in progress (in addition to the summer tour of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young), and three bands have expressed interest in having IVAW tour with them, set up information

tables, speak onstage, and sell merchandise.

Thanks to IVAW members Charlie Anderson and Kelly Dougherty for contributing information for this story.



HANNAH FRISCH HAS BEEN AN ACTIVIST SINCE THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND VIETNAM ERAS. SHE BEGAN WORKING WITH VVAW IN 2001 AND IS NOW PART OF VVAW'S NATIONAL STAFF.

We have started placing ads for our military counseling program and for Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) into college and alternative press newspapers. We are starting with San Francisco and Colorado Springs, because these are cities with active IVAW chapters; this way the ads will be as useful as possible in connecting antiwar Iraq vets with IVAW. If the ads seem to be successful, we will expand to other cities.

The following is the text of the ads:

## VETERANS:

### PROBLEMS WITH STRESS, VA BENEFITS, BAD DISCHARGE, ETC.?

Contact Vietnam Veterans Against the War Military Counseling Project  
773-561-VVAW or [camiblue@vvaw.org](mailto:camiblue@vvaw.org)  
[www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org)

### OPPOSE THE WAR?

Call Iraq Veterans Against the War  
[local phone] or [local email]  
[www.ivaw.net](http://www.ivaw.net)

### Other Resources:

GI Rights Hotline 800-394-9544  
Military Law Task Force [www.nlg.org/mltf](http://www.nlg.org/mltf)

# Depleted Uranium Situation Worsens

DOUG ROKKE

The delivery of at least one hundred GBU-28 “bunker buster” bombs containing depleted-uranium warheads by the United States to Israel for use against targets in Lebanon will result in additional radioactive and chemical toxic contamination, with consequent adverse health and environmental effects throughout the Middle East. Israeli tank gunners are also using depleted-uranium tank rounds, as photographs verify.

Today, US, British, and now Israeli military personnel are using illegal uranium munitions—America and the United Kingdom’s own “dirty bombs”—while US Army, US Department of Energy, US Department of Defense (DOD), and UK Ministry of Defence officials deny that there are any adverse health or environmental effects as a consequence of the manufacture, testing, or use of uranium munitions, so that they may avoid liability for the willful and illegal dispersal of a radioactive toxic material—depleted uranium (DU).

The use of uranium weapons is absolutely unacceptable and a crime against humanity. Consequently, the citizens of the world and all governments must force the cessation of uranium weapons use. I must demand that Israel now provide medical care to all DU casualties in Lebanon and clean up all DU contamination.

American and British officials have arrogantly refused to comply with their own regulations, orders, and directives that require DOD officials to provide prompt and effective medical care to all exposed individuals (“Medical Management of Unusual Depleted Uranium Casualties,” DOD, Pentagon, 10/14/93; “Medical Management of Army Personnel Exposed to Depleted Uranium (DU),” US Army Medical Command, 4/29/04; Section 2-5 of US Army Regulation 700-48).

They also refuse to clean up dispersed radioactive contamination, as required by Army Regulation 700-48, “Management of Equipment Contaminated With Depleted Uranium or Radioactive Commodities” (Department of the Army, September 2002) and US Army Technical Bulletin 9-1300-278, “Guidelines for Safe Response to Handling, Storage, and Transportation Accidents Involving Army Tank Munitions

or Armor which Contain Depleted Uranium” (Department of the Army, July 1996). Specifically, Section 2-4 of United States Army Regulation 700-48 (dated September 16, 2002) requires that:

- (1) Military personnel identify, segregate, isolate, secure, and label all RCE (radiologically contaminated equipment),
- (2) Procedures to minimize the spread of radioactivity will be implemented as soon as possible,
- (3) Radioactive material and waste will not be locally disposed of through burial, submersion, incineration, destruction in place, or abandonment, and
- (4) All equipment, to include captured or combat RCE, will be surveyed, packaged, retrograded, decontaminated and released.

The previous and current use of uranium weapons, the release of radioactive components in destroyed US and foreign military equipment, and releases of industrial, medical, and research-facility radioactive materials have resulted in unacceptable exposures. Therefore, decontamination must be completed as required by US Army Regulation 700-48 and should include releases of all radioactive materials resulting from military operations.

The extent of the adverse health and environmental effects of uranium weapons contamination is not limited to combat zones but includes facilities and sites where uranium weapons were manufactured or tested, including Vieques; Puerto Rico; Colonie, New York; Concord,

Mass.; Jefferson Proving Grounds, Indiana; and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Therefore, medical care must be provided by the United States Department of Defense to all individuals affected by the manufacturing, testing, or use of uranium munitions. Thorough environmental remediation also must be completed without further delay.

I am amazed that fifteen years after I was asked to clean up the initial DU mess from Gulf War I, and over ten years since I finished the depleted-uranium project, US Department of Defense officials and others still attempt to justify the use of uranium munitions while ignoring mandatory requirements. I am dismayed that DOD and Department of Energy officials and representatives continue making personal attacks aimed to silence or discredit those of us who are demanding that medical care be provided to all DU casualties and that environmental remediation is completed in compliance with US Army Regulation 700-48. But beyond the ignored mandatory actions, the willful dispersal of tons of solid radioactive and chemically toxic waste in the form of uranium munitions is illegal and does not even pass the test of common sense.

According to the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), DU is a “dirty bomb.” The department issued “dirty bomb” response guidelines on January 3, 2006 for incidents within the United States, ignoring DOD use of uranium weapons and existing DOD regulations. These guidelines specifically state that “a radiological incident is defined as an event or series of events, deliberate or accidental, leading to the

release, or potential release, into the environment of radioactive material in sufficient quantity to warrant consideration of protective actions. Use of an RDD or IND is an act of terror that produces a radiological incident.” Thus, the use of uranium munitions is an “act of terror,” as defined by DHS. Finally, continued compliance with the infamous March 1991 Los Alamos memorandum that was issued to ensure continued use of uranium munitions cannot be justified.

In conclusion, the president of the United States, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, and the prime minister of Israel must acknowledge and accept responsibility for the willful use of illegal uranium munitions—their own “dirty bombs”—resulting in adverse health and environmental effects.

President Bush, Prime Minister Blair, and Prime Minister Olmert should order medical care for all casualties and thorough environmental remediation, and stop the illegal use of depleted-uranium munitions.



DOUG ROKKE IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE US ARMY DEPLETED URANIUM PROJECT. HE HAS A PHD IN HEALTH PHYSICS AND WAS ORIGINALLY TRAINED AS A FORENSIC SCIENTIST. WHEN THE GULF WAR STARTED IN 1991, HE WAS ASSIGNED TO PREPARE SOLDIERS TO RESPOND TO NUCLEAR, BIOLOGICAL, AND CHEMICAL WARFARE, AND WAS SENT TO THE GULF. WHAT HE EXPERIENCED HAS MADE HIM A PASSIONATE VOICE FOR PEACE, TRAVELING THE COUNTRY TO SPEAK OUT.



# Five Years After 9/11: Now What?

HORACE COLEMAN

The fifth anniversary of 9/11 fell on a Monday in 2006. TV, newspapers, radio, and magazines were full of stories about it. The Sunday newspaper supplement Parade was published on September 10 this year. In it was an “as-told-to” story about a guy named Wilton Sekzer.

Sekzer, a Vietnam veteran, had a son named Jason. Who worked at the World Trade Center. In Building One, on the 105th floor. Where Cantor Fitzgerald, the firm that lost more than 600 employees on 9/11, had offices.

Wilton Sekzer describes himself as “a retired New York City cop. I mean, who am I?” To me, Sekzer comes off as a (formerly) true-believing, 100% red-blooded patriot—and no fool. “I volunteered for Vietnam in July 1965,” he says. “I grew up knowing that you were expected to answer when your country made the call. There was no such thing as ‘Well, I wonder if my country’s right? Is anybody lying to me about this?’ You grew up saying, ‘If the bugle calls, you go.’”

Saddened and angered by his son’s death, Sekzer wanted revenge. He believed Bush and the party line. He emailed military branches, asking to have his son’s name put on ordnance used

in Iraq. “I’m from the old school. Certain people walk on water. The president of the United States is one of them.”

Sekzer describes his reaction, when he heard Bush say there was no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to 9/11, this way: “I almost jumped out of my chair. I said, ‘What is he talking about? What the hell did we go in there for? If Saddam didn’t have anything to do with 9/11, then why did we go in there?’”

Good questions. Unfortunately, not enough people have the sense or courage to ask them. A smug fog of refusing to make that realization, ducking the burden, and jingoism covers the country. Sekzer is blunt: “I feel that the government exploited my feelings of patriotism. But I was so insane with wanting to get even, I was willing to believe anything.”

You see a green guy run out of your house, carrying your DVD player and dropping your silverware. You can’t catch him, so you beat up the purple guy standing on the corner three blocks away, because you know he’s a thief and you never liked him anyway.

The old school I attended taught me to not believe anyone without reservations. Not because of your relationship with them,

their soothing words, their pleasant personality, or their nice smile. Not even your mama—she might be lying about that bicycle for Christmas.

There’s no draft, and it’s hard to get enough people to enlist. No Iraqi oil is paying for the war there. No tax increase here is helping to pay for this side trip. Instead, there’s a ballooning trade deficit, mounting national debt, an economy that’s slip-sliding, involuntary extensions in the war zone, and redeployments there.

Troops suffer while the military industrial complex that President (and former soldier) Eisenhower warned us about grows obese on excessively lucrative contracts and subcontracts. Civilians proudly “support our troops” by patting themselves on the back for staying the wrong course.

Of course, some people do walk on water. For about two steps. Don’t let them take you down with them. All lifesavers learn that.

To quote Wilton Sekzer again, “It’s a terrible thing if someone like me can’t trust his president. I began to wonder what the hell’s with the whole system.” It is terrible. But you’re better off if you wonder and then act to satisfy the curiosity and skepticism you

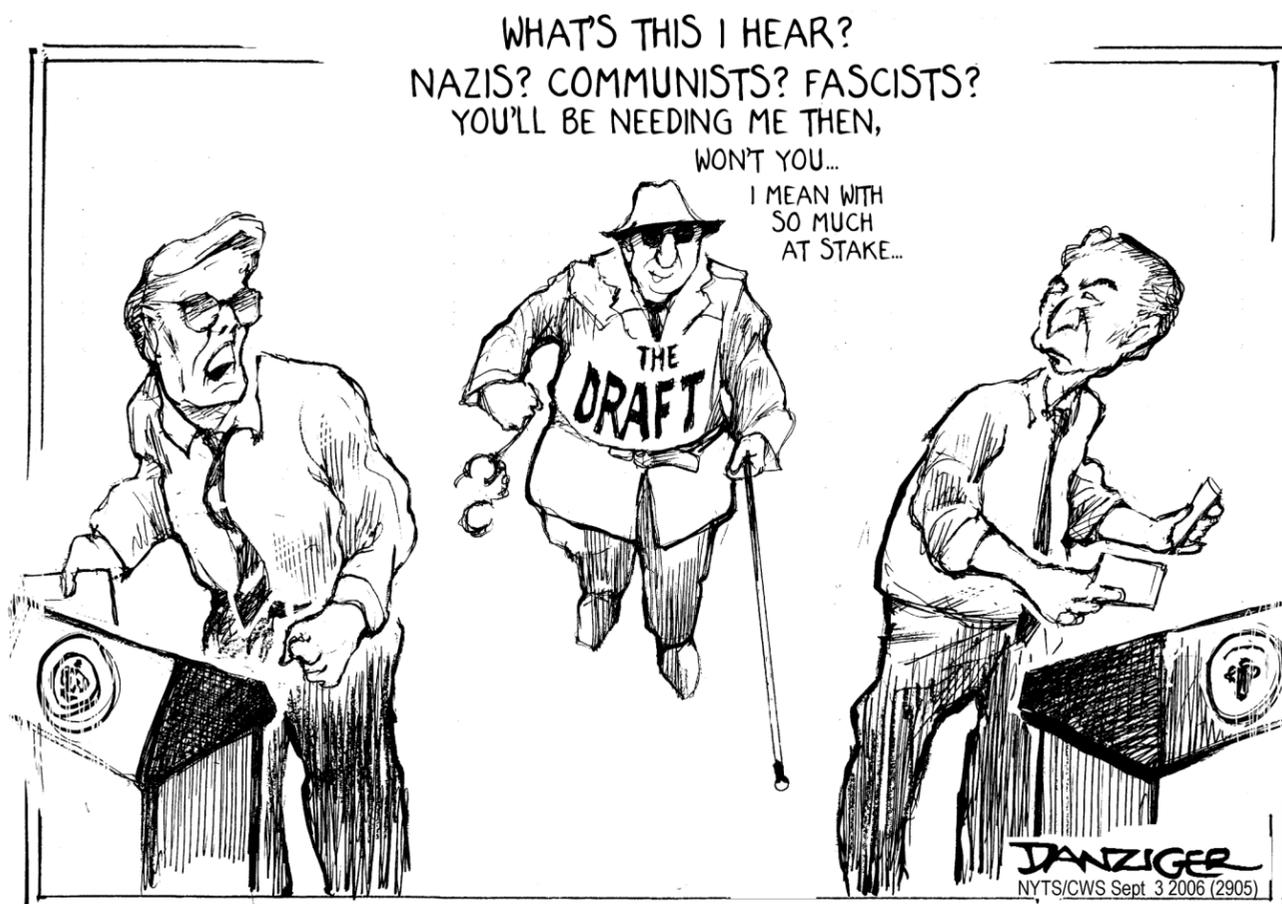
should have. After all, the last I heard of Santa Claus, he was supposedly headed for Iran.

The current regime is peopled by theorists more interested in political ideology than reality and practicality. The majority of the electorate seems to have a “let’s you and him go fight while I go shopping” attitude. Collectively, it has bad judgment, less sense, no reliable information, and little foresight. Our “leadership” seems to be worse—when it does anything other than bringing home the bacon, featherbedding, and log rolling.

Winston Churchill supposedly said, “Democracy is the worst form of government—except for all the others.” Makes you go *hmm*. Cynicism is no substitute for reasonable and responsible action, however; neither is passing the buck or doing nothing. And if we’re flattening the globe into a piratical corporatocracy, where’s my share of the loot? Where’s yours?



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



# Agent Orange Updates

COMPILED BY JOHN ZUTZ

## Agent Orange Illnesses That Effect Veterans

[Source: NAUS Weekly Update for 22 AUG 03 & POVA VSO msg 28 JUL 04]

The following health conditions are presumed to be caused by Agent Orange. Vietnam vets do not have to prove that the illness is related to their military service, and may be able to get disability compensation.

1. Chloracne (must occur within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange) - a skin condition that looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. The first sign may be excessive oiliness of the skin. This is accompanied or followed by numerous blackheads. In mild cases, the blackheads may be limited to the areas around the eyes extending to the temples. In more severe cases, blackheads may appear in many places, especially over the cheekbone and other facial areas, behind the ears, and along the arms.

2. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma - a group of malignant tumors (cancers) that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue. These tumors are relatively rare compared to other types of cancer, and although survival rates have improved during the past two decades, these diseases tend to be fatal.

3. Hodgkin's disease - a malignant lymphoma characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.

4. Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma

5. Soft tissue sarcoma other than osteosarcoma and chondrosarcoma - a group of different types of malignant tumors (cancers) that arise from body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues (not in hard tissue such as bone or cartilage). These cancers are in the soft tissue that occurs within and between organs. The following conditions fall under the term "soft-tissue sarcoma):

a. Adult fibrosarcoma,

b. Dermatofibrosarcoma protuberans,

c. Malignant fibrous histiocytoma

d. Liposarcoma,

e. Leiomyosarcoma,

f. Malignant granular cell tumor,

g. Alveolar soft part sarcoma,

h. Rhabdomyosarcoma,

i. Ectomesenchymoma,

j. Malignant glomus tumor,

k. Malignant hemangiopericytoma,

l. Malignant Schwannoma,

m. Malignant mesenchymoma,

n. Epithelioid sarcoma,

o. Extraskelatal Ewing's sarcoma,

p. Congenital and infantile fibrosarcoma,

q. Malignant ganglioneuroma,

r. Epithelioid Leiomyosarcoma (malignant leiomyoblastoma),

s. Angiosarcoma (hemangiosarcoma and lymphangiosarcoma),

t. Proliferating (systemic) angioendotheliomatosis,

u. Clear cell sarcoma of tendons and aponeuroses,

v. Synovial sarcoma (malignant synovioma),

w. Malignant giant cell tumor of tendon sheath.

6. Porphyria cutanea tarda (must occur within 1 year of exposure.) - a disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas.

7. Multiple myeloma - cancer of specific bone marrow cells that is characterized by bone marrow tumors in various bones of the body.

8. Respiratory cancers, including cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus. (Previously these conditions must have manifested within 30 years of the veteran's departure from Vietnam to qualify but this 30 year time limit has now been eliminated.

9. Prostate cancer - one of the most common cancers among men.

10. Peripheral neuropathy (transient acute or subacute - must appear within 1 year of exposure and resolve within 2-years of date of onset) - a nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and muscle weakness. This condition affects only the peripheral nervous system, that is,

only the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord.

11. Diabetes mellitus: Often referred to as Type 2 diabetes: - a condition characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

12. Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (Final rule and regulations pending).

Occasionally the VA sees combat veterans with multiple unexplained symptoms or difficult-to-diagnose illnesses that can cause significant disability. Two VA centers offer specialized evaluations for combat veterans with disabilities related to these difficult-to-diagnose illnesses. The War Related Illness and Injury Study Centers - WRIISCs (pronounced "risks") are at the VA Medical Centers in Washington, DC, and East Orange, NJ. Veterans who were deployed to combat zones, served in areas where hostilities occurred, or were exposed to environmental hazards while on duty may be eligible for services.

## Agent Orange Illnesses that effect Veteran's Kids

[Source: Extracted from Agent Orange Review, Vol. 19, No 2, Dated July 2003]

The following health conditions are presumed to be caused by Agent Orange. Vietnam veteran's children do not have to prove that their illness is related to their parent's military service, and may be able to get disability compensation.

1. Spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta): A neural tube birth defect that results from the failure of the bony portion of the spine to close properly in the developing fetus during early pregnancy.

2. Other birth defects identified by VA as being associated with the service of women Vietnam veterans, and that has resulted, or may result, in permanent physical or mental disability. However, the term does not include a condition due to a familial (this is, inherited) disorder; birth-related injury; or fetal or neonatal infirmity with other well-established causes.

Covered birth defects include, but are not limited to, the following conditions:

- 1) achondroplasia,
- 2) cleft lip and cleft palate,
- 3) congenital heart disease,
- 4) congenital talipes equinovarus (clubfoot),
- 5) esophageal and intestinal atresia,
- 6) Hallerman-Streiff syndrome,
- 7) hip dysplasia,
- 8) Hirschprung's disease (congenital megacolon),
- 9) hydrocephalus due to aqueductal stenosis,
- 10) hypospadias,
- 11) imperforate anus,
- 12) neural tube defects,
- 13) Poland syndrome,
- 14) pyloric stenosis,
- 15) syndactyly (fused digits),
- 16) tracheoesophageal fistula,
- 17) undescended testicle, and
- 18) Williams syndrome.

\*\* Not covered are conditions that are congenital malignant neoplasms, chromosomal disorders, or developmental disorders. In addition, conditions that do not result in permanent physical or mental disability are not covered birth defects. All birth defects that are not excluded under the language above are covered birth defects



# A World in the Afterword

JAN CURRY (REVIEWER)

**World Trade Center**  
Directed by Oliver Stone  
(Paramount Pictures, 2006)

*New Yorker* critic David Denby applauds Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*, not only as a powerful celebration of courage and strength, but also as a personal "coming home" for "warrior" Stone after the odyssey from *Salvador* through *Platoon* to *Born on the Fourth of July*. Stone, in an interview with Edward Douglas for ComingSoon.net, says that it is neither a documentary nor cinema verité, but instead a building up, from a "chain of evidence"—consultation with the characters' real counterparts, their families, and the transcripts of Chuck Serieka and Dave Karns—to present "the tightly connected emotions of four characters." These include Port Authority police sergeant John McLoughlin and Officer Will Jimeno, who are trapped beneath layers of the first tower's rubble; and their wives, Donna and Allison, who are home, trying to make sense of the news and their husbands' conditions.

The screenplay was written by Andrea Berloff and the producer was Debra Hill, and the portrayals of the wives were far more multidimensional and complex than the usual Stone female archetypes, as Denby rightly points out. The two women have to struggle against significant males in their families to carve out how it is that they can respond to the

horror, the fear, and the inability to communicate with their husbands. This in turn deepens the emotional connections, both between the spouses separated by the disaster, and between the two men, for a key to their own developing bond is the ways in which they talk to each other about their wives. At one point, Sergeant McLoughlin (though a man of few words) says to Officer Jimeno, "I have the right wife"; coming as it does amid the full spectrum of his images of the marriage—from banality to the touchingly nagging to rock-solid solidarity to admissions of losing touch—definitely resonated with me (a veteran of a twenty-one-year-old relationship to a Vietnam veteran). McLoughlin is the last of the two to be rescued, and he fights with all the remaining strength he can call up to bring out each word to Donna as he is being wheeled into surgery: "You ... kept ... me ... alive". The younger couple, Will and Allison, upon their reunion, go back and forth innumerable times, each insisting that their soon-to-be-born daughter receive the name the other had preferred. In short, the classic Stone technique of unfolding a giant event as experienced through a Jungian family-sized group is revisited in this 9/11 portrayal.

Moving beyond this micro-dimension, there are precious few references to those outside the foursome and their families, and those that are presented take on enormous weight through their

scarcity—at least to those of us who are committed to tracing accurately the global impact and implications of 9/11. Among these, three stand out. Just after the towers are hit, we are shown splices of half a dozen places around the world in which people are being drawn to their televisions to see the unbelievable. At the remove of five years after the event, this segment can almost remind one of how much the global community shared the shock and sadness, later overshadowed by the regret for subsequent US foreign policy. Later in the film, there is a simple on-screen statement that the Trade Center victims included representatives from eighty-seven countries—a possible caution against the hunkered-down, xenophobic, "with us or against us" jingoism, which, as the current intelligence committee reports state, did more to encourage than discourage similar attacks in our future.

The lightning strike, however, is the disclosure in the film's afterword, however true to the real character's story, that one of the key rescuers went on to enlist for two tours in Iraq. This is the character Dave Karns, an ex-Marine who, upon hearing of the 9/11 attack, immediately travels from Connecticut to "Ground Zero," heads out into the rubble after the official search had been called off for the night, and is the one who actually locates Jimeno and McLoughlin. He is a paragon of determination, so driven as to

have put on his uniform for the search, so dedicated to military service that when asked by a fellow rescuer for a shorter name for quicker communication, he answers, "Sergeant Karns." Extreme or not, he is validated in that he is the key human link for the trapped officers, the very difference between their lives and their deaths. In the Douglas piece, when asked about this Marine character's statement that the attacks were "an act of war," Stone answers that the film "is accurate to every single person that was in it, and their emotions are naked, sometimes with things we don't like, but we gotta live with," and that if we consider where we were on 9/12 and where we are now, "you have to wonder that something went wrong." Nicholas Cage, who played McLoughlin, answered that to "attach" politics to the film would "take away" from the true meaning of the film. We might ask of Stone: Why not include a real character's view that any connections between 9/11 and al-Qaeda to Iraq were entirely fabricated to further the murderous oil agenda? But what we ask of Stone is not as important as what we ask of ourselves and the people we elect.



JANET CURRY IS A MEMBER OF  
VVAW AND A TEACHER AT CLAYTON  
HIGH SCHOOL IN CLAYTON,  
MISSOURI.

## The Covered Wagon

Members of the Covered Wagon Anti-War GI Coffee House from Mountain Home, Idaho are planning a reunion. Some of us got together in July to see Victor Pacania who has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. We would like to have a big reunion soon.

For info, contact:

Tom Spalding - [tspalding@audobonchrysler.com](mailto:tspalding@audobonchrysler.com)

Susan Holtz Franceski - [susanfranceski@msn.com](mailto:susanfranceski@msn.com)



The Covered Wagon crew at a Vigil, 1972



The Covered Wagon, 1972



June 2006 Covered Wagon reunion

## Slim Strikes Another Hit

BOB RIGGLE (REVIEWER)

### Watermelon Slim and the Workers

### Watermelon Slim and the Workers

(Northern Blues, 2006)

www.watermelonslim.com

It's clear from the gritty, bare-bones blues of the first song ("Hard Times") straight through to the distinctive bayou country sound of "Eau De Bone" that Bill "Watermelon Slim" Homans has another hit.

Homans and his crew of Workers prove to be a fine group of craftsmen, providing a tight sound that seems to be effortless as they ply their craft through the

various tunes. All songs, with the exception of Big Joe Williams's "Baby, Please Don't Go" were written by Homans. Percussionist Michael Newberry did the song arrangements.

The hauntingly eerie slide-guitar work on "Devil's Cadillac" may not send a chill up or down your spine, but it sure grabs your attention. And if you just like to hear some good harp work, then "Check Writing Woman" or, even better, "Possum Hand" are for you. Or even the straight-ahead boogie of "Mack Truck."

I've gotta be honest with you. I like the sound of a Dobro, and I like the mix of Watermelon

Slim's voice and a Dobro. "Folding Money Blues" is a good little piece, but I was wanting more. I guess "less is more."

The best road-trip tune has got to be "Juke Joint Woman." Add a bunch of horns to the arrangement, and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy would be itching to do a cover version of it.

Bill Homans is a 2004 W.C. Handy Blues Award nominee, a VVAW contact in Oklahoma, and probably still on tour somewhere. For more info or tour schedules, contact Southern Artist Management, (405) 447-4329.



BOB RIGGLE IS A VVAW MEMBER AND THE CONTACT FOR CAVE CREEK, ARIZONA.



## Back to Iraq

KEN NIELSEN (REVIEWER)

### Nice Bombs

### Directed by Usama Alshaibi

(Artvamp and Benzfilm Group, 2006)

www.nicebombs.com

Usama Alshaibi is an American. Alshaibi traveled to Iraq in 2003, but he is not a soldier. Alshaibi is a recently naturalized US citizen from Iraq, and he lives in Chicago. It is through this unique background that the film *Nice Bombs* is able to present the viewer with an original and personal account of Iraq.

After he spent his first ten years growing up in Iraq, Alshai-

bi's mother smuggled her family out of Iraq, during the Iraq-Iran war in the seventies, to Jordan and finally to the United States. In 2003, Alshaibi returned to Iraq to make peace with the past and to understand the present. With support from his employer, Studs Terkel (with whom Alshaibi worked as a sound engineer for ten years, producing over 7,000 hours of recordings), Alshaibi and his wife, with a digital video recorder, made the long trip to Jordan to reconnect with his father. From Jordan, they traveled to Baghdad to revisit his birthplace and reconnect with relatives.

*Nice Bombs* is essentially a

personal journey back to Iraq, but it is also a time capsule of a period in history that depicts the hope of a country recently released from the stranglehold of over twenty years of dictatorship. At the time of Alshaibi's visit in 2003, US soldiers were still largely considered liberators by the Iraqi people and were not yet the targets of mass frustration resulting from failed and ill-conceived policy.

Predominantly filmed in Baghdad, Alshaibi's *Nice Bombs* provides a perspective into the lives of Iraqis living under war and occupation in the Middle Eastern metropolis. Often surprising, the film filled me with the overwhelm-

ing desire to figure a way out of the mess that arrogant Americans have created. However, by the end of the documentary, even Alshaibi's previously hopeful uncle (a main figure throughout the film), when interviewed via telephone in 2006, has serious doubts about Iraq's future and sadly fears that the only way to end the violence is to reinstate another dictator.



KEN NIELSEN SERVED IN THE US ARMY FROM 1991 TO 1993 (4TH BATTALION, 9TH DIVISION, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION). HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND VFP.

## Our Stolen Youth

Our youth was tested  
all those many years ago  
when the boys we were  
faced the mortality  
of the men we were to be.

In the chaos that lurked  
just beyond the wire,  
the mayhem of wretched torment  
waited in ambush,  
calling for us by name,  
beckoning for our very souls.

Deaths' Black Angel  
Would pass in a rush of cold,  
Its icy fingers reaching for the  
Warmth of life itself.  
Our youthful spirits forever wounded  
By the vulgar stench of war

Time has become entangled  
In the oppressive barbed wire silence.  
Stilled by the need for penance,  
It tortures the heart and spirit...  
Wanting only the peaceful refuge  
Of holy absolution.

Let our sorrows and tears  
Fall upon their granite names,  
Those many faces that we knew.  
Friends made...  
Friends lost.  
God Shed His Grace on Thee.

This was our stolen youth  
Those many years ago.  
When the men we were  
Walked with death and insanity  
On the fine line of madness.

—Rich Raitano



Ken Nielsen, Memorial Day 2006, Chicago

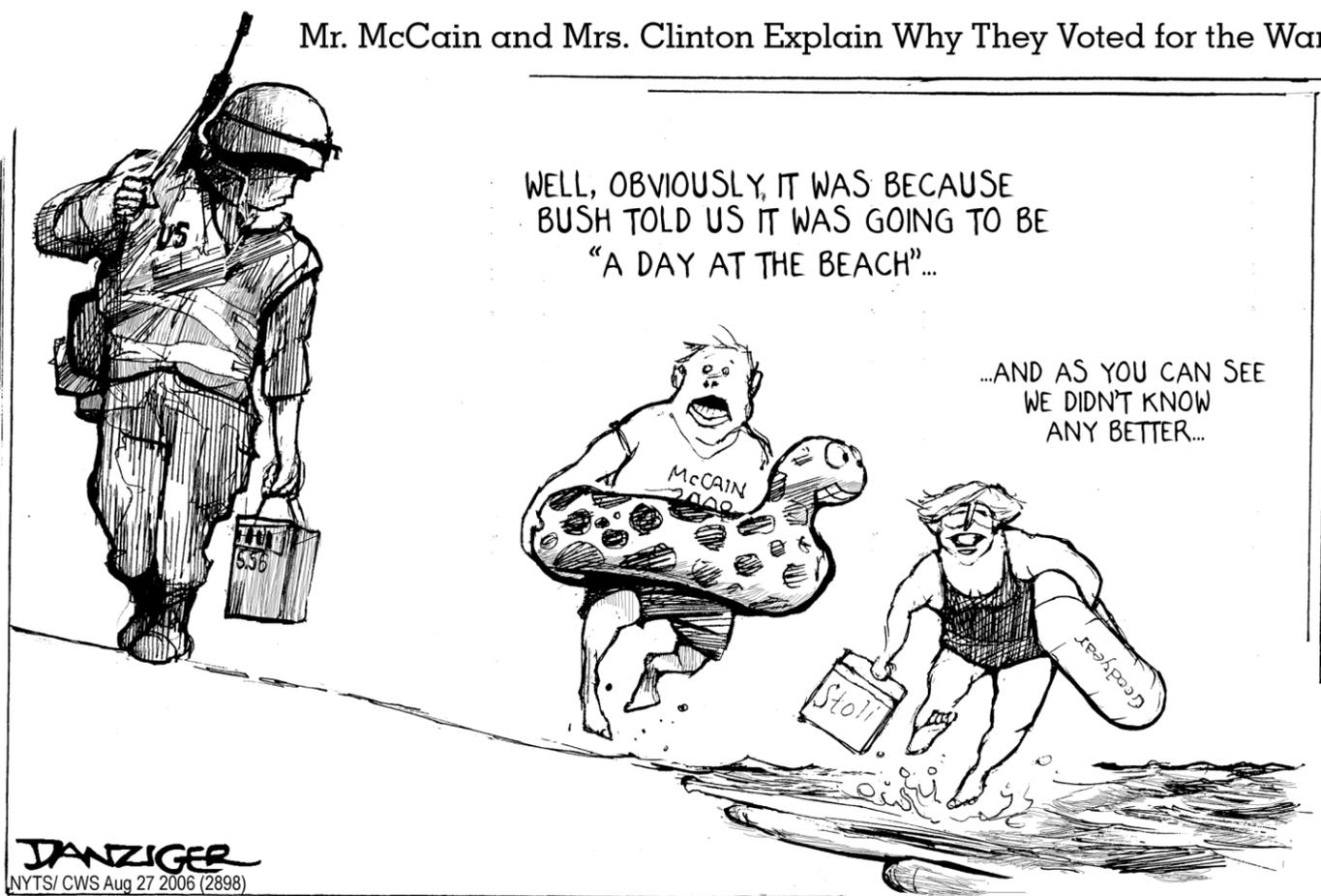
## What the Fuss Is All About

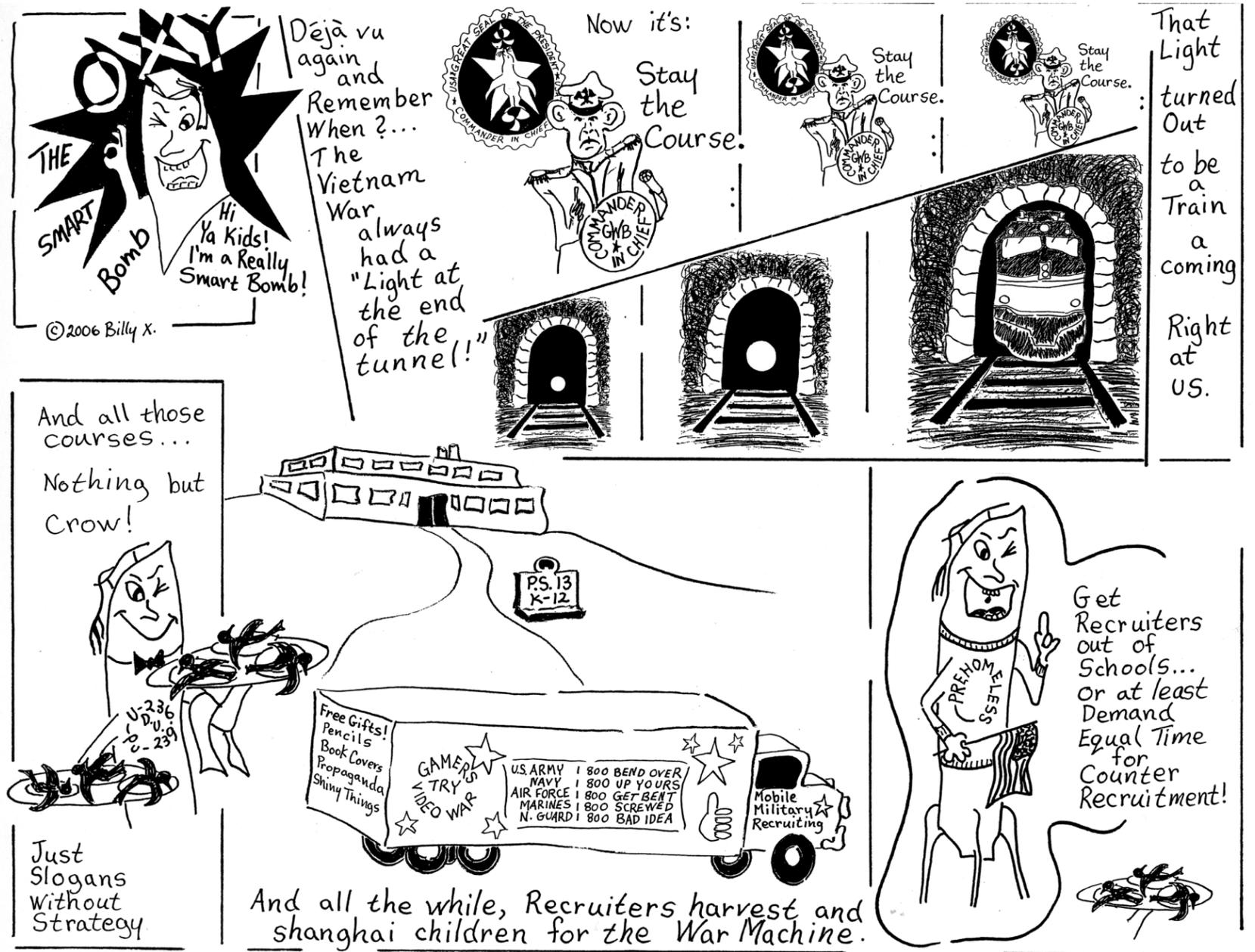
One wonders what the fuss is all about.  
 They say the flag is blowing in the wind.  
 They say the wind is blowing up a storm.  
 They say the moon is blue, the lies are true,  
 the bogeyman is here, we must believe  
 whatever we are told. So all for one  
 and one for all the money he can get  
 his sticky fingers on, him and all his  
 sticky-fingered friends. So what's new?  
 Just the other day, K Street three-piece-suit  
 walks into a bar and orders a beer.  
 Sorry, sir, the barkeep says, we don't serve  
 sleaze in here; FBI man overhears,  
 calls the IRS: barkeep's doing time  
 in Lewisburg. Let that be a lesson  
 to us all: Miller Lite can change your life.  
 Super Size me, praise the Lord, and give me  
 purple mountains' majesty, Hollywood  
 commandos, and a gas-guzzling SUV  
 with GPS and Power Everything.  
 Burn, baby, burn, some angry Black man said,  
 but I say what's the hurry? Soon enough  
 we'll burn the whole damned planet down, choke it,  
 strip it, starve it, melt it, pave it over,  
 blow it up, and bury it in empty  
 bottled water bottles, Pampers diapers,  
 plastic grocery bags, and last year's cellphones.  
 Then we'll see which way the wind is blowing,  
 whose flags are blowing in the wind, whose lies  
 are worth a big rat's ass, who's rich enough  
 to buy a one-way ticket out of Hell,  
 whose God is on whose side, and who's left  
 to wonder what the fuss was all about.

—W. D. Ehrhart

*EX-MARINE W. D. EHRHART'S LATEST COLLECTION OF POEMS IS SLEEPING WITH THE DEAD, PUBLISHED EARLIER THIS YEAR BY ADASTRA PRESS.*

### Mr. McCain and Mrs. Clinton Explain Why They Voted for the War





## 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, Northern 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  
 innaresting@yahoo.com  
 (503) 408-6828

## Letter to the Editor

I would like to contact any vets who were at a VVAW press conference/seminar chaired by Ted Kennedy at Faneuil Hall in Boston on 7 September 1971.

I have seen news footage of this conference, and the vets made some very eloquent and moving comments. I would like to include some of the comments in a documentary film I am making about former soldiers who are

now clearing bombs in Laos, and perhaps speak to them further.

I am in contact with Fred Branfman, who spoke at this seminar, but I have no names of any vets who spoke there. Please contact me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Wilczynski  
 sylvia5@iinet.net.au



Vietnam Air Force nurse Joan Duffy addresses the international conference in Hanoi

# The Korean DMZ War (1966-69)

MARK HARTFORD

This Veterans Day, November 11, 2006, at 10:30 AM, former soldiers who served in Korea after 1953 will gather at the Korean War Memorial to place a temporary plaque that recognizes the sacrifices of those soldiers that served, fought, and sometimes were wounded or killed in combat with the North Korean Army. The majority of those who were killed or wounded after 1953 died during the "DMZ War," which occurred between 1966 and 1969. Senate bill S2914 has been introduced by Senator Mike DeWine from Ohio; it calls for placing a permanent plaque on or near the Korean War Memorial honoring the sacrifice of these men.

Members of VVAW and their supporters in or near Washington DC are invited to attend this memorial service to show support for these forgotten veterans and their unknown war. You are also asked to contact your congressional representatives and senators to support the passage of this bill.

I served in Korea at the start of this war. Here is part of the story.

Forty years ago, in June 1966, I stepped off the back of a two-and-a-half-ton truck to start a thirteen-month tour of duty with Company B 1/23rd, 2nd Infantry Division, in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating North and South Korea. I became part of a contingent of American soldiers who were tasked with defending a nineteen-mile stretch of the DMZ from infiltration, sabotage, and assaults from North Korean Army (NKA) forces.

Before my tour of duty was complete, I would walk endless miles of rice paddies (swampy in the summer, frozen over in the winter), around (and sometimes through) minefields placed when the DMZ was first created, and up and down the sides of steep hills grown back to their natural state, covered with brush and trees, in search of the enemy. I carried a "basic load": M-14 rifle, 100 rounds of ammunition in five clips (one locked and loaded, the other four in pouches), four grenades, a bayonet, a flak vest, a helmet, a canteen of water, and usually a poncho. Occasionally, I would trade my M-14 for a shotgun or an M-79 grenade launcher.

On constant alert for any sudden noise or movement that might pose a threat, we would search

"spiderholes" that had been made by twisting the overgrown rice and other vegetation into a compact, insulated, and nearly invisible hiding place for NKA infiltrators. We "cleared" old bunkers and other artifacts left from the Korean War throughout the DMZ, expecting to die each time we threw ourselves into them. We walked through decayed villages and cemeteries left by families forced to move when the DMZ was first designated as part of the armistice agreement (the "temporary" halt of hostilities most people associated with the end of the Korean War).

We would spend three to four days rotating up onto guard posts (ours was "GP Dort") set up in the DMZ to watch for any movement of forces by the North into or closer to the DMZ. We lived on stale water and C rations. And of course, there was the NKA speaker system, each big as a house, blaring everything from rock and roll to Korean folk music, day and night, to harass us and provide cover for the infiltrators moving north and south through the zone.

I experienced the tedium of long nights, fighting off fatigue, waiting in the dark for opportunities to kill the enemy, then the sudden terrifying moment when the night would split open with loud explosions and flashes of tracer rounds as sudden movement in the dark unleashed the firepower of our waiting force. I saw for the first time a dead NKA soldier, an infiltrator, killed in the heat of the fight—killed within inches of releasing a grenade meant to kill our forces. I felt the loss of my own comrades, ROK and US soldiers killed by ambush, blown up in their barracks at night as they slept, all sent home to a country totally unaware of their death and our small war in faraway northeast Asia.

We won this low-intensity guerilla war, which had been started by North Korea. It officially started on November 2, 1966, when a unit of US soldiers and one KATUSA ("Korean Augmenting The United States Army") were ambushed by an NKA squad, killing all but one American, who was badly wounded. The wounded soldier was seventeen years old at the time. Private Reynolds, the only American who was able to fight back after the first assault, died where he fought. He was nineteen years old and had been

in-country for only seventeen days. I found out recently that he was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for valor.

When I first arrived in Korea, all of the units that operated in the DMZ were undermanned. This resulted in us patrolling night after night, after night shift to day patrol, and then immediately leaving for a four-day stint on GP Dort, with little or no downtime. We would patrol with as few as four or five men to a squad authorized for nine men. Often it was just myself as the squad leader, two KATUSAs, and one other US soldier.

Our equipment was not the newest—by then, M-16s were in use in Vietnam, but ours were still the older, heavier M-14 rifles. Okay, that was a benefit, given the reports from the field in Vietnam that the M-16 had a tendency to jam. The M-14 was a solid weapon. If kept clean, it would work anytime you called on it—accuracy was up to the shooter.

Our radios were not of the latest generation either, and this was a real problem. They often did not work at all, leaving us in the zone without a way to call for backup if we needed it. It was quite a boon when the first PRC-25 radios came into use. Then we had much better communication in the field, and they were lighter and more compact in size.

Sometimes we would become frustrated by our inability to strike back after our soldiers were killed and wounded. Like soldiers everywhere, we would look for ways to retaliate. It was this attitude that led to my personal incursion into North Korea to attack the huge speaker system that blared propaganda at us every night, and hopefully to kill those protecting it. Our action had the objective of retaliation for the ambush of our soldiers on November 2, 1966.

Before the DMZ War was over in 1969, over fifty of our soldiers were killed by hostile fire or other actions (half the casualties since 1953 to the present), and over a hundred more were wounded. Near the middle of the war, the Army finally caught up with reality and began paying hazardous-duty pay to those operating in the DMZ. After I left, Agent Orange was used to defoliate both sides of the fence.

Soldiers who served in the

DMZ from 1968 and later were often exposed to Agent Orange and have suffered the same medical problems as those exposed to it in Vietnam. It is just recently that veterans from Korea have been accepted to be assessed for compensation for the ill effects of Agent Orange.

These are the soldiers I know about who were killed along the DMZ during my tour:

Hensley, Sgt. James: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Benton, Pfc. John: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Burrell, Pfc. Robert: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Fisher, Pvt. Morris: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Hasty, Pvt. Les: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Reynolds, Pvt. Ernie: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 11/02/66  
 Tyler, SP4 Press Jr.: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 02/12/67  
 Mueller, SP4 Carl R.: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 05/22/67  
 Smith, Pvt. Baron J.: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 05/22/67  
 Ashforth, SP4 Leonard: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 07/16/67  
 Boyd, Pfc. Tommy D.: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 07/16/67  
 Gibbs, Pfc. John L.: 23rd Rgt., 2nd ID, d. 07/16/67

I honor and remember them every day.

When it came time to return to "the world," I rode out to the replacement center with the other two soldiers with whom I had arrived in-country. We boarded a plane full of soldiers going home. I finally ended my trip many hours later in the Los Angeles airport. At that moment, I was transformed from a stressed, well-tested infantry soldier back into a nineteen-year-old kid. I was too young to vote, buy beer, or get married, but I was a veteran of a foreign war.



MARK HARTFORD, US ARMY,  
 RA19875883 - 1/66-12/69  
 KOREA DMZ VET 1966-  
 1967 Co. B, 1/23RD INF. 2ND  
 INFANTRY DIVISION. CALIFORNIA  
 COORDINATOR, VVAW, 1971 .  
 PARTICIPATED IN DEWEY CANYON  
 III. HELPED ORGANIZE 30+  
 CHAPTERS IN CA. VVAW CONTACT,  
 COLUMBUS, OH - PRESENT.

# Semper Fidelis?

P. STEWALL

Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful. If you ever spent 3 months in either the Paris Island or the San Diego Marine Corps Recruit Depot (boot camp) you already know what this means. Or do you? I thought I did for the many years since the glorious day of my discharge. But over the past few years I have been wondering what it really means to say that to my fellow Marines, as we do almost robotically at the discovery of our common pasts at one of those infamous boot camps.

Always - forever.  
Faithful - loyal.

Forever loyal to what, or to whom? Well, there can be differing answers.

Many will say it's loyalty to the Corps. That's what we're

taught and I heartily agree. Well, maybe not heartily, hell maybe I don't agree at all. Ollie North, one of the (in)famous Marines of my generation would say it's loyalty to the Corps. But who was, or is, he really loyal to? His Commander in Chief? His fellow Marines? His Country? Truth, Justice and the American Way? Well, there can be differing answers.

Who is more loyal to his fellow marines? One who would blindly follow orders without regard to morality? One who would cover up crimes to protect his superiors? And why? For greed? Out of cowardice? Or, one who refuses to follow the orders to participate in torturing innocents and murdering civilians? One who would fight to end an unjust war and bring his fel-

low Americans home? And again, why? The Golden Rule? Because something was learned from the Nuremberg trials?

I proudly say "Semper fidelis!" to those who refuse to be murderers and torturers of innocent civilians. These are the true heroes who have the courage to risk prison and ostracism to do what is right. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilian friends in the peacemaking community are all certainly worthy of our loyalty forever. These are America's patriots, supermen and superwomen who fight for Truth, Justice and the American Way.

As for Ollie North? To paraphrase Lloyd Benston, I have met true American heroes and Mr. North isn't my hero, even if he

pretends to be a Superman. He lied (though not nearly as much as our current administration did to get our faithful young Americans into the current quagmire) not for you or me, he lied for the scoundrels profiting from war. No, Ollie & his ilk do not deserve loyalty but shame. Forever.

So let me clarify what I mean when I say, "Semper Fidelis," for I will not be forever loyal, definitely not, to those who act criminally. I will always be faithful to my fellow advocates for peace-even if they never went to boot camp. Semper Fidelis! And peace to all.



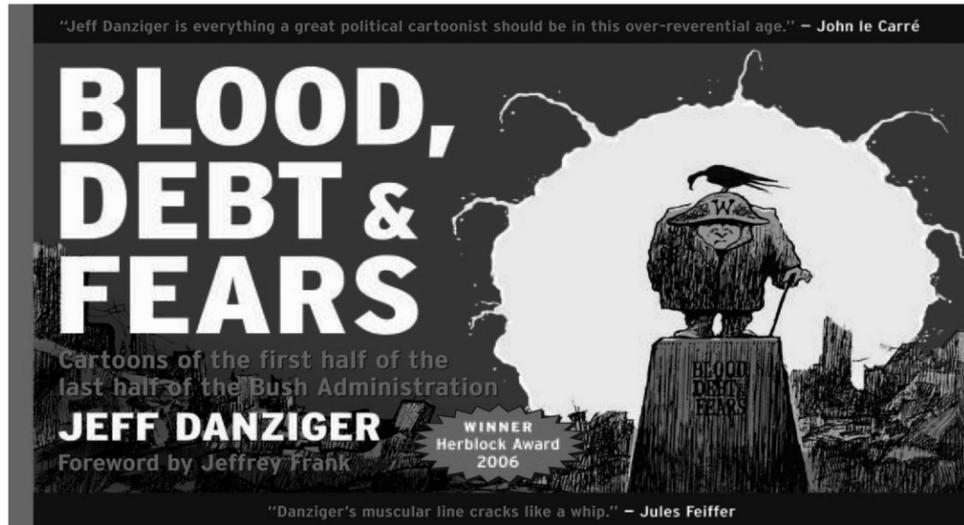
P. STEWALL IS A CHICAGO AREA MEMBER OF VVAW AND A MARINE.

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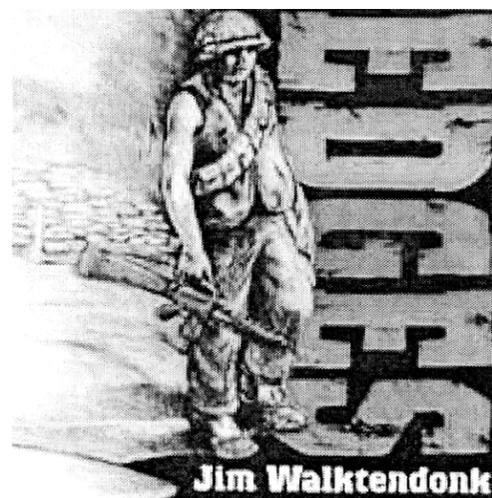
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## Open Letter to Chancellor Peterson

October 7, 2006

Chancellor G. P. "Bud" Peterson  
University of Colorado  
17 CCB Regent 301  
Boulder, CO 80309

Dear Chancellor Peterson:

We members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War ask you to intervene against your university's handling of the case of Professor Ward Churchill. We condemn the treatment of Professor Churchill as anti-democratic and anti-academic.

We have known and admired

Professor Churchill for decades. Not only is he an important scholar, but of special importance to us is his role as a Vietnam veteran who has gone on to serve his nation in other ways. We believe his works are scholarly and reflect an accurate interpretation of world conditions. As a Native American scholar, Professor Churchill is a rare treasure for students all over this country. He is a resource for other scholars and widely read laypersons.

We feel that the action of dismissing Professor Churchill is an act of racism against a people already grievously wronged. The

crimes against American Indians have without question been genocidal.

Why hasn't the University of Colorado afforded Professor Churchill the rights of free speech and intellectual expression that you provide for the other professors at the university?

Professor Churchill has received condemnation from both the ultra-right and the ultra-left. In addition to the current criticism by the right, Churchill and the entire American Indian Movement were attacked by the Stalinist cult called the Revolutionary Communist Party in the early eighties. The

leftist cult justified their attack on the American Indian Movement for that organization's failure to recognize the superiority of European Marxist interpretations of world history. We feel that the University of Colorado has joined the ranks of those who accept only cultural and intellectual ideas based in European versions of history.

We proudly support Professor Churchill.

Barry Romo  
and seventeen other VVAW members (not listed here)



## Buffalo Boy and Geronimo

JERRY LEMBCKE (REVIEWER)

**Buffalo Boy and Geronimo**  
By James Janko.  
(Curbstone Press, 2006)

I hesitated when a friend recommended *Buffalo Boy and Geronimo* because I don't read much fiction except as sources for my own research and writing. But I took a chance and I'm glad I did.

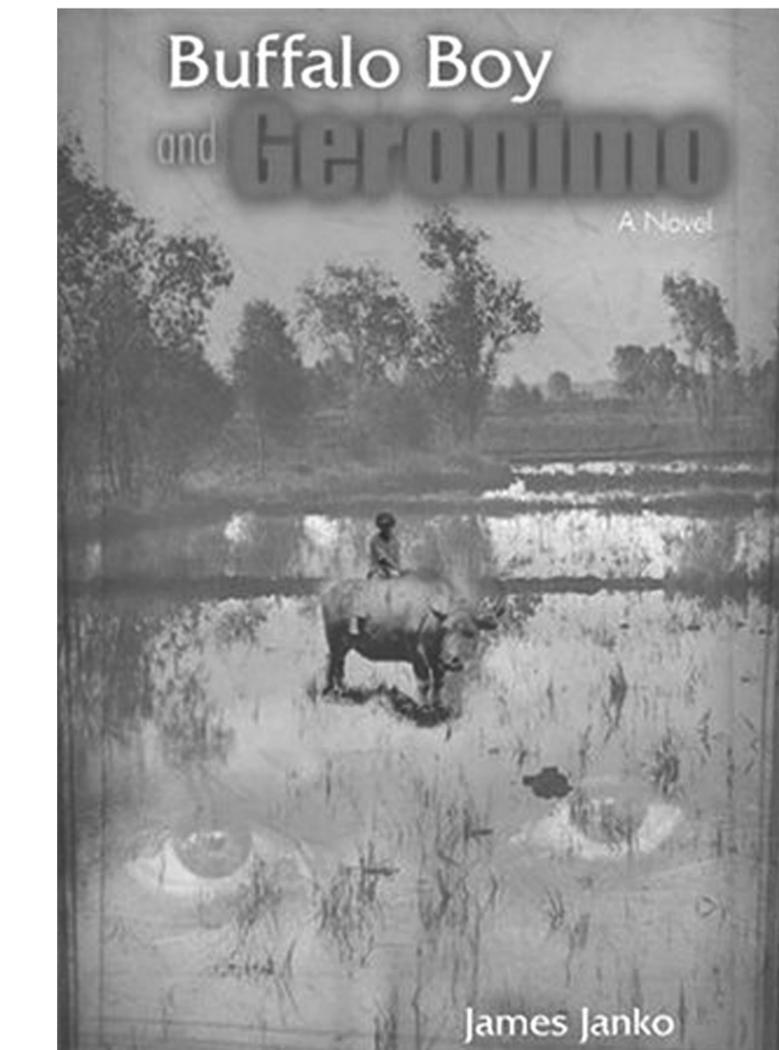
It was the promise of a good coming-of-age story that I gleaned from the first few pages that drew me in—Hai, a Vietnamese boy, struggling with his emergent masculinity in the context of the war. It's 1970 and Hai will soon have to decide whether to join the ARVN forces of the Republican government or go into the tunnels of Cu Chi with the Viet Cong. For the time being, though, his daily routine of tending Great Joy, his water buffalo, fishing the Sai Gon river for his family's dinner, and imagining how to impress Thien, the village's pubescent "water girl," keeps his mind and emotions entangled with the boundaries of man and nature, child and adulthood, whimsy and reality.

Left at that, this would be a story worth reading for what it tells us about life as it was lived by rural Vietnamese people during the war, a side of the story seldom told to Americans about life where the mundane—the daily provision of food and shelter—intersected with the deadly—the intermitting military operations, of both sides, that cut through the land and community year after year. To tell the story, James Janko, returned to Vietnam as a writer

to learn about the people he had opposed thirty years earlier as a U.S. Army medic.

Janko's introduction of Conchola in the second chapter gives *Buffalo Boy and Geronimo* the structure it needs to make this a truly outstanding piece of writing, one that like the best of the novel-form tells the reader as much about the Self as the Other. Those familiar with David Maraniss's *They Marched into Sunlight* will see resemblance in Janko's work to the parallelism Maraniss created by writing the history of the 1st Infantry Division's Black Lions Battalion getting butchered in October 1967, while side-by-side with it, recounting the story of the anti-war movement that brought the University of Wisconsin to a standstill during those same days. Taking the technique to another level, however, Janko develops Hai and Conchola as parallel characters (for his parallel stories).

Conchola is a Mexican-American medic in the 25th Infantry that is working in the neighborhood of Hai's village. Like Hai, his anxiety about manhood has generated an emotional jumble that mixes fantasies of his own animal-prowess as a fighter with his detachment from military discipline and, eventually, his disregard for his unit's mission. The Hai and Conchola that Janko gives us are enough alike to force their comparison—does Great Joy function the same way in Hai's imagination as el tigre in Conchola's? Of course, it's their oppositional alignment in



the events that gives the book its tension—the 25th and the villagers are on a collision course—but the author's deftness avoids the clichés and keeps us reading. With riffs that will have you thinking Cacciato, Janko takes us to the end—which turns out to be, well, we're still not sure what (or where) that is, even when we get there.

I can imagine *Buffalo Boy and Geronimo* being a good addition to the reading lists for many literature courses as well as some history and social science syllabi with a focus on Vietnam during the war years. Veterans of the 25th

Infantry who spent time in the Cu Chi area during the run-up to the Cambodian invasion might find it a fascinating look over the cultural fence at what they were, and were not, up against.



JERRY LEMBCKE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE SPITTING IMAGE: MYTH, MEMORY, AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM. HE IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE IN WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS AND A NEW ENGLAND VVAW CONTACT.

# 9/11: Five Years Later

DAVID CLINE

I remember the morning of September 11, 2001 like it was yesterday. I was still sleeping when my phone rang just after nine in the morning. It was my friend Jaime Vazquez, a Vietnam Marine vet. He yelled into the phone, "A plane just hit the Trade Center! Turn on your TV!"

I turned it on and went to my front window. I live in the Jersey City Heights, across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan, and I had a clear view of the twin towers from my apartment. I could see heavy black smoke billowing out of Building One. I went to see what they were saying on television just as the second aircraft hit Building Two. I could not believe what was happening.

I knew that the World Trade Center (WTC) had long been a target for terrorist attacks. I used to work for the Port Authority, who ran the WTC, and for eight years, I was an officer for my union local. During that time, I spent many hours there in negotiations with labor relations, representing cafeteria and observation deck workers who were members of our union.

In 1993, I was scheduled to be at the WTC for contract negotiations on the day it was bombed the first time. At the last minute, the local president reassigned me to another facility to represent an employee in a disciplinary hearing, but the rest of our executive board was there when the explosion happened. They had to flee down almost eighty floors, along with thousands of others, to escape the destruction.

The perpetrators were captured, tried, and convicted, but it was understood that they were part of a larger network and that there was a good possibility that they would try to attack the twin towers again.

On September 11, 2001, it happened and was much more horrible than anyone had imagined. Over the hours, days, and weeks after the attacks, people throughout the area, country, and world rallied to rescue people, do relief work, and help their fellow human beings in whatever ways they could.

I have talked to friends and strangers who were there and told me of leading office workers to safety, of couples holding hands and jumping to their deaths to escape the burning hell inside,

of people on the ground being crushed by falling bodies, and of firemen, police, and emergency service workers repeatedly going back inside to lead people out, only to have the buildings collapse on them. Even writing these words still brings me pain and tears.

As the minutes and hours rolled on, we learned that a third plane had slammed into the Pentagon, and yet another aircraft crashed in Pennsylvania after the passengers heroically attempted to fight back against the hijackers.

But what happened next has much to do with the dire state we find our nation in today. Everyone understood that in response to these attacks, action had to be taken to hold accountable those responsible and bring them to justice.

An air assault and ground invasion of Afghanistan followed within weeks, and the Taliban regime was overthrown. In the fighting that followed, many of the main leaders of the al-Qaeda organization that had planned, financed, and organized these attacks were able to escape capture.

US troops have remained there since and are now caught in a growing insurgence against foreign occupation, much like the resistance that developed in the 1980s against the Soviet military invasion of that country.

But the Bush administration had bigger plans. In a strategic paper titled "Rebuilding America's Defenses," the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), a right-wing think tank, had argued for aggressively expanding American imperial influence abroad. One of the main obstacles they identified was the reluctance of the American people to remilitarize, and PNAC advocated incremental escalation of their program unless there was "another Pearl Harbor."

Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Karl Rove, and other top dogs in the Bush administration were architects of this neocon (-artist) thinking, and now they had what they had dreamed about.

George W. Bush used the September 11 attack to declare his "war on terror," which has since meant the illegal invasion of Iraq, support for and encouragement of Israeli aggression against Lebanon and long-suffering Palestine, people being "disappeared" and

tortured in gross violation of the Geneva Conventions and basic human rights, and increased imperial meddling and bullying throughout Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

These military conflicts abroad have inevitably led to more suffering and loss of freedom here at home. Social uplift programs, including those to assist veterans, have been slashed and face new threats with each new federal budget. Jobs continue to disappear through "free-trade agreements" and globalization, while many elected representatives, both Democrat and Republican, treat civil liberties and rights like quaint relics of the past. When natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina strike, the message from the White House is: "The people be damned."

This year marked the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, and memorial services were held at Ground Zero, the Pennsylvania field, and the Pentagon, as well as in many cities and towns throughout the nation. In New York City, family members of those lost read the 2,997 names and held a solemn remembrance.

Bush used the occasion to address the nation and again justify "staying the course" in the Iraq quagmire.

At Ground Zero, a memorial to the dead still has not been built, and some big rollers and politicians have proposed designs that many family members oppose as trivializing the sacred memory of those lost on that day.

In the five years since then, hundreds if not thousands of the rescue workers who so selflessly risked their lives have become sick, and some have already died from various respiratory illnesses caused by the toxic stew of asbestos and other hazardous materials that filled the air after the towers collapsed. At that time, the city government and the Environmental Protection Agency had assured the rescue workers that air quality was safe, and appropriate protective gear was not issued.

Today, many of these sick rescue workers are still struggling with a city and federal government that is stonewalling their claims and denying them the treatment and compensation they need. When we talk about what happened, we must insist that the living receive justice just as surely

as the dead. It reminds me of the treatment that Vietnam veterans who were poisoned by Agent Orange received when we came home from Southeast Asia, and of the treatment of Desert Storm and Iraq War vets today who have been exposed to depleted uranium and other toxins.

Recently, there has developed what is called the "9/11 truth" movement. Many theories have been advanced about what happened. The federal 9/11 Commission left so many unanswered questions that, much like the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, speculation and conspiracy theories have found fertile soil in some people's minds.

I think that all questions and possibilities need to be examined, and I believe that we should not trust a government that has lied so many times in the past. But I also think that we need to focus our primary efforts on what is happening now and how the 9/11 attacks were used as a justification for unjustifiable war.

Over the five years since that day, I have worked with an organization called September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. I have met many strong, honest, and caring people who will not allow the loss of their loved ones to be used as propaganda props for aggression abroad or repression at home. As they and all the 9/11 families remember and mourn their losses, we join with them in solemn reflection on this crime committed against our people. But we must also reflect on why these terrorists would attack us, what policies our government is pursuing that have so antagonized people in the Muslim world, who benefits from these policies, and what we can do to get our country on track as part of a world community that promotes human rights, justice, peace, and freedom.

This is the legacy of September 11, 2001 to which I am committed. If Americans understand this and do something about it, we may be able to fundamentally change course and prevent worse disasters from happening. If not, I am afraid to think of what will happen in the future.



DAVID CLINE IS THE NEW JERSEY CONTACT FOR VVAW AND A NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

## The \*%&%#@# War Story of All

*continued from page 32*

some men write for pistols, and some men write for liquor, and some men who have given up on going home do not write at all.

I tear out the coupon from a page of *Popular Mechanics*. Beneath the black-and-white photograph, the advertisement screams its headline in boldface letters: **ARMY SURPLUS KNIFE AND GENUINE LEATHER SCABBARD \$4.95+SHIPPING AND HANDLING. SUPPLIES LIMITED. THIS OFFER WILL NOT BE REPEATED.** Which, of course, it is. Every month. Like clockwork. So I clip the coupon, write a letter.

*Dear Mom and Dad, Today the captain gave each medic in the company a Bronze Star. He said we did good. He said we're gonna win this war and that we are good soldiers. I need a favor. Pay these people. Send me the knife. I'll pay you back. Do it now. It's important. Love.*

But they didn't. I know they're crazy. I know that. When I was ten years old, she had her first nervous breakdown. I watched it happen. In broad daylight, she is screaming, running, until the

police arrive, pin back her arms, she goes quiet. In high school, I watched him become an inert human puddle. Yet I need them to help me. Help.

*It's been three weeks. Why haven't you answered my letter? Here's another coupon. Just send the knife. Just send the fuckin' knife. Your son, the medic.*

Each day, as we march and hunt for humans, I learn to increase My Word Power. Solve Brain Teasers. Join the Rosicrucians. I receive the cover art of *The Last Unicorn* and a handwritten note from an editor that says: "Yes, it was Gervasio Gallardo. You are a very observant reader." I receive a typed answer on official stationery regarding the process of processed cheese. At long last, the lieutenant hands me a letter.

*Everyone here is fine. The weather is wonderful. Your Uncle Bill says hello. We've thought about the knife and don't think it's a good idea. You might hurt yourself. Write to us soon. XXXXX Mom and Dad.*

Now it's my turn to go crazy.



*1/7 Cav medic on QRF, Phuc Vinh, 1970 (photo by Marc Levy)*

Later, I will take a hand-forged machete off an NVA, strap it to my pack, use it at night. And later still, I will sleep with a loaded .25 automatic; my college roommates will say I'm disturbed. In Brooklyn, New York, I will visit Chinatown, purchase a block-blade Chinese meat cleaver, and for six years, keep it beneath my pillow. If there is noise, I will rise up and walk the perimeter of each room, ready to cut, slash, stab. And twenty-two years later, in Guatemala, I will buy a peasant's machete, carry it through Mexico, spirit it through customs, tuck it beneath my New England mattress, the exposed black handle within arm's reach. But for now, it's my turn to quietly hate, hate, hate them.

Winter: I'm home and Uncle

roars as he sits at the Thanksgiving dinner table. We have finished the meal, and I have told the story. Uncle roars. He roars great gales of laughter. Salty tears tumble down his gravy face. It's the stupidest, funniest, most absurd war story of all fuckin' time. Yet Mother and Father sit, quite perplexed. Why is he laughing? Uncle wipes his mouth, his face, his weary brow, tells them what I must tell myself in order to survive this tale, which I do not often tell.



*MARC LEVY SERVED WITH D 1/7 CAV IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA (1970) AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.*

## Michael Pahios, Rest in Peace

JIM DINGMAN

Mike Pahios, a Vietnam Marine veteran, longtime member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and a founding member and first president of Veterans for Peace NYC Chapter 34, passed away in his sleep on August 8, 2006 from an undiagnosed congenital heart defect.

Mike worked for many years for NBC television in their video department and had retired less than a year ago. He worked with the first seasons of the original *Saturday Night Live*, and for a time he shared an apartment with the comedian and actor Dan Akroyd.

He was active over the last ten years with the Borden Avenue Veterans Residence community action patrol. During the eighties, he was an active opponent of the Reagan wars in Central America. He traveled to Nicaragua several times as part of a VVAW delegation and with the Veterans' Peace Convoy. He also went to El Sal-

vador as part of a Veterans Peace Action Team.

Mike was an admirer of Evans Carlson, the founder of the Marine Raiders in World War II, and he was a historian for the United States Marine Raider Association. He was able to communicate with people who did not see eye-to-eye with him politically and still remain friends.

Michael served in Vietnam with the Second Battalion, Fifth Marines. His unit was the first major Marine outfit that was sent to Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive after NLF/PAVN forces seized the city.

He enjoyed life, food, and cigars and relished his relationships with all people, especially the opposite sex. He loved to party, hang out, and explore everything around him. His good nature and sense of humor touched many of us. He will be greatly missed.

Michael Pahios: Presente!



*Mike Pahios on prison farm near Managua, Nicaragua, April 1986.*

# Where We Came from, Who We Are, Who Can Join

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

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups to deal with traumatic 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 US aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia also put forward lies. The US 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

## The \*%&%#@# War Story of All

MARC LEVY

Every third day is log day. Hueys—jammed with cardboard crates of C-rats, ammo in wood or metal boxes, precious mail, rubber barrels of water slung beneath their bellies—spot our popped smoke, dip down, swoop in, and frantically unload, then they are gone. Our mail is stuffed in a red nylon sack tied shut with thick cotton rope. The lieutenant unties the bag, reaches in, carefully hands out letters that bear names, rank, serial numbers.

Abbott receives a Dear John, goes quietly berserk. Cleland is ordered home on emergency leave. Jack's wife sends bad news. "Shit," he says, putting the letter down.

Ernie opens a small, flat parcel; he reads the hand-printed note accompanying the cassette. "Train Station Sounds. Train Entering Station. Train Departing," he says. "Always love my choo-choos. Can't live without 'em." Jim receives an Easter basket filled with artificial grass and soggy yellow eggs of marzipan. He offers them up; we eat them.

"Nothing for you, Doc," the

lieutenant says.

What remains in the red sack are books and magazines donated by publishers. We pilfer the bag for *Time*, *Popular Science*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Reader's Digest*, a trove of paperbacks on various topics. I grab two glossy magazines. I grab a book written by Jan Yoors, who has lived with gypsies. Check my watch. In an hour, we'll move out, march through jungle. Set up an NDP. Send out patrols. Set up an ambush. I reach into my pack, snare the blue-lined Red Cross writing pad and a cracked Bic pen, and write to the company that makes our salt tablets. I've written many letters of inquiry; it helps pass the time.

*Dear Sir or Madam, Did the artist Gervasio Gallardo draw the cover art for Peter S. Beagles' latest book? It's very beautiful. I intend to read the story. Your reply is most appreciated.*

*Dear Sir or Madam, I would like to know what is meant by "processed cheese." This term appears on the list of ingredients of your fine*

*dairy product, which I enjoy immensely when I am not otherwise engaged.*

There is time to write to my parents. I'm stupid. Still seeking the impossible.

*Dear Folks, Today we killed five. Actually, they were dead before we killed them. They had walked into our booby trap. They scream a lot. Then they are dead. The lieutenant says I'm doing a good job. The others do the killing. I'm the medic, remember? So far, I've patched up six of my guys. We're so lucky. We're killing them more than they kill us. No one understands why they don't bleed. Oh well. I'll be sending you something I took from a dead man. Put it in a safe place. Love.*

After an hour, we stop, set up the perimeter. String the trips and claymores. Dig foxholes. Then the skin mags come out.

"Captain, isn't she beautiful?" I say, tearing the centerfold from its stapled spine. "I mean, isn't she fuckin' gorgeous?"

The shapely all-American blonde is smiling, freckle-faced; she has inviting, sexy legs; she has perfectly pouting lips. As she leans forward, her full, round breasts spill from the page.

"Whatever you say, Doc," the captain replies. He grabs the handset from the RTO. Calls in our grid coordinates. Our casualties. Our body count. "Whatever you say."

It's my fourth month. Patrols, jungle, ambush, monsoon. We live like dogs, and we know it. Letters from home, holiday cheer, the glossy escape into fantasy, these are the things that mock the clockwork of killing time and killing people: they blunt our fear of dying.

There are not enough machetes in third platoon. At night, we take turns clearing patches of brush. Each man cuts, rips, stabs the earth, then hunkers down 'til guard. Soon, men write home for machetes, survival knives. "K-bars," the Marines call them. And

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