



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

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War is the Atrocity

RICHARD STACEWICZ

After describing the brutal murder of two Iraqi farmers, who were working their fields during curfew, with 50 millimeter machine guns and belt-fed grenade launchers and other incidents that contradicted the "rules of engagement," US Army scout sniper Garret Reppenhagen, ended his testimony by saying, "the truth of the matter is the war is the atrocity." From March 13th through the 16th, dozens of members of the Iraq Veterans Against the War along with their supporters in VVAW, Vets For Peace and military families gathered together in Silver Springs, Maryland to hold four days of hearings about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. The purpose of the Winter Soldier hearings was "to show the true human costs of the occupation." Like their predecessors in VVAW who gathered in Detroit, Michigan 37 years ago, IVAW members sought to break through the media blockade that continues to restrict the public's access to the "Ground Truth" and instead reveal, the true nature of the war that is destroying Iraqi society.

The IVAW organized 13 panels made up of veterans, military families and various allies who presented a description of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (hereafter "Iraqistan") that sharply contradicts the official version of the wars described by Bush administration officials and their media lapdogs. They detailed the costs of the occupations on Iraqis and Afghans, returning veterans, their families, and the nation.

The roots of the Iraqistan debacle and the true lack of



Bryan Casler testifies on the Racism and War: the Dehumanization of the Enemy panel

concern for the Iraqis and Afghans can be found in basic training and deployment. Numerous testimonials recounted the lack of language and cultural literacy preparation in basic training. Iraqis and third country nationals, who worked for various contractors, were generally referred to as "Hajis." No distinctions were made between those who the troops had been supposedly sent to "liberate" and the "bad guys" they were to pacify. This attitude toward Iraqis was cultivated in basic training and permeated the military establishment. After summarizing the extensive nature of racism he encountered among his former commanders, former Sgt. Geoff Millard stated, "These things start at the top, not the bottom."

Members of a panel on "Gender and Sexuality in the Military" further elaborated on the impact of basic training on

not only Iraqi civilians, but on the brothers and sisters who served alongside their comrades. The heavy infusion of machismo and degradation of women and homosexuals that is often used to inculcate a fighting spirit among the troops devalued women and homosexuals in the military and exposed them to sexual harassment from their brothers in arms. Margaret Stevens, a medic with the New Jersey National Guard, argued that this kind of mistreatment of women is not necessarily the result of military engagement but happens "only in the context of these genocidal wars."

Most of the veterans who testified described wanting to serve in Iraq to help the Iraqi people even if they had some doubts about their missions. Adam

Kokesh, and others volunteered, "to do the right thing." Yet shortly after arriving in country, most realized that the Iraqis did not want them in their country. Jason Hurd, who served ten years in the US Army and Tennessee National Guard and served in Baghdad from November of 2004 to November of 2005, recounted a conversation he had with an Iraqi civilian that captured the feelings of many whom the soldiers encountered. When he asked the man, "Are your lives better because we are here? Do you feel like we are liberating you?" The man looked him in the eye and he said, "Mister, we Iraqis know that you have good intentions here, but the fact of the matter is, before America invaded, we didn't have to worry about car

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From the National Office

BARRY ROMO

VVAW is really proud of our part in supporting Iraq Veterans Veterans Against the War (IVAW) with their own Winter Soldier Investigation: Iraq & Afghanistan. You will see the articles about the event in this issue. It's good to be needed in our "old age." We organized security for the event; we're proud of the fact that we hauled off a right wing nut who tried to disrupt the event

as well as a couple of "friendlies" who didn't feel the rules set up by security applied to them.

But we need more from VVAW members and supporters. We will be holding Memorial and Veterans Day events. We should remind the country that the war is not over, that the conflict is not looking up, and, quite frankly, whoever wins the presidency must

be reminded that on January 21, 2009 the war goes from being Bush's War to being McCain, Clinton, or Obama's War. We will not give the next President a honeymoon as long as people are dying.

Check out the VVAW Store on line. We have some new stuff that we are selling, including a VVAW flag. If you are out there

alone and don't have someone else to hold a banner, the flag can announce your presence.

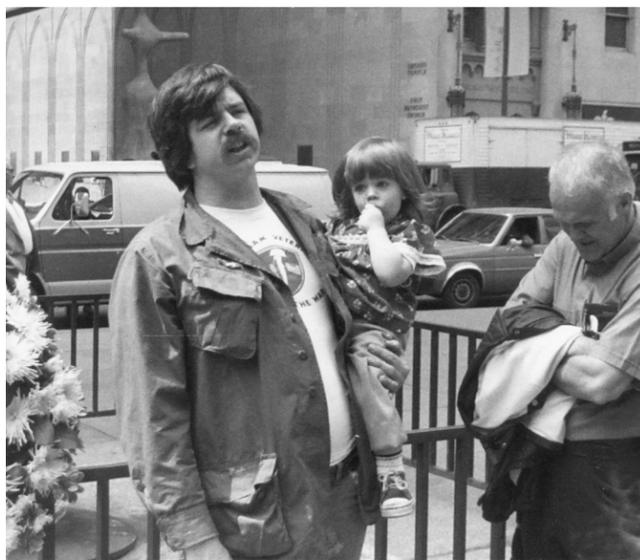
Finally, we want to thank Katha Pollitt of *The Nation* for asking people to support us last December. A good number of people responded to her call.



BARRY ROMO IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW.



Bobby Muller and Barry Romo at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan



Bill Davis with his daughter, Becky

Editorial Collective

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
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Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Aaron Davis, Suzanne Webster, Ward Reilly, Bob Gronko, Kurt Hilgendorf, Diane Wood, Nick Coppin, Richard Stacewicz, Bill Perry, Russ Scheidler and others for contributing photos.

VVAW Merchandise

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My View on Winter Soldier: Prior to the Event

JOHN ZUTZ

I was still in the Army in early 1971. I had survived Vietnam and returned to the world on Veterans Day '70, and after 30 days leave was stationed in California. No early out – I still had more than 6 months to serve. I had entered the Army fairly neutral. I knew there were people against the war, and I understood that my country required my service.

The news about My Lai broke while I was on leave on my way to Vietnam. Those photos and stories got me questioning what we were doing there. Then I saw the waste and stupidity first hand. The Generals could tell everyone that we were winning that war, but the privates surely understood the truth. Each one counted the days (and sometimes the hours and minutes) until he was sent home.

I had watched my buddies invade Cambodia while guys wearing the same uniform were murdering students protesting

that invasion at Kent State. I had been helpless in Vietnam while my mother was cleaning up glass from Madison's Sterling Hall bombing.

I didn't know which direction I was headed but I was firmly against the war in Vietnam.

In California I kept a copy of VVAW's Playboy ad hanging in my locker, much to the first shirt's chagrin. But fuck it, what could he do? Send me to Vietnam?

There were a number of troops, fresh out of basic or returned from Germany, who were tempted, by the boredom or the spit-shine mentality, to volunteer for Vietnam, and of course they asked me, and others who had returned, what it was like. We told them the truth. I'm not sure they believed us. We could have been spoofing them, and they were conditioned to believe the Generals.

They believed us when the Winter Soldier story came

through. Veterans were talking about what they saw and what they did. It was a risk to stand up and tell the world you covered up a rape, or you counted prisoners at the end of a chopper ride in case one was "missing" on arrival.

Media coverage of the testimony was sporadic, but even though we were in the field we got enough to know what was happening. The Neanderthals in the company were beating on their chests to show how tough they were. At the same time a number of my buddies mentioned that they were ashamed to be a member of the military. I believe they had good reason to feel that way.

They were familiar with military indoctrination. They knew the things being testified about were not sporadic incidents by a few bad apples. They stopped talking about volunteering for Vietnam.

Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan could have the same

effect. It could cause the troops to think again about their duty. We all know the Generals lie. It's the privates and the corporals who actually fight the fights who tell the truth.



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



John Zutz at Winter Soldier

Iraq: A View from the Bottom

JOHN ZUTZ

My feet hurt. Every muscle and bone in my body is sore. I think even my teeth ache. My eyes are blood-shot. I've only slept 12 hours in the past four days.

But damn, I feel good.

I just spent a long weekend in Silver Spring, Maryland, near Washington DC, listening to a group of young Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans tell their version of the war. I wasn't surprised to learn that Privates, Sergeants, and even Captains points of view didn't resemble the Pentagon versions. Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) has been aware of those differences and spent the weekend making sure the version from the bottom got told.

IVAW called the gathering Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan. They fashioned the hearings after the Detroit Winter Soldier event held by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) in 1971.

The Winter Soldier name came from Thomas Paine, who wrote, urging troops to withstand the terrible winter conditions at

Valley Forge, "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

Have no doubt; these young men and women are patriots. Standing up in the face of the government and speaking truth to power takes courage. Holding true to the oath they swore to uphold and defend the constitution of the US is the definition of valor. Facing their personal internal demons requires a special form of bravery. If they were "summer soldiers" they would have abandoned their posts long ago.

I learned about the legacy of GI and veteran resistance. I heard how our "rules of engagement" became guidelines, and then were disregarded entirely. I listened to veterans and their families tell about the crisis in veteran health care. I learned how sexism and racism affect the troops and the occupied countries. I was informed about the cost of the occupation and the pillaging by contractors.

I found out about the breakdown of the military and the future of GI and veteran resistance.

And that was just in the formal sessions.

I'm not going to try to quote statements by the participants because they are available through internet sources. The major traditional media outlets ignored the event, or minimized it, except the foreign press.

However, the hearings were streamed live as well as being broadcast over Pacifica radio and Dish TV. I'm sure the complete testimony will be available on line or on DVD soon. I recommend that everyone listen. It's over fifteen hours of testimony, but much of what is said will make an honest citizen ashamed.

Face it, the military's job is to break things and kill people. The "mission first" attitude of the military means that a humvee gets more respect than a human – even if that human is our own, but especially if he is a foreigner.

The young men and women at Winter Soldier volunteered to serve our country. They were

trained to act in certain ways and to react reflexively. They were taught to believe that the enemy is sub-human. It's no surprise that nasty things happen. The peer pressure of the military hypnotizes the troops to go along.

But not everyone is drinking the KoolAid® of good predictions that our administration is handing out. People who pay attention have noticed that the White House and the "experts" have been wrong all along.

IVAW and the people at Winter Soldier woke up. They realize the things we are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan don't align with our morals or our values. They understand that we're doing much more harm than good. They've dedicated themselves to making things better, beginning with the end of the occupation.

That's why I feel good.



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

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Good jobs are getting hard to find. They're more likely to be disappearing than developing. Health care for many has been and keeps disappearing. Jobs - not only the good ones - are disappearing during this recession. Homes are being lost. The war in Iraq seems endless. Most Americans would probably agree that the future doesn't look good at this point. What folks want are for things to be different. They want things to change.

So guess what. It's an election year. The theme for this year's presidential election is - change. Change all the things mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Barack wants change. Hillary wants it. McCain wants it. The people need change. So, vote for me. I'll set you free. If the past is any indication only a few will be set free.

The question becomes, will the new president change a lot of things or maybe just a little. Most likely he or she (as I write this Hillary is still an active candidate) will shoot for small changes while trying to create a feel-good atmosphere modeled on the Kennedy presidency.

This being a capitalist country, prosperity can only return if there is some stimulus to the economy. Of course prosperity is relative. During a period of prosperity the middle class might expand, the near poor can make do and the actual numbers of real poor may go down, but a whole lot more people would be happier than you have in today's situation.

In the past the kick-starts needed to bring prosperity have been both internal and external. Internal stimuli of the economy

have included stuff like a great amount of money accumulated through slavery and used to invest in the growth of the country. In the 19th century there was the expansion of the railroads and all the jobs this created in industry along with the populating of the West with European descendants. Then in the 20th century came the automobile and with it came all the highway infrastructure along with new towns, hotels, and restaurants and expanded industry along the roads.

There has also been external stimuli, mainly in the form of wars and trade. We could extract raw materials from other countries and return finished goods to them. Wars used to also be a stimulus because they generated a huge need for supplies and employment for those who made these supplies. In these times the Pentagon already has a bloated budget so having a war doesn't create as many jobs. Today wars are a drain on the economy. And we've expanded trade about as far as it can go.

In the last three or four decades we have had nothing to stimulate the economy - nothing to bring that elusive prosperity. Over the past fifteen years or so economists talked about all the dotcoms jump starting the economy, but they brought good jobs to only a few people and data entry jobs to many. So when a politician is making all kinds of promises it isn't likely that there is money behind those promises.

So, the population is hurting and the presidential candidates are out there promising. Even if the winner is sincere in his or her promises that doesn't mean

the best kind of changes will happen. That's because there may be a lack of vision or because the president must dance with those who bring him or her to the ball - the lobbyists and Wall Street types who are happy with the way the wealth is distributed. Remember a couple of months ago, one of Obama's top aides was caught telling Canadian officials not to worry about changing NAFTA. He and the rest of them can promise a lot on the campaign trail, but it's different backstage. There will be no boat rocking on many main issues. As Mario Cuomo said, "You campaign in poetry; you govern in prose."

Should the electee either be sincere or have his feet held to the fire by the populace (which is usually ahead of the president), there is still the question of how to do it. How to grow the economy? Some environmentalists claim that good jobs can be created if we should choose to transform to an environmentally-friendly society and all the changes to industry that it would involve. I'm no expert on that, but great. Great if it works.

Back during the Great Depression, the Roosevelt administration put people to work in the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Critics called these make-work jobs, but it put money in the pocket and bread on the table. You can still see the results of jobs well done in our state and national parks among other places. I've seen a lot that isn't make-work. The WPA and the CCC are examples of the type of thing that could be created today which could stimulate the

economy and benefit the nation. That bridge that collapsed in Minneapolis last year wasn't the only one in need of repair. The nation's infrastructure needs a lot of work.

There are many reasons to end the war in Iraq, but if for no other reason, the new president should end it because of the drain on the economy. He or she should also abrogate NAFTA. NAFTA was a boon to the investors, not the ordinary people of the three countries. Some people want to make the presence of undocumented immigrants into a campaign issue. It is no coincidence that the numbers of undocumented workers exploded after NAFTA came into being. Central Americans and Mexicans lost their jobs and got squeezed out of agricultural jobs when NAFTA began so they came here. NAFTA screwed them just like it screwed our industrial workers in Ohio.

Almost anybody would make a better president than what we have now (although the more we hear from John McCain we begin to wonder). Hopefully we'll get someone who can swing a few issues back towards what is needed by ordinary people. For the last thirty years it's been a situation of the rich getting richer, the middle class shrinking and the poor getting poorer. Some of the wealth needs to shift back. I would expect a little something better from the next president. I wouldn't expect great things.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR AND VVAW MEMBER IN THE CHICAGO CHAPTER.

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

The Iraq war is entering its sixth year, eclipsing in longevity both World War II and the American Civil War. If John McCain is elected, it may threaten the Chicago Cubs' record for consecutive seasons without a World Series appearance, although its duration for the moment remains short of our involvement in Vietnam. This begs the oft-asked question, "Is Iraq Vietnam all over again?"

Having majored in medieval history in college, I am obviously not qualified to answer that question. Okay, there was that silly

Hundred Years War thing in the 14th and 15th Centuries, although trying to make any comparison there may be stretching it. At least we hope so. But there is one glaring difference between Iraq and Vietnam, and it's kind of an elephant in the corner of the room. I don't know that too many people think it's important - we don't hear any of the Presidential contenders talking about it - but if you served in Vietnam, I may guarantee that it has crossed your mind.

Like every other town in America, Tuscola holds three or

four parades every year. Each of them features a Grand Marshal, usually somebody about ninety years old who has, well, lived to be ninety years old. But I have noticed that our parades these last few years have invariably included local Iraq vets as Grand Marshals, and I assume that this has been the case across the country. You may guess where I'm going here.

A couple of years ago, as one of our parades was about to get underway, a City Council member expressed to me his appreciation that two of our local Iraq vets

were serving as Grand Marshals. I of course agreed, and added - I couldn't help myself - that I was reminded of all of the parades in which I was honored after I got back from Vietnam. He then asked, "Really?" My reply - Nam vets will understand - was "f*** no." That kind of ended the conversation. I picked up my American flag, fell in line for the color guard, and off we went down Main Street. I do not believe that he and I have since discussed the subject.

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US Casualties Continue



Notes from the Boonies

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So what's my beef? I certainly do not begrudge our young men and women who served in the Middle East. God bless every one of them. They have been, as we were, Bobby Zimmerman's "pawns in the game." And like us forty years ago, more of them are coming around to that conclusion. Even if they don't, God bless them anyway. Put 'em in a parade. Throw flowers. Offer them your nubile sons and daughters. I could not be more on board with this. So why am I digging up bones from 1968? And why am I using

up the space that *The Veteran* has graciously – some would say inexplicably – given me since 1997 to bring up a subject that is arguably yesterday's news?

I suppose the answer is that I still don't get it. The Iraq war is no more popular than was Vietnam, and, with the really odd exception of those crazy church folks from Kansas, I have yet to hear of the first instance of an Iraq vet being dissed by anybody. But we were. Forty years later, I keep asking myself why.

I suppose I could call

some sociology professor at the University of Illinois and ask him, but he'd probably just thank me for the call and then dial up Homeland Security, and a few hours later I'd be handcuffed and hauled off to Guantanamo. I would then be introduced to what the Administration calls enhanced interrogation techniques. My ACLU friends would have a pancake breakfast to raise the money to post my bail, but of course if you're one of George's security risks, there ain't no bail. Scratch that idea.

Option number two would be to ask my fellow Nam vets in Tuscola. The problem is that they probably don't know either. But, as suggested earlier, that doesn't mean that the question hasn't crossed their minds.

I suppose I should come clean here. Nobody ever spat on me when I got back from Vietnam, and nobody ever called me a baby killer. I am certain that those things happened to other vets, for the inescapable reason that there has never been, and never will be, any shortage of morons in the world. People who did that were certainly not representative of the anti-war movement in this country, which recognized not only that we had been "pawns," but also our role as natural leaders in that movement.

What was the reaction I most often received? Absolute indifference. "Hey, Wiz, haven't seen you in a few months." "Well, actually, it's been two years. I just got back from Vietnam." "That's cool. Wanna shoot some pool?"

So here I am, 61 years old and still dwelling on this really antiquated question, while in Iraq and Afghanistan people are getting killed in a war that doesn't have one damned thing to do with my paranoia. But if we still feel compelled to greet each other with "Welcome Home" – because nobody ever said that to us forty years ago - there's got to be some baggage out there. So help me out – maybe help us both out – and drop me a line at PO Box 412, Tuscola, IL 61953, with your thoughts on the subject. I'll print your comments in the next *Veteran*.

I promise I won't call Homeland Security on you, even if your answer makes as little sense as my question. Oh, and Welcome Home.



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.



War, Politics and the Veteran

STEVE CRANDALL

We are proud to be veterans of the Vietnam war. We are also just as proud to be members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. We have heard and read comments from Vietnam veterans that believed the media and the left-wing peace activists created a stigma that sullied Vietnam veterans, and therefore brings shame to all of those who served in Vietnam. When we came home some of us joined the peace groups marching in the streets. Many more just wanted to fit back in and continued where we left off. For those our shame was not what we did in Vietnam, but what we

didn't do when we returned. We didn't speak out!

So who were the people marching in the Veteran's Day parades throughout the country? They were the groups that believe that they, and they alone, hold patriotism at the highest level. They do not question the atrocities of war and they do not insist on oversight of veterans' rights. They march to the beat of the Commander-in-Chief because to do anything else would be unpatriotic. This Veteran's Day they donned their uniforms, hats, badges, pins and head for the Veteran's Day parades, for they

make the decisions as to who march in their parades and what they will wear. Groups like VVAW and Veterans For Peace were asked to provide military or veteran identification should they want to join in the parade. But there will be no "politics," no symbols, banners or other clothing identifying these groups. Non-military members of these groups will not be allowed to participate in the parade. Many of these members are the wives of veterans who watched their friends and loved ones die, be maimed, or come back suffering from the effects of being exposed to Agent Orange or Depleted Uranium. All

while non-veterans groups--like the Boy Scouts, Sea Cadets and what other groups they determined would make their parade look "patriotic"--were encouraged to join in and march along side the "patriarchs."

The California Central Coast Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War will be "Honoring the Warrior, Not the War".



STEVE CRANDALL IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE CA CENTRAL COAST CHAPTER OF VVAW.

War Resister is Keynote Speaker at New Orleans Action

WARD REILLY

Louisiana native Sgt. James Circello, an active-duty war resister, and former soldier, was the keynote speaker on Saturday, 10-27-07, at Washington Square Park during a regional action in New Orleans, one calling for an end of the Occupation of Iraq, the restoration of the Constitution, and for the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. He was joined in speaking by a wide array of local activists from the New Orleans area.

Sgt. Circello, and Airborne Infantry Iraq war x-troop, and Louisiana native son, spoke of how he finally lost hope that the newly-elected, Democrat-controlled Congress, would end the Occupation in Iraq, after Congress expanded the war with the "troop surge", instead of ending the war, as mandated by "we the people" in the November 2006 election.

James did 6 years of active duty before going AWOL during Easter of 2007. He said that he

could no longer morally be a part of the destruction of Iraq. He has been actively speaking out as a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, and Courage To Resist, and is a fugitive from the military because of his AWOL status.

Bob Smith, a 3-combat tour Green Beret (Vietnam), and a retired Command Sergeant Major, MC'd the event, which was plagued with sound system problems, which seemed fitting considering this WAS in New Orleans. Nobody cared, and it was a proud action.

If there was a down "note," pun intended, it is that the PA system failed just as "Zenbilly" of Baton Rouge started what was to have been a harmonized set of original and cover anti-war songs, but he bravely entertained the small gathering on his acoustic guitar with one microphone only, which is a tough act.

Judith Leblanc was the driving force behind the event and

the first speaker. She is a rep for United For Peace & Justice, which was the main sponsor of this, and 10 other regional demonstrations across the country. Veterans For Peace was a very strong sponsor, and the newly formed New Orleans Coalition Against the War (NOCAW) pulled the action together locally. Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, Pax Christi and the UU church of New Orleans, among several other orgs, all did as much as possible to make the day a good one.

On a beautiful day in south Louisiana, in a city that is still in total collapse, activists came from Texas, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, New York, Mississippi, and many from Baton Rouge, to grace our city in support and solidarity with the people in the city of New Orleans. What an honor it was to see them. We had a good day resisting this war, with much more yet to come.

In the smallest of the nationwide regional demonstrations, (rightly so, by default, brought to you by the Bush administration) 300 BEAUTIFUL, and tired, anti-warriors stood tall, and marched through the historic French Quarter and historic Jackson Square, to nearly unanimous approval of the citizens along the route.

In the name of journalism, I must report that one member of "Dunks For Bush" slurred out "losers" as we marched by, which gave us all even more to smile

about, as most cheered us on.

In the park, we were joined by 4 members of an opposition-to-protest group, which stood by and muttered "we are winning" as Circello spoke. Yeah, right. "Winning" is killing 1,000,000 innocent people, shutting of the electricity, sewer, and water of a nation for 5 straight years, destroying its infrastructure, and displacing 4,000,000 others. Winning. Liberated to death, so to speak. Democracy in action? I don't think so.

Standing WITH Circello on stage were Green Beret Bob Smith (3 combat tours, Vietnam), Vietnam combat veteran Pat Dooley (1st Cav), Vietnam Combat Medic Dave Collins (1st ID), Iraq War vet Justin Cliburn, Iraq War vet Amanda Fontenot, retired AF vet and gubernatorial candidate Vinny Mendosa, and infantry vet Ward Reilly, a Vietnam era war resister. A HUGE shout out to those who came from other states, some of whom also came to do some relief work while they were here. In that we were hoping 300,000,000 would show up, instead of 300, I guess we still have a bit of work to do. Fight on sisters and brothers, they all come crumbling down in 2008!

End the Occupation Yesterday!



WARD REILLY IS THE SOUTHEAST NATIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW.



Ward Reilly and Ray Parrish at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

New Ohio Chapter Is On The Move

BILL REYNOLDS

Through the organizing efforts of the Southeastern Ohio chapter of VVAW, the area is fast becoming a hotbed of anti-war activity. They are educating the community about the mission of VVAW and IVAW and spreading the word about Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan. The Southeastern Ohio VVAW chapter and the Mid-Ohio Valley Peace Initiative have sponsored two coffeehouses, with good food, drink and music, and some impassioned and articulate speakers. The most recent coffeehouse on March 1 was a fundraiser for Winter Soldier. Poets, speakers and musicians provided a wide variety of great music and thoughtful words on the current situation in the Middle East. VVAW National Coordinator Marty Webster spoke eloquently about the original Winter Soldier investigation and gave a passionate presentation on the importance of the testimony of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan that took place in Washington.

The event was a big success. It was the first time some of the participants had ever taken part in an anti-war event. People came from across the Ohio river in

West Virginia, and as far away as Pittsburgh, to raise money for a good cause. The beauty of it was that it gave many participants something concrete they could do to further the cause. It may simply have been to get on stage and play a song or read some poetry, but it constituted that first important act of getting together with like-minded people and taking one small step.

All the funds raised went to the national IVAW office to help with Winter Soldier. With that under our belts, a few weeks later our town was blessed with the arrival of VVAW member Bill Homans, aka Watermelon Slim, who came to play at the local blues festival, sporting a VVAW button on his jacket. Slim taught himself to play upside-down left-handed slide guitar in a hospital bed in Vietnam. Nearly forty years later he is a phenomenal blues man. After the show he was approached by two of the more dedicated local activists, who are willing to put in long, grueling hours at blues shows and late-night parties to further the cause. When asked if he would be interested in returning to the area to do a benefit gig for VVAW, Slim

expressed great enthusiasm.

Mark your calendars: On August 3, Watermelon Slim and the Workers will be playing at the Front Row in Parkersburg, WV. All proceeds will go to VVAW. Local folk legend Mike Morningstar will open the show. Earlier in the day, there will be a barbeque and gathering for Ohio VVAW and IVAW members and supporters at the home of local VVAW contact Bill Reynolds.

Other events planned for this area include an interfaith Memorial Day service at the Peace Memorial outside Parkersburg, WV. The memorial consists of a display of crosses, one for each US service member killed in Iraq. Leaders of various faiths with gather at this site to remember those who have given their lives and to consider the true cost of war. In addition, Marty Webster is planning a forum on the campus of Ohio University in Athens during the month of May.

For more information about these events, contact Lynn Cady of the Mid-Ohio Valley Peace Initiative (740-374-2969) or Bill Reynolds (740-350-0316). For tickets to the Watermelon Slim



Bill Reynolds

show, call the Front Row at 304-422-7655. Be advised, this show may sell out early. All VVAW and IVAW members interested in attending should contact Marty Webster at 513-349-4413. See you there. ☺

BILL REYNOLDS IS A LOCAL HISTORIAN AND RESIDENT OF WATERTOWN, OHIO. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM AND IS THE VVAW CONTACT FOR SOUTHEASTERN OHIO AND NORTHERN WEST VIRGINIA. LYNN CADY, OF THE MID-OHIO VALLEY PEACE INITIATIVE, ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ARTICLE.

VVAW Salt Lake City



VVAW led the fall mobilization protest march in Salt Lake City last October. Members Rick Miller and Gene Barrett carry banners, and Aaron Davis (far left) bellows out cadence.



At the Salt Lake City October 27 mobilization rally, original Utah VVAW member Larry Chadwick spoke to a crowd of 1,000 at the city county building. Also present were chapter members Rick Miller and Gene Barrett holding banners with Veterans For Peace and VVAW.



The VVAW chapter in Salt Lake City recently renewed the treaty of support of the American Indian Movement (AIM). Holding the sacred pipe are Vietnam vet, VVAW activist and Choctaw native Gene Barrett, along with AIM activist Gene Thunderhawk. The organizations plan a joint action on Columbus Day in October. Thunderhawk participated in Wounded Knee in 1973. VVAW members covertly supplied AIM with supplies during the 73-day siege.

Agent Orange – The Time-Release Poison Pill

PAUL COX

"It is not impossible that our country has dropped a delayed-action bomb that will reverberate on the affected populations with consequences that will only be possible to evaluate in a distant future."

Senator Gaylord Nelson almost had it right in 1970: Agent Orange (AO) is indeed a delayed-action bomb. But instead of exploding once, it has been exploding continuously in the bodies of more than 3 million Vietnamese and tens of thousands of US and other veterans since it was dropped on nearly 1/8 of the landmass of Vietnam during the American War. It, or more specifically, the dioxin contaminant that was manufactured into it, is a poison that attacks the immune system, organs, cellular genetic code, and fetal development. On February 22, 2008, a three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's dismissal of the lawsuit by the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin (VAVA) against 37 chemical manufacturers that made herbicides for the US military and profited tremendously from their contracts.

The lower court that had originally dismissed the case was presided over by Jack Weinstein, the same judge that rammed through the out-of-court settlement in 1984 of the first Agent Orange/dioxin suit brought by US veterans. That settlement for \$180 million was spent within 10 years, leaving tens of thousands of veterans who were not yet sick with dioxin poisoning without access to the settlement. The largest cash payout to any of the individual plaintiffs was a lame \$4,000. However, the Veteran's Administration (VA) began recognizing a few illnesses in veterans related to AO, and has gradually expanded the list

to a suite of diseases that are presumptively caused by AO if the veteran served in Vietnam. Currently the VA expends about \$1.5 billion annually on AO-related illnesses to veterans in direct medical care and disability payments.

So, when those Vietnamese who have been suffering from AO poisoning for 30 years decided in 2004 to file a suit in US Courts against the chemical companies, it was reasonable to think that they would have gotten an honest hearing. Judge Weinstein had, as a part of the 1984 settlement, retained jurisdiction of all subsequent AO-related lawsuits, presumably because he was already familiar with the scientific basis and legal landscape for AO/dioxin issues. However, it was clear from the beginning of the case that he was hostile to the suit. He stated that AO was not a poison and that the original suit had been settled due to political and economical reasons, not because there was any scientific evidence that AO actually hurt anyone. Ultimately, he sided with the chemical companies and the US government and dismissed the Vietnamese suit and two others brought by US veterans.

The dismissal forced the plaintiffs in all three suits to appeal that decision to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. The entire appeal for all three suits was heard in one day in June 2007 by a three-judge panel and was accompanied by demonstrations of support for plaintiffs in several cities around the country.

In its decision, the Appeals Court bobbed and weaved on matters of domestic and international law, ultimately coming to the conclusion that domestic laws were not violated because claims were barred

against government contractors. This may sound familiar as the same argument that has been made to let the phone companies aid the "intelligence community" in widespread and uncontrolled wiretapping of US citizens. The Appeals Court also ruled that VAVA had not proven a "violation of international law because Agent Orange (AO) was used to protect the troops against ambush and not as a weapon of war against human populations."

It apparently does not matter to the courts that – thirty-seven years after spraying stopped in Vietnam – AO contamination is massively devastating to the people of Vietnam, to veterans of that war from the US, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, and to people in Canada whose communities were contaminated by its testing.

More than three million Vietnamese suffer today from illnesses and birth defects, and hundreds of thousands of war veterans from these other countries are ill from dioxin poisoning. Yet the court accepted the argument that since the US has always maintained that AO was not a chemical weapon, it is not a chemical weapon. Finely-tuned legal language cannot hide the crime. Veterans For Peace (VFP) members may remember the delegation of Agent Orange victims who attended the June 2007 hearing on the appeal. Two of those people – Nguyen Thi Hong and Nguyen Van Quy – have already died due to cancer from Agent Orange exposure. How many others must die before justice is done?

Left unexamined is the smoking gun that the chemical companies knew their products contained dioxin poisons, and yet, chose to forego slower manufacturing methods that would remove the dioxins. After all, the military had an open-ended order to buy all the AO the chemical companies could get, and there were profits to be made.

The appeals court decision has prevented the Vietnamese victims from getting access to company and government files that undoubtedly would yield additional revelations about the collusion between the chemical companies and the government. The court's companion decision also upheld the dismissal of the

two suits by US veterans who got sick after the 1984 settlement with the chemical companies.

All is not lost, however. There is a growing awareness in this country of the damage AO/dioxin has done, of the lies and treachery of the US government and the chemical companies, and of citizen's responsibility to take responsible action even if our government won't. Late last year the American Public Health Association passed a strong resolution calling for the government and chemical companies to allocate resources to help the Vietnamese victims and US veterans, and to take action to remedy the damage to the environment in Vietnam.

VAVA will now take their fight to the full Court of Appeals and, if necessary, to the Supreme Court, where, after additional years of delay, they will get additional cracks at justice from our court system. In the meantime, organizations that support justice for Vietnamese victims are beginning the process of pushing Congress to provide compensation for the victims and remediation of the environmental damage and bringing public pressure to bear on the manufacturers of Agent Orange. VVAW, along with other veterans groups, can play an important role in this campaign. When the time comes to push for legislation, we will need to mobilize across the country to lobby our congressional delegations to support it. In the meantime, a hearing on the AO problem has been set for May 15, 2008, in the House. Please call your Representative to urge them to attend. The primary support organization in the US for VAVA's fight for justice is the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign (VAORRC). Their website is packed with information and documents related to this struggle. The full text of the court decision, VAVA's statement, and VAORRC's press release can be found at the VAORRC website at: www.vn-agentorange.org/index.html



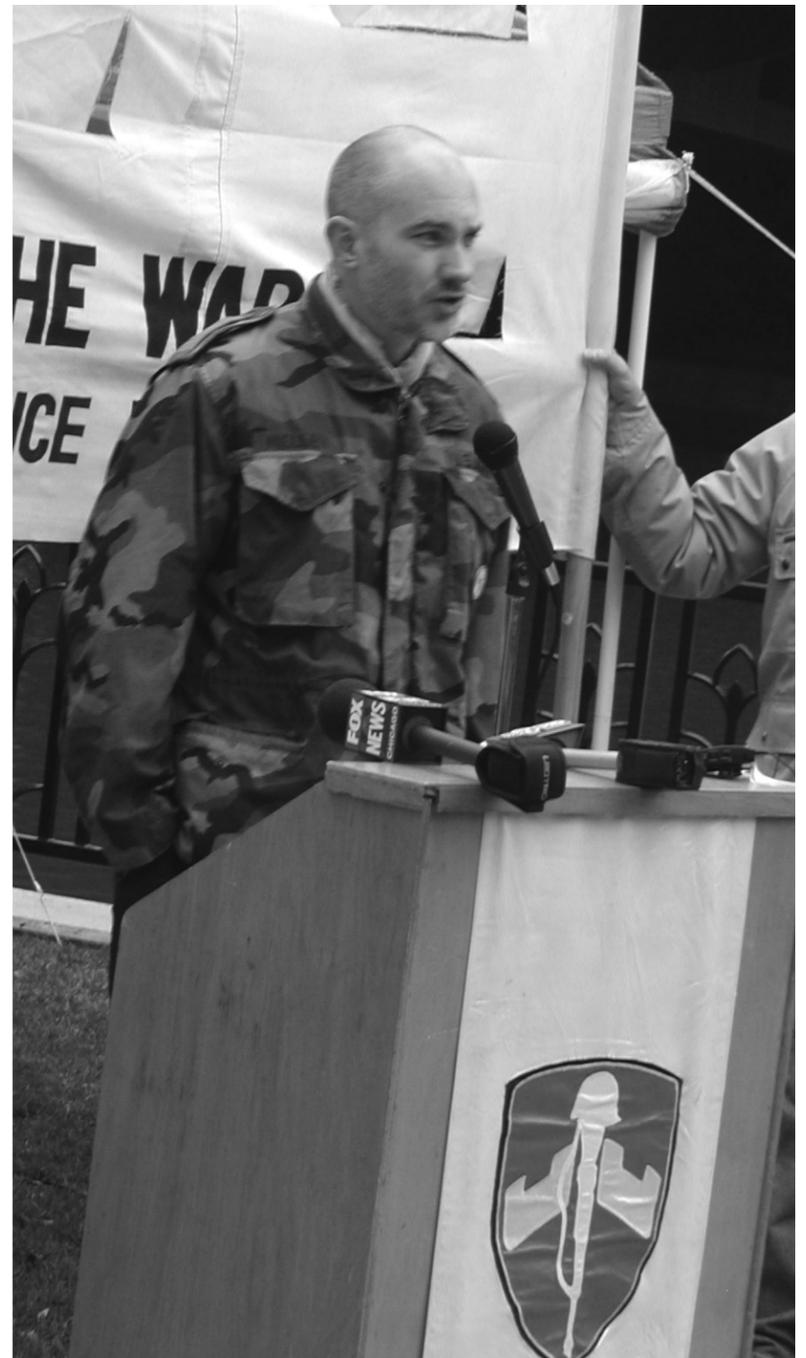
PAUL COX SERVED AS A MARINE IN VIETNAM FROM 1969 TO 1970 AND IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS ON THE NATIONAL BOARD OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF AND RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN.



Veterans Day Chicago 2007



Joan Davis speaks at Veterans Day 2007, Chicago



Ken Nielsen speaks at Veterans Day 2007, Chicago



Bruce Hyland speaks at Veterans Day 2007, Chicago



Patty McCann of IVAW speaks at Veterans Day 2007, Chicago

The Late, Great, '68

HORACE COLEMAN

Of course it started with Tet—the Lunar New Year that came with a sucker punch that staggered the US military and made the US blink, for a second. The US won the Tet Offensive militarily but some people thought the foe might not be defeated as soon, or as easily, as we had thought.

The war wasn't over but it reeled for a while. My Freedom Bird flight left at night, in the middle of Tet. As the plane climbed out of Tan Son Nhut, quiet passengers saw the flashes from outgoing artillery, the impact of shells and bombs, tracers arcing and parachute flares mimicking falling chandeliers. Goodby Nam! Hello World!!

University students rioted in Paris; the USSR crushed Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison local cops showed anti-war students, demonstrators and bystanders who was boss by doing what overwrought police officers do best with crowds.

In less than three months after my Freedom Bird landed stateside, Martin Luther King would be assassinated, major American cities would suffer riots (again) and armed troops would be guarding the Capitol. I'd just changed locations. There was a

"war" going on here; a civilian conflict called social upheaval. I wouldn't find out about the party at My Lai for a while.

The government and military were doing the Cold War at the same time as Vietnam. It was mostly a series of coups, subversion, propaganda, espionage, intrigue and military feints that the US and Russia used to indulge themselves. We would win that one, eventually. The Russians went broke first

Unless you were on, close to, or in certain college campuses, ghettos or big cities you could usually easily miss it. TV would shove it in your face, though, just as it did with Vietnam.

The hot war, Vietnam, was opposed by a growing handful of disillusioned vets, peace activists and members of The Left (whatever the hell that was). The Silent Majority (a term some one first used to describe those dead) mostly, and silently, "approved" the war. The Black Panthers (Huey Newton's lumpen proletariat) did symbolic acts, some violence, battled cops and ran free breakfast and educational programs. SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) tried to organize the working class. Later on they would get into street fighting and blowing up buildings and themselves.

People didn't know what to do so they just did their thing.

I'd missed the Orangeburg Massacre, a little dust up in South Carolina where three blacks were killed and 28 shot in a flap about integrating a bowling alley in the town. My last duty station stateside was in South Carolina. Where was an air strike when you needed it? I hadn't yet gotten the news about Eartha Kitt getting on LBJ's case about Vietnam (while in the White House and his face). Secretary of (War) Defense McNamara was still running things with a spreadsheet.

When I heard LBJ's speech where he said he wouldn't run for president, I was shocked. The power lover was giving up power and letting some one else "solve" the problems of Vietnam and this country? It seemed like minutes instead of weeks later that I watched Bobby Kennedy on the tube announcing MLK's death. Within months I would hear some one announce Bobby's assassination. Sprinters John Carlos and Tommy Smith showed out at the Summer Olympics, in front of the whole world, when they stood shoeless on the victory stand to get their medals and raise clenched fists.

Chicago cops rioted at the

Democratic convention, head whipping any one in sight. Mayor Daley resembled Mussolini as he bullied the convention and tried to control the TV coverage. Jimi Hendrix's version of the Star Spangled Banner was really right on now. And, where had all the flowers gone?

So many unusual and outrageous things were happening so fast and loudly that you didn't need a grapevine. What's going on? Sensory overload. Soul shock. Mind mess. I thought about a poem I'd studied in college: "Things fall apart. The center can not hold."

Just like now. "Deja vu all over again." Except gas was 34 cents a gallon. A first class stamp cost a nickel and it didn't cost more to make a penny than it was worth.

And we only had one dubious hot war going on.



HORACE COLEMAN WAS AN AIR FORCE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER / INTERCEPT DIRECTOR IN VIETNAM (1967-68). HE ALSO SERVED IN TACTICAL AIR COMMAND, PACIFIC AIR COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AIR DEFENSE. HE SPEAKS AT GRADE SCHOOLS, HIGH SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES AND LIVES IN LONG BEACH, CA.

poems by veterans

This book tells the stories of veterans with direct experience of the military. For some, the intense experience of war can only be expressed in poetry, while others are driven by the need to say something openly political. It includes veterans from World War II, the Cold War, Korean War, Vietnam War, peace time and the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Soldier-poets contributors: Camillo "Mac" Bica, Richard Boes, Thomas Brinson, Michael Embrich, Michael Gillen, Marc Levy, Bob Lusk, Gerald McCarthy, Jim Murphy, Fred Nagel, Ron Thompson, Robert "Tack" Trostle, Jose Vasquez, Jay Wenk, Sam Weinreb, Dan Wilcox, Larry Winters and Dayl Wise.

"...Above all I am not concerned with poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of war, the poetry is in the pity." - Wilfred Owen

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The Bodies Beneath the Table

Hue City, 1968
(or was it Fallujah,
Stalingrad, or Ur?)

The bodies beneath the table
had been lying there for days.
Long enough to obliterate their faces,
the nature of their wounds.
Or maybe whatever killed them
ruined their faces, too.
Impossible now to tell.
Only the putrefying bodies
bloomed like Macy's Parade balloons,
only unrecognizable lumps on
shoulders where heads should be.

The two of them seemed to be a couple:
husband and wife, lovers perhaps,
maybe brother and sister-who
could tell-but they'd pulled the table
into a corner away from the windows,
their only protection against
the fighting raging around them,
crawled beneath it-the table, I mean-
half sitting, bent at the waist,
close together, terrified, almost
certainly terrified, nothing but noise,
only each other, only each other,
any moment their last.

All these years I've wondered
how they died. Who were they.
Who remembers.

— *W. D. Ehrhart*

Marine Corps veteran W. D. Ehrhart first published poetry in Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans, published by VVAW's 1st Casualty Press in 1972. He teaches English and history at the Haverford School in suburban Philadelphia.

Happy Anniversary!?

Five years of Middle East tears spurt
a rain of pain into a flood of blood.
People send sun tan lotion but
forget the take-me-home potion.
Dollars shrink and float away
as casualty lists bloat and stay.
It's worth it to show, though, that
our trigger and god is bigger.
This keeps us, we think,
free from misery as we sink.
It's easier to hack life spans and limbs
than to control our excessive whims.

— *Horace Coleman*

Ode to the P-38

No, not the P-38 Lightning - Air Craft,
nor German semi-automatic pistol.
You're a field ration can opener,
Officially:
Opener "comma",
Can "comma",
Hand "comma",
Folding "comma",
Type I.

You're were small and light to carry,
Hinged, nickel-plated, hardened steel,
cheap, petite, 1-1/2 inches long.

You adorned my dog tag chain,
like a ring, my steady.
Around the block a few times,
WWII, Korea. With me... Vietnam.

Environmentally friendly,
light weight,
you're human-powered,
no batteries for you.

Opened C-rations, bottles,
stripped wire, cleaned boots,
fingernails, a great marking tool.
Once scaled a fish. Do you remember?

We parted that fall night, 24th Evac
Hospital,
my last vision of you, around my neck.
Resting on my dog tags,
never saw you again.

I think of you often my love,
but we both knew it was temporary.
Heard about your retirement,
with the adoption of MRE's.

Thank you for everything,
for penetrating all those C-Rats.
Never been able to bring myself
to buy an electric can opener.

— *Dayl Wise*

Notes:

MRE's: Meals Ready-to-Eat, individual field ration in lightweight packaging.

C-Rats: Nickname for C-rations containing a canned entrée, three cans containing cheese, crackers, candy, a dessert and cigarettes.

War is the Atrocity

continued from page 1

bombs in our neighborhoods, we didn't have to worry about the safety of our own children as they walked to school, and we didn't have to worry about US soldiers shooting at us as we drive up and down our own streets."

The men and women in the military were placed in the untenable position of occupiers whose missions only inflamed Iraqi resistance. Numerous panelists described missions where soldiers were put under intense stress and pressure and were compelled to engage in activities that not only risked their own lives but those of the Iraqi citizens they encountered. Soldiers were put in what psychologist Robert Jay Lifton called "an atrocity producing situation" in which human beings behave in illegal and immoral ways they would normally reject.

Veterans described harassing and frightening Iraqi families and destroying homes often in the middle of the night. Scott Ewing, private 1st class with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment who served in Telafar described trashing countless homes "yet found no evidence of foreign fighters or weapons caches." These were not isolated incidents but stories repeated over and over by veterans who had served in numerous places and at different periods of time over the past five years. This was standard operating procedure. Numerous testimonials recounted experiences where civilians were murdered because they happened upon US troops who were operating without clear and consistent Rules of Engagement. Veterans described the random shootings at passing

vehicles, the destruction of a civilian occupied apartment building by an AC-130 gunship, the killing of women carrying bags of vegetables, the shooting of a civilian at a demonstration, and free fire zones where there were no friendlies. Everyone was deemed to be an enemy combatant. In order to cover up these atrocities, several of the panelists provided photographs of shovels and weapons they carried with them to place alongside the bodies of civilians they had killed in order to justify their actions.

Former Marine Sergeant Jason Lemieux, who served three tours in Iraq, summarized the feelings of all who testified. He concluded that, "The Rules of Engagement changed frequently, contradicted themselves, and when they were restrictive, they were either loosely enforced or escalations of force, as shootings of civilians were known, were not reported because Marines did not want to send their brothers in arms to prison when all they were trying to do was protect themselves in a situation they had been forced into." The soldiers' primary concern in these wars, as it has been in previous wars, was to survive their tours, to protect their brothers and sisters in arms, and to return home.

For many, however, the dream of a safe return home was deferred by the President's Stop-Loss program which turned many of those caught up in this program into "prisoners of war" as characterized by Sergeant Kristofer Goldsmith whose own experience with Stop-Loss led him to attempt suicide before his redeployment. The stress of

continuous deployments is leading to increased levels of stress among countless young men and women in the military. Family members of soldiers who have succeeded in killing themselves provided moving testimonies of their children's demise.

The true nature of the wars in Iraqistan was revealed by veterans whose duty was to escort convoys of trucks operated by contractors. Kelly Dougherty, a medic in the Colorado Army National Guard, served as a military policy sergeant from March 2003 to February 2004 escorting KBR vehicles from bases in Kuwait to bases in Iraq. She described how KBR trucks often broke down and how US forces had to secure them to keep them out of Iraqi hands. She described one incident in particular, when two fuel tankers broke down and hundreds of Iraqis from a nearby local village descended on the trucks to get the diesel fuel which they desperately needed. She recounted how she had been ordered to light the fuel in the tankers on fire and to destroy the vehicles. "Here we were burning fuel in front of Iraqi civilians who had to wait in lines for miles long just to get a little fuel for their stove or vehicles. It really brought home to me the complete irony and absurdity of our presence in Iraq . . . Putting our lives on the line and risking violence towards the Iraqi people to protect hunks of metal and then just destroying them at the end of the day. This happened so many times and we were so frustrated."

Frustration, anger, fear and remorse were expressed by all who testified. "I just want to say that I'm sorry for the hate and destruction that I've inflicted on innocent people..." Jon Turner said. "I am no longer the monster

that I once was."

While there were strong emotions expressed throughout the hearings. The IVAW members see this event as a jumping off point. Rather than a culmination of their activism, it is just the beginning. "We are still soldiers," said Camilo Meija, "We are just not their soldiers anymore. We are the New Winter Soldiers." These new Winter Soldiers, like their predecessors, are now expanding their activism to reach out to active-duty personnel.

Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan was eerily reminiscent of the first hearings held by Vietnam Veterans Against the War. What is clear, is that America's imperial appetite has not been sated. While the occupation on the ground in Iraqistan mirrors in many ways the circumstances in Vietnam, the military has changed. The resistance among active-duty personnel has not reached the proportions attained in Vietnam. It was this phenomenon that ultimately led to the end of direct US involvement in that conflict. Today, however, enlisted personnel serve for completely different reasons and in altered circumstances. Soldiers are "volunteers" rather than draftees who serve for primarily financial reasons and are rotated in and out with their comrades. The ties they develop with their fellow servicemen and women are deeper and longer lasting. They often live on or near bases and are much more immersed in the culture of the military. While numerous polls and increased levels of PTSD among returning veterans show that the level of disenchantment with the occupation of Iraqistan is growing, reaching out to active-duty personnel will not be easy. The military establishment has changed its structures since the end of the Vietnam War to forestall a new rebellion among its personnel, so too must this new generation of veteran activists develop new tactics to reach out to their brothers and sisters. Members of VVAW and the civilian antiwar community will play a crucial role in supporting their efforts to bring these wars to an end. Only the troops can do it.



RICHARD STACEWICZ IS A PH.D. IN HISTORY, AUTHOR OF WINTER SOLDIERS, AND PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE AT OAKTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS.



IVAW members at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan ...The Bravest of the Brave

WARD REILLY

If you had an opportunity to sit back and be a certified "war hero" for the rest of your life, would you EVER do anything to endanger that opportunity? These women and men have put it all on the line. They are Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). If you could be silent, and be a hero, or face the loss of your freedom by speaking out, what would you do? These women and men have spoken. IVAW, heroes to the bone. The bravest of the brave!

How lucky are we, I ask myself, that we have IVAW, and their hard-working staff?

IVAW members are the eyes that saw Fallujah, and the terrified looks on the faces of the Iraqi & Afghani children. They are the ears that heard the explosions of the IED's, or the cries of mothers-in-anguish, as their innocent child was dragged away in the night. They are the arms that cradled the injured. They are the noses that smelled the death, and the putrefied food sent to them in the field by Halliburton.

They have seen, touched, and tasted Iraq and Afghanistan. They have lost their innocence for me, and for us all. And they could have come home in silence. How lucky am I, or are we all, that they chose to speak out? They have ZERO motive to lie.

It's taken me almost two weeks to attempt to write about Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan, and I am still stunned and exhausted.

How can mere words describe such agony, beauty, and bravery, mixed into one giant nerve-wracking (and healing) experience?

To say it has been an honor to be a part of WSIA is an understatement.

I knew that the WSIA would be a success. I knew how important it would be historically, because I have "been here" before, when I was a GI Resister in the infantry from 1971 to 1974, the last time a GI Resistance was necessary, and I payed dearly for my stand. It is extremely hard to resist inside the military. But we did, and Vietnam can now be used as the model for those that say "we will never leave Iraq." The same people said that about Vietnam, and today there isn't a single US soldier stationed in Vietnam, in spite of the plans to never leave there.

I could also tell it was going to be a success from the reaction of fear from the right-wing, as we were planning this event. The bloggers started calling words not yet spoken "all lies." You have to love words being condemned before they are even spoken. Bless those pro-war folks.

I knew that the WSIA was going to be a HUGE success the minute we officially started it off with the press conference at the National Press Club in D.C., on Thursday afternoon, the 13th of March, 2008. The room was packed with journalists and camera crews (100+), which is



Antonia Juhasz testifies at the Corporate Pillaging and Military Contractors panel

quite a bit different from most of the anti-war press conferences I've seen come and go since 2001. This room was full, and we on the Media Team knew that we had done our jobs well, right then and there, and we hadn't even started the testimonies.

During the five days I was at Silver Springs, media people, and guests-alike, asked me "what we hoped to get from this event," and all I could answer was that I personally hoped that it would be a healing experience for these veterans and troops, first and foremost. And to me, nothing feels better than to see these brave men and women smiling and happy, and to be amongst friends, even for just a little while. That's not easy to do if you have been an Occupation soldier, and seen what they've seen, and done what they've been forced to do. Make

no mistake about it, war is a hate machine, one that will suck any-and-all in, by nature.

I also answered that I had "no idea" what these brave testifiers were going to tell us, except that I knew it would be one of the most historic events ever put together, in the attempt to end the Occupations, and to help get our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The pro-war folks are NEVER going to be able to say that 100% of the words spoken by IVAW during those five days was anything but documented truth. The process of certifying and qualifying those that were to testify was taken very seriously, to the point that the Committee that chose the speakers had to actually turn people down, people that they knew were telling the truth,

continued on page 14



Registration at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

...The Bravest of the Brave

continued from page 13

but simply couldn't meet the rigid documentation qualifications. Also, we had the positives-and-negatives from the original WSI to use as a model, to help us make this one even better.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and Veterans For Peace (VFP) once again filled me with pride. VVAW built a Security Team of 80 volunteer people, a team that was totally effective. They made a huge sacrifice, in pulling sometimes 12-hour shifts, rarely getting to enjoy the gathering. And the few times that someone actually tried to disrupt the event, which did happen at least twice, the Security team stifled them instantly, and removed them without hesitation, as trained to do. One disrupter was arrested.

I went even ask how much money it cost VVAW, but it was a lot, and I can not think of a better example of we elder veterans, and our organization, TRULY supporting the next generation of veterans.

Diane Baker, a beautiful friend and a great activist (who has some physical disabilities) who attended with MFSO, was assaulted by one of the pro-war people that was standing on the street corner in the front of the National Labor College. The "heroic-eagle" that assaulted her, put an air horn to Diane's ear as she was walking across the street for coffee, and blasted her from a couple of inches away. It hurt her badly, and brought (more) shame to the pro-war crowd, who ironically, and hilariously, were forced to get into a "free speech zone" set up by the local police. How is that for irony? And, as I told many at the event, "Eagles don't gather, rather, vultures do."

Because their "gathering" was a concern to many, I will report here that there were 34 pro-war people there, counted by Lobo, for me. So few, considering that they called nationally for their members to be there, for over 3 months. Their number truly does represent the portion of US citizens that still support the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. We had more than 1000 anti-war guests attend.

Like VVAW, VFP not only raised a lot of money in support, but their membership greatly helped fill the 700-seat venue

to capacity, each and every day, and that was a great relief to (we) organizers on the Ally Team. IVAW had requested that no other anti-war actions take place in DC during the 4 days of WSIA, which meant that a very limited number of activists would be there in DC, so I was a little worried about how well we would fill our venue. No worries, as we actually had to turn people away that wanted to attend, but had not registered.

Again, VVAW and VFP stood tall, and we can all be so proud.

The panels themselves were priceless...shocking to many, and painful to all. In all my life, I have rarely witnessed anything as brave as the members of IVAW, and ALL the panelist's, as they testified, one after another.

As usual, and by policy, most of the national mainstream media was ordered not to cover this event. *The Houston Chronicle*, for example, actually dispatched a reporter, and, after filing her first (of 2) articles, her editor "spiked" her story, and ordered her home a day early, and to write a "more balanced" story featuring a pro-war slant. How shameful, the national "free press", to blacklist us.

BUT, the international and Indy media articles flooded the world. Journalists from 15 countries ran articles, including the BBC, and here at home, Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now*

dedicated an entire week to Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan. Scores of other outlets did stories.

Get this, a Marine that was watching the event IN IRAQ, actually called and told us he and his buddies were watching, and wanted to know how his platoon could help us!

Our biggest media "coup" though, was in getting a feature story in the *Stars & Stripes* which goes to every GI, Marine, Sailor, and Airman in the world, and they were primarily who we were reaching out to. Likewise, the *Army Times*, *Marines Times* and other military outlets covered the event.

And to top it off, the Department of Defense actually issued a statement regarding the event, via a story in the *Washington Post*. Just the fact that they acknowledged the WSIA means that they monitored it, and that they are afraid of it.

Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan... Eyewitnesses to the Occupations was filmed by, among many others, David Zeigler, who made the film *Sir!, No Sir!*, which documented the Vietnam Era GI Resistance. He was retained, and given the task of doing our "official" documentary film, and in a few months, we can look forward to a full-length film on the event. His camera teams covered everything, including some of our team meetings as we organized WSIA. Also, a book is being done with full transcripts of the testifiers, which will be

a used to show the truth about what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan, what's happening to our troops, and to the innocent civilians of those countries. A copy will go to every university in the country.

To close, I will simply say that being at the Winter Soldier event was like being allowed to be a witness, or a juror, at the criminal trials of George Bush and Dick Cheney. The buck stops with them. THEY are the criminals, THEY are responsible for EVERY death and crime committed in these Occupations, and the Winter Soldier testimonies, provided by the bravest US citizens to ever live in our great-but-misguided nation, in the form of IVAW members, have just supplied the evidence and PROOF of Bush and Cheney's crimes, to the entire world. Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan will ROCK the world.

"Bring 'Em On"... the War-Crimes Tribunals, that is.



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 WAS ACTIVE IN THE GI RESISTANCE, AND RE-UPPED IN VVAW IN 2001.



IVAW members at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

Winter Soldier Investigation: Iraq & Afghanistan Proudly Served

TOM BAXTER

For more than six years our team has been standing in Florida's Old Capitol, Sundays and Thursdays with our signs: JUSTICE, NOT VENGEANCE, HONK FOR PEACE, NO TORTURE, NO MORE WAR CRIMES. I'm a life member of Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Vietnam Veterans of America. I was at the original Winter Soldier Investigation in 1971. When I heard the Iraq Veterans Against the War were going to have a Winter Soldier Investigation they had my best wishes and some of my cash.

When Vietnam Veterans Against the War called on members to serve as security detail I arranged to take time off, signed up that night and the next day drove 15 hours to Silver Spring. Thursday, Friday and Saturday I pulled 12 hour shifts, Sunday, one six hour shift.

In orientation, it was reemphasized, we wouldn't get to see much of the event, our job was to keep it safe and secure for Iraq Veterans Against the War's Winter Soldier Investigation. I did not mind too much, I knew that if listened, I'd get all pissed off and/or weepy. Sure enough, I listened to some and got pissed off and weepy. I really like to find some place to hide when that happens. But I was on duty, so I wiped my face with my hand, put

my mask on, and bottled it up for a while.

Standing at my post next to Barry Romo at the latrine, I tensed when a Media badge came up. Another of our duties was to assure no Media entered the South Hall to disturb "presenters." He did not want to pass, he wanted reflections from those who were at both Winter Soldiers.

Barry gave a good talk about our physical and social destruction of Iraq, mass killing, tens of thousands thrown into jail without trial, rampant torture, an epidemic of sectarian terror attacks, pauperization, infrastructure destruction and the complete breakdown of basic services and supplies. You know, a short history of "Operation Iraq Liberation."

Here is the personal reflection I gave.

"My name is Tom Baxter. In my hometown, I am a respected professional. I am a law librarian. I have respect among my librarian peers and from the attorneys and judges, I know and work for. ... I was at the first Winter Soldier Investigation. I didn't testify. Like most veterans of both wars, we neither witnessed nor committed individual war crimes. But all of us participated in the crime of a criminal war started and based on lies, fought with criminal means. I was proud and willing to give up my professional status and do

whatever tasks assigned. I spent 15 hours driving here and I'll spend 15 hours home, time well spent. I am proud of the hours I spent on latrine guard. I am proud I spent hours keeping a door with a over active closer from slamming. I'd be proud to do it all again.

The reason, I'm proud is that I see my and my comrades faces from 40 years ago in those kids faces. Perhaps, what I do here will save a few kid's lives. Perhaps not. But I have to do something. I will not be a 'good German.' I will not stand by silently as my government murders people because they got in the way. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, 'silence is betrayal.'

I look in their faces and wonder how many will die by their own hand and be buried by their children, parents, and spouses. I look and wonder how many of their fellow soldiers' memorial services they will speak at. I hope to hell they don't die as criminals as Dwight Livingston or David Funches did. I weep for them as I did for my friends.

I also weep for those down range of the most powerful military force in history of the world. Many of them children, who, due to the criminal acts of my government, lack access to water, food, medical care, parents and education. I weep for the kids that are selling their bodies for food because we killed or arrested their parents and



Tom Baxter at Winter Soldier

destroyed their country."

A reporter asked, "What do you have to say when prowar veterans say that this hurts their feelings?" "Well, I feel real bad that the truth offends them. I feel even worse that they are so brainwashed that they believe we have done good, in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Laos, Somalia or Vietnam. I feel worse for those we killed for the crime of 'being in the way.'"



TOM BAXTER SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM 1967-1969. HE IS THE VVAW CONTACT FOR TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA.

What I Felt About Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

JOHN BEITZEL

From the moment I arrived at the location of the Winter Soldier hearings in Silver Springs, Maryland, I could feel the intensity of the Winter Soldier event. The security was extremely tight, from the moment you arrived at the front gate, until you walked into the conference room. Ultra-right wing groups had threatened to disrupt the event, but only a small group protested outside the front gate. If I remember correctly there were more protestors at the original Winter Soldier event in Detroit. These protestors proved to be irrelevant.

There is no need to review the tormenting stories from Winter

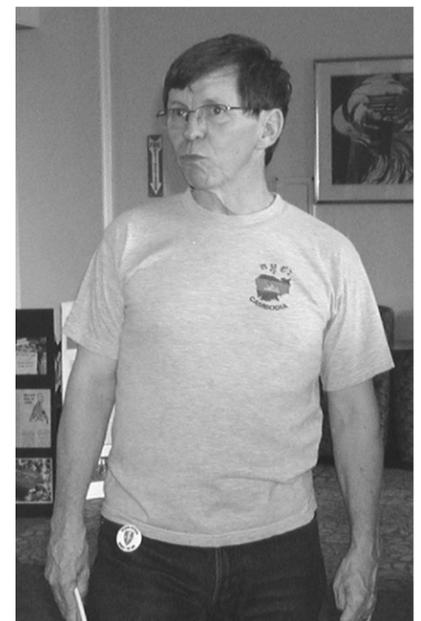
Soldier; Iraq & Afghanistan. If anyone wants to hear the testimony, it can be viewed on the Internet. What impressed me the most, were the Winter Soldier participants. They were so articulate, intelligent, and mature when expressing themselves, and telling their stories. As a participant in the first Winter Soldier, it was déjà vu all over again. Every time a new panel would start their testimony, I found it a struggle to stay in the conference room, and listen to their heart-wrenching stories. I felt exactly the same way in Detroit. At both events, I had to force myself to stay.

What I will remember the

most, and what characterized the entire event were the emotions and feelings... sadness, anger, shock, rage, indignation, regret, remorse, resentment, disgust, repulsion, distress, pain, agony, torment, heartbreak, and empathy. I felt a deep, deep sadness for the Winter Soldiers, for the Iraqis, for America. As I drove home alone, I shed some tears.



JOHN BEITZEL SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM 1969-1970. HE TESTIFIED AT THE FIRST WINTER SOLDIER IN 1971. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM PENNSYLVANIA.



John Beitzel at VVAW's 40th Anniversary in Chicago, 2007.

Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan Security

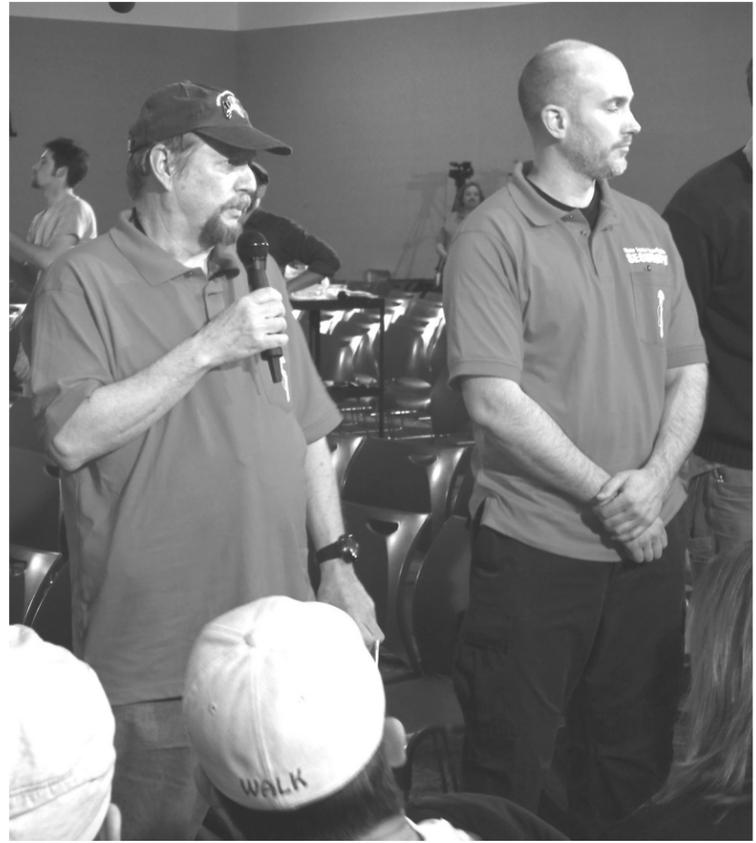
KEN NIELSEN

Better safe than sorry. We had no idea what the reaction of extreme right so-called patriots would be against Iraq Veterans Against the War's Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan. There was a lot of electronic static through the biggest source of misinformation (aside from the government) and it got a few people concerned, both in IVAW and the VVAW team in charge of security. To be ready we prepared for all sorts of scenarios, some outrageous and some common. Months of preparation went into the various details. The mission was simple: protect the participants of the event and protect the continuity of the event.

Decades of experience were called upon to produce a structure that was nearly foolproof. Bill Branson provided experience from numerous VVAW security projects from the seventies through the nineties. Without Bill the project would have had major problems.

Just as important, a huge amount of gratitude has to go out to the people who volunteered to be security for Winter Soldier. Over seventy individuals gave up their right to watch the event while they performed different security tasks through the four days (two of the days lasting over 14 hours). Without these people it would not have happened. This is a testament of the power of people in action. A call went out to support IVAW and it was answered. The security people alone outnumbered the right wing protesters at least two to one and provided an environment that allowed the IVAW testifiers to do what they had to without fear. These people deserve to be named:

Elliott Adams
Lian Alan
Carl Arnold
Joe Bangert
Billie Bates
Charlie Branson
Bill Biggus Branson
Tom Baxter
Jerry Brest
Alfredo Calixto Cabrera
Frank Corcoran
William Covert
Billy X. Curmano
Zoe Curry
Janet Curry
Dave Curry
Ken Dalton
Louie De Benedette
Buzz Yogi Doyle
Adam Outta Here Dzagulones
Don Dzagulones
Ken Farr
Ed Flowers
Hannah Frisch
Buddy Georgia
Joe Giannini
Eldon Grossman
Bob The Sting Gronko
Willie Hager
Mark Hartford
Kurt Hilgendorf
Annie Hirschmann
Ken Howland
Kevin Chinatown Huyge
Bruce Hyland
George Johnson
Billy Kelly
Michael Kramer
Jason Kray
Elizabeth Landru
Erik Smiley Lobo
Dave Logsdon
Jeff Machota
Brian Mattarese
Amy Meyers
Catherine Sick Miller
Meg Massive Miner
Earle Mitchell
Jim Murphy



Bill Branson and Ken Nielsen address the IVAW organizers and testifiers

Jon Niles
Walter Nygard
Dennis O'Neil
Tom Palumbo
Jeff Patterson
Alex Primm
Cathy Primm
Barry Romo
Mark Rutter
Jan Ruhman
Laurie Sandow
Pat Scanlon
Russell Scheidler
Ted Sexauer
Gary Staples
June Svetlovsky
Jen Tayabji
George Taylor
Kathleen Taylor
Brad Thompson
Tony Teolis
Mike Tork
Remigio Torres
Harold Trainer
Carol Trainer

Siouxie Webster
Marty Webster
Beverly Wiskow
Chante Wolf
Diane Wood
Big John Zutz

Thank you all for helping Iraq Veterans Against the War share the stories main stream media refuses to tell and the stories the world needs to hear. It was a honor to assist IVAW and a privilege to work with you all.



KEN NIELSEN IS A MEMBER OF CHICAGO VVAW AND VFP. HE SERVED IN THE ARMY 91-93 IN THE 4TH BATTALION 9TH REGIMENT OF THE 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION.



Bill Branson leads the security training at Winter Soldier; Iraq & Afghanistan

Winter Soldier Security



Main Room Security - Mike Tork, Bruce Hyland, Carl Arnold and John Zutz



Charlie Branson holding down the security office



Security leaders and volunteers in the Security HQ



Jeff Machota and Marty Webster at the security training



Bill Branson demonstrates some security techniques



Main Room Door Security - Adam Dzagulones, Bob Gronko and Don Dzagulones

Guarding the Box at Winter Soldier 2008

DIANE WOOD

When Ken Farr, a Smedley Butler vet, asked me to smooth the edges of some flamingo pink tape on the carpet at the foot of the dais at Winter Soldier, I didn't know that the box we created would become the center of my universe for the next four days. All of my Vetspeak.org friends were signed up for security. But surveying my own experience and worth to the group during the sign-up process, I was fully aware of my lack of combat or crowd control experience. I figured childcare, food service or even the registration table might work. And then I remembered myself.

If all my Vetspeak.org friends could work security; why not me, too? When it evolved that my post would be front and center, I questioned whether IVAW needed someone more macho in the role. True to their decades-long support of women in key roles, I was proud and humbled to be included as part of the primarily VVAW and VFP-related security team in the main room. As things progressed, one audience member asked me where I got the training to do the job. "Motherhood and menopause," I told her. "That's all anyone needs to know." But still, I didn't feel quite right.

I had it easy, didn't I? Unlike the old VVAW and VFP vanguard securing the front gate, standing for hours at a time in the rain and cold dealing with protesters, I had a dry seat at the party. I could sit down. I felt guilty about that. From where I sat (5th row center aisle), I could hear every word uttered by every panelist. I could see the sweat on these young veterans' brows, the tears running down their faces, expressions of

commitment, determination, guilt and pain. When a vet shouted from the dais, I felt the winds of change. When they laughed for fear of crying, I could feel the heat of their battles. And when they tossed their innocence, their medals, their blood in anguish into the crowd, it all came flying at me in pieces, my entire being seared by it all. Maybe this wasn't such an easy post after all. But I was not alone.

If America (and history) has any conscience, the anguish of the veterans and speakers on the dais last weekend will be heard. (You must hear them at ivaw.org). But there was another set of emotions rising, a fierce set of emotions happening -- and that is the emotions felt by the deeply grieving audience. This was a working audience, a profoundly affected audience, a compassionate audience that not only had my back as a security person, but the backs of every testifier on stage. If any violence had been propagated against those young men and women, I know many who would have taken the bullet. There is no question in my mind. Yet this audience also sometimes pushed the limits, causing security like me to spring into action at a second's notice. Yes, some didn't realize that the rules had to apply to everyone or they wouldn't be respected by anyone. This included war heroes, famous journalists, testifiers, infamous anti-war leaders-- everyone. And yes, there was even a man who challenged me three times over two days, with his square body, middle finger and flaming, angry eyes:

"I want to sit in THAT chair

NOW," his eyes said to me, even if it meant creating a distraction from the veteran testifying. "You are mindlessly policing someone who doesn't need policing."

But this is what I actually 'heard' him say:

"I am deeply grieving, as America should grieve, about the testimonies of these veterans, about what they've had to go through, about what they are still going through. I am tired of mindless, self-serving authority, authority ridden with senseless, self-serving agendas and random parameters. It is time, once again, for America to question their leaders. I do not know what authority to rage at. I do not know where to put the emotions I feel."

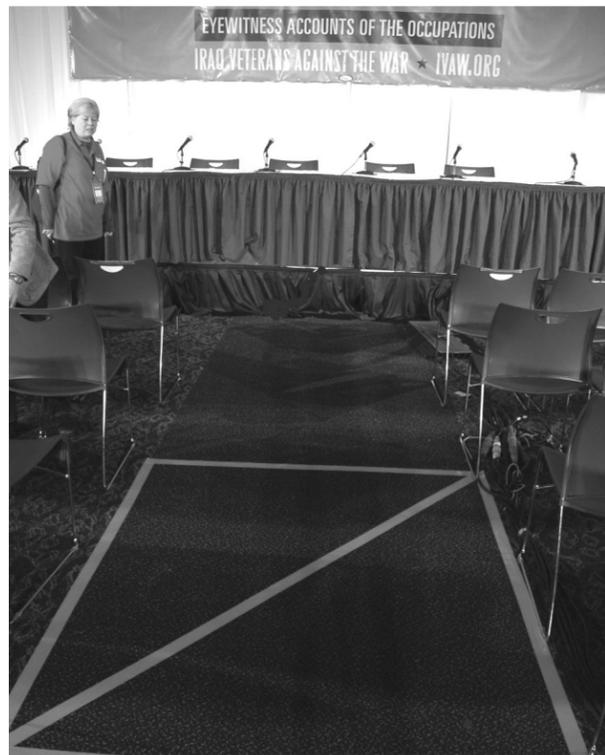
And there I was.

Even if I overstate this man's motivations, as I interacted with this audience it was clear that as a group they were no strangers to questioning authority. Given the scarcity of mainstream American

press at the event, it was an act of revolution just to attend! If a few lost their way in the sea of emotion and pain, and I stood inadvertently in the way -- I say: "Go home, write your feelings into words that others can read. Talk to people, show them your pictures, your film. Do what you can to inspire others to seek The Truth. Ending a war is a messy, emotionally bloody business. And at least, by God, you showed up to the party. How can we not honor you for that?"

Looking back over that weekend, no one left without some level of PTSD. The question is, is it only the testifiers, the volunteers and the audience feeling the pain? Shouldn't ALL Americans feel the pain? Shouldn't ALL Americans care enough to seek out The Truth, to stop encouraging family members to fight mindless, unreasonable wars

continued on next page



Diane guarding the box



Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan Security

Winter Soldiers of the "War on Terror"

J. MICHAEL ORANGE

My wife, Cynthia, and I witnessed the Winter Soldier Investigation (WSI) hearings where we listened to the testimony from 72 people who had the great courage to go public with their experiences. In account after account, a common thread emerged of Iraqi families being torn apart and terrified, terrified by—not grateful for—the American soldiers and private mercenaries who occupy their country. The testifiers told of Iraqis, being without power and water, begging for food and fuel, and only wanting foreign troops to leave so they can begin to rebuild their devastated country.

We need to comprehend the enormous scale of the so-called "collateral damage" in Iraq. It is appalling to learn that over a million Iraqi civilians are estimated to have died since the US invasion. It is also striking to compare the civilian death rates for Iraq and Vietnam. For every US military death in Iraq, 250 civilians died, an average of 550 a day over the 5 years of the US invasion and occupation. The comparison for Vietnam is 80 civilian deaths for each US death even though the Vietnam war machine employed more than a decade of saturation bombing that exceeded twice the explosive

tonnage during all of WWII.

The testifiers explained the sheer mechanics of killing so many civilians through rules of engagement, the practice of reconnaissance by fire, and overwhelming force, for example. Those who sell the invasion and occupation as a "just war" will simply dismiss these firsthand accounts as exceptions and they will continue to entice new advocates and a never-ending stream of recruits, all made possible by a bottomless military budget, including \$4 billion annually for recruiting, a gutless Congress, and a compliant media.

The testifiers at Winter Soldier went deeper than telling stories that once again confirm what we all should know—war is hell. They addressed the anguished question that naturally arises: How do you explain actions that would be criminal even in a war zone? The most important answer to this question is that, even though these soldiers joined the military to defend the Constitution with honor, they found themselves serving in an unjust invasion and occupation. We could not listen to the four days of firsthand accounts and imagine our country invaded Iraq to export

the American dream of freedom and democracy any more than we could imagine, now that we have removed the impediment of Saddam Hussein, the five Western oil companies that will have free access to Iraq's resources are more interested in exporting this same American dream instead of importing a more flammable one. Even the ultraconservative former Federal Reserve chairman, Alan Greenspan, declared that "the prime motive for the war in Iraq was oil." It didn't take long for the soldiers who testified to come to the same conclusion.

The soldiers explained how trickle-down abuse starts at the top ranks of the military hierarchy with institutionalized racism, sexual harassment, and assault on the lower ranks. They testified about the complete lack of training in Iraqi culture and language. The nature of this occupation and the civil war it sparked are especially brutal for everyone. It's hard for those of us in the 99% of the population, who the Commander in Chief has tasked with shopping with yellow ribbons proudly displayed on our SUVs, to grasp the white-hot frustration, anger, and vengeful wrath that results when our soldiers have no reliable way to discern friend

from foe and are under extreme duress at virtually all times in a near-country-wide combat zone. We heard how common practices of terrible abuse and killing of civilians increased with multiple redeployments, disillusionment over the injustice and impossibility of the mission, and as unit casualties grew. Similar circumstances produced similar results in the jungles of Vietnam.

The establishment media has been promoting the notion that we can "win" and that the winning part has now started with the grand success of the surge. What this argument ignores is that the recent death rates are more attributable to the fact that 4.5 million Iraqis have now fled the country as refugees and for those who stayed behind, most of the ethnic cleansing has been accomplished. The Winter Soldier testifiers knew not to be swayed by this propaganda. There is no way to win an immoral war; only ways to shorten it.



MICHAEL ORANGE IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANT, MEMBER OF VVAW, AUTHOR OF FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM (WRITERS CLUB PRESS, 2001)

Guarding the Box

continued from previous page

based on misinformation and blind patriotism. Is there no collective memory left in America? Can't we see that instead of coming home feeling like victorious war heroes, many of our daughters and sons return disillusioned and in pieces? This is a professional, non-conscripted military. What has caused this change of heart in such volunteers? What is actually happening over there? What is happening within the military itself? Listen to the Veterans who have been there! Show Us the Images, too!

As Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now* put it, if it takes weeks of publishing true images from the occupations to make Americans realize what is truly happening, then so be it. Show us the images! It is time for our government to share the burden of our veterans and other conscious souls – and for all Americans to

experience the disillusionment and devastation that comes from sending men and women off to another mistake of a war. It is time for America as a country to shed some tears, a sea full of them, and to turn the mirror of responsibility on themselves and to experience, firsthand, a whole shitload of PTSD. And then – even more importantly – it is time to act.

As a woman experiencing Vietnam-era *deja vu*, I wasn't as shocked as some other audience members at the specifics of the testimonies. In fact, I wanted MORE. Not because I am immune to human pain, not because it doesn't devastate and disembowel me – but because I know how many millions of PR dollars are being spent by the government and others to successfully suppress these voices and experiences. In America, when we feel discomfort or pain, we race to the doctor. But

wake up! The doctor is out and the Resistance has begun—fueled and inspired by the testimonies of courageous veterans, supporters and even active duty military. Around the globe, veterans and supporters have begun to see through the lies we've been fed by the large PR firms hired by our government with our very own tax dollars.

We have begun to gather with one simple, humanistic, time-sensitive, overwhelming, crucial, gut-wrenching, utterly important purpose—to save lives on both sides of the fight. Make no mistake about this, we are the bullies! Most Iraqi people do not want us there destroying their 7,000 year-old culture and history with our 300 year-old one. Listen to your very own veterans; your own boots on the ground. Be affected by their testimonies, as the audience at Winter Soldier was so affected. Help our veterans, in every way possible, publicly and privately,

to do their important work. Their words and tears send a very clear message with the proven power to end the occupations, as Vietnam veterans did three decades ago. Educate yourself on this! It is NOT time to increase troop counts in occupied areas: It is time to bring them home.



DI WOOD IS THE AUTHOR OF CAMOUFLAGE & LACE (2005), A VVAW LOVE STORY, HER PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF HOW VVAW TESTIFIERS, THROUGH BOUNDLESS COURAGE AND SACRIFICE, ENDED THE WAR IN VIETNAM. THE ENERGY AND RECONNECTIONS THAT SPRANG FROM CAMO LED TO THE FOUNDING OF VETSPEAK.ORG WHICH PUBLISHES AND DISTRIBUTES THE CRUCIAL VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES OF AMERICA'S MILITARY VETERANS ONLINE, IN PRINT AND ON DISC.

Winter Soldier - Let It Snow!

RUSS SCHEIDLER

You've entered the No Fly Zone over Waybelo, MN. It's the last day of March and the home team is playing the baseball opener. It started snowing about 9 o'clock this morning and it's still snowing now that the game is over. Some parts around here will see a foot of snow before it's all said and done. I guess I'll never understand the maniac millionaires who are building a new baseball stadium without a roof in a place where snow can stop a baseball game at both the beginning and the end of the season. They continue to do things that just don't make any sense. Like, building a new stadium with taxpayer's money that has no roof in a place that has five months of winter or starting wars in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. Things that you just cannot win.

I mean look at history. The Twins were frequently snowed out of their early season games and they finally had to build a stadium with a dome roof. Now they want to build another with no roof. Hey, the weather here can kill you in more ways than one. Now, the maniac millionaires have started wars in the two most lethal places on the planet. Just ask Alexander the Great or any of the Caesars or the British. Nobody has been able to subdue these two places for any length of time. Perhaps the people are just too crazy or the environment is just too extreme.

So, the home team won the season opener and that always feels good. Still, I could not go for more than half an inning without thinking about the Winter Soldier Investigation that happened in

Washington, DC on March 13-16. Maybe it was all the snow outside, but it sure feels like the winter of our discontent.

I went with a contingent of other VetSpeak.org compatriots. We were like the parents, or even grandparents, of the Iraq Veterans Against the War, people who testified to the truth of the current wars. There has never been a war without abuse of the populace and there never will be. The old Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) folks who came to provide security for the testimonies, all came knowing we were attending a moment in history.

We were not disappointed. The new, well-funded, version of the Swift Boat Liars for Bush had threatened to disrupt the proceedings. The Gathering of Eagles, now also known as "The Beagles" or "The Gaggle of Geese" (they got some new nicknames there), could not put up more than about 40 or 50 people at a time. They even were offering to pay people's travel fares to come and disrupt the proceedings, and let them sleep in their DC office if they couldn't afford a hotel room.

The DC cops took them at their word and came out in force. By the late afternoon of the first day, they were closing down shop. They had prepared to be very busy but were bored instead. The VetSpeak and VVAW folks manning the gate surprised the cops by being very efficient gatekeepers throughout the facilities. The only disruption came from an old guy who snuck in and made about two

seconds of disruption before he was competently removed from the proceedings.

Perhaps, the most magical moment came when Dick Gregory arrived and attended for a while. He is still a magnificent individual. He did not forget that at the first Winter Soldier Investigation in 1971, the Vietnam Veterans dispersed the Michigan Nazi Party members with relish! I pray the man lives for another hundred years. But, I drone on.

The real stars of the day were the Iraq and Afghan Veterans Against the War. They brought tears to all that heard their testimonies. They brought much hope to my heart. There was even a phone call from an active duty unit in the war that was ready to provide any testimony they wanted! It seems that the proceedings were produced live streaming on the internet.

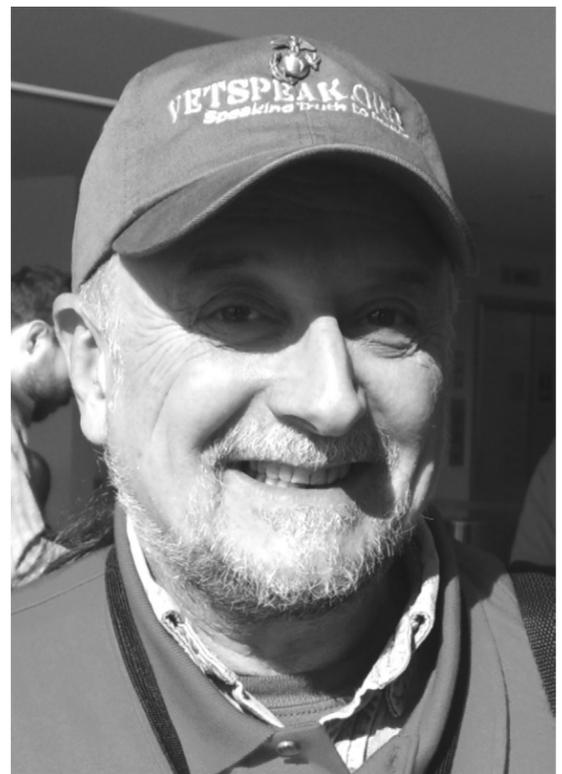
I was on the security team, so, I heard very little of the testimony. I pray that the media that was there will produce some of the most elegant recordings that the world has ever seen. For that was the quality of the proceedings. It is unfortunate that the domestic media buried this elegant affair.

This generation of veterans has so much more on the ball than we had. They are, without exception that I saw, levelheaded, intelligent, and committed that this madness must end.

Every single one of them, that I had the privilege to speak with, was effusive with praise for the security job that the old guys and gals were doing. Even more gratitude was given for the work that we did a generation ago. "If you guys hadn't done what you did back then, we wouldn't have had a place to start."

So, where does a veteran get off determining that the war he fights is wrong? A veteran on the podium answered that question, "Well, we're not really stupid!"

Two more wars down and again the first casualty is Truth! The maniac millionaires lied about



Russ Scheidler at Winter Soldier

both wars and now we're stuck in a quagmire civil war in Iraq and the Taliban have just grown the largest poppy crop the world has ever known. Watch out for cheap heroin flooding a town near you.

My companions and I drove all the way and arrived home mere hours before it snowed again, 3-5 inches. It's late tonight and it's still snowing.

I am very honored to have participated in the recent Winter Soldier Investigation as a member of the security force. I feel lucky to still be alive after a generation of Post Traumatic Stress (I keep working to not let it become a disorder "D").

So, let the new generation take the reins, or pass the torch or whatever seems the right analogy to you. These young people are the best I've ever seen.

Hey, it's still snowing outside! Winter Soldier, let it snow!

Semper Fi,

Uncle Russ



RUSS SCHEIDLER SERVED IN THE US MARINE CORPS, 1969-1972, ONE OF FOUR BROTHERS SERVING SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE CORPS. HIS OLDER BROTHER, ED WORTHLEY, DIED AS A RESULT OF TWO TOURS IN VIETNAM, WHICH PROHIBITED RUSS FROM SERVING THERE. INSTEAD, RUSS WAS ORDERED TO GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA. AFTER DISCHARGE FROM THE MARINES, HE WAS A MEMBER OF VVAW.



Russ Scheidler

Winter Soldier "Detroit Bill"

HORACE COLEMAN

It was the early 70s. I think I'd been out of Nam for about four years, out of the service for a little more than five. Smoke was still coming out of my ears.

Trouble Child (TC), an undergraduate at the university where I was teaching, had gotten some money together to bring a guest speaker to campus. Some Nam vet who had this film with him about something called the Winter Soldier Investigation.

I went to the showing and saw a version of Detroit Bill that seemed about 30 pounds lighter, talking like a wildly gesturing marionette whose puppeteer was on speed.

Bill spent the night at TC's off campus digs. I went there the morning after the film had been shown. TC was in his mini-kitchen putting together breakfast. Bill was up a steep and narrow flight of stairs, asleep in the bedroom.

I was in the little living room when Bill came slowly down, clinging to the banister like it was a life line. He was wearing a sleeveless underwear shirt. I could see the sling rig strapping his very artificial arm to his body. I could tell by his awkward thumping gait that the leg on the same side as his hook hand was also gone, high up.

Before he started telling

how he had gotten his ticket punched, Nam was in the room and completely out of the closet in the back of my mind that never closed tightly. Some things don't fit into a closet or "stay in the field."

Bill was a sure enough adrenaline junkie. He told me about the HALO (High Altitude, Low Opening) jumps on oxygen that his team used to make from this specially modified spook bird. They'd go up North, cross the DMZ, do their thing and di di mau.

Except for that last mission.

Every damn thing went wrong. They got hit shortly after they'd landed and never reached their objective. Bill thought he'd been blinded. Until he'd put his hand on his head and pushed his scalp out of his face. He wore a .50 caliber shell on a chain around his neck, as a reminder—like he needed one. He'd been hit with that and .30s too, he said.

Talking about what it all meant, he said "What do I tell my son when I strap my arm on in the morning!?"

I didn't say "It don't mean nothing!", I said "Tell him the truth. Call it like you see it. Say what you think. Slip it out of your mind and to your lips."

So, when these students from this charter high school in LA

started e-mailing me or calling asking for an a phone interview because "I have to do a paper for my English teacher / my history teacher" and they had to interview a war vet, I let it slip.

I'd tell one person that one of my most memorable memories was walking past the shipping coffins stacked three stories high outside the mortuary at Tan Son Nhut and thinking they looked like oversized cigarette cases. I didn't mention getting sniped at in Saigon.

"Did you write home often?" some would ask and I'd say about every 10 days, keeping the home fires stoked. Then tell them about the two airmen I'd worked with whose wives waited until just before they came home to write them that they were pregnant by some one else.

I'd explain that in the 1960s you could be 18 and get drafted but couldn't vote. Or, you could be black, of voting age, couldn't vote in your home state and get drafted.

I'd tell some else that President Bush had strings pulled to get him into the National Guard and keep him out of Nam—and didn't show up for all his Guard duty. Then I'd mention how Vice President Cheney used educational draft deferments to duck out of Nam. I'd say most draft age men didn't

go to Nam. Neither did most of the active duty military. And send them some documentation for that.

I might tell some one else that the draft was eliminated because too many Nam draftees raised hell. An all volunteer army and no draft meant less dissent. It also means fewer troops—who spend multiple tours in the Iraq and Afghanistan war zones.

Some people I'd refer to another Nam vet, Sgt. Ronn Cantu's sister Lisa or to the LA chapter of IVAW. I might say something about how the Army had a habit of calling PTSD a troop's "pre-existing condition."

Don't ask. I'll tell. Who knows? Some one might actually learn something. Or think a little. I know; that's un-American. But if you don't, there won't be a military or a country worth a damn. Just more unnecessary wars. More Detroit Bills—trying to get as high as they'd once been. And regretting it. ☮

HORACE COLEMAN WAS AN AIR FORCE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER / INTERCEPT DIRECTOR IN VIETNAM (1967-68). HE ALSO SERVED IN TACTICAL AIR COMMAND, PACIFIC AIR COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AIR DEFENSE. HE SPEAKS AT GRADE SCHOOLS, HIGH SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES AND LIVES IN LONG BEACH, CA.

United We Stand

ARNOLD STIEBER



Arnold Steiber at Winter Soldier

He had to go. He had to be there. He had to hear these young folks, and support them. He beamed the entire way as we drove from Michigan to Silver Springs.

Bob Davis is a WWII vet. He was in the Battle of the Bulge. He has a Purple Heart. He spent most of his working career in the government. His last position was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor. And now, all these years later, he was on his way to the Labor College to hear the stories and share emotions with veterans whose parents weren't born when Bob was in the military.

Bob's new hip allowed him to volunteer for the registration desk. He beamed as he helped welcome everyone. When he wasn't working

the desk he attended every session. He was amazed at the organization of the events and the focus and presentation skills of the testifiers.

Bob says, "As one who survived World War II (the so-called 'Good War,' but just as bad as any war before or since) and one who has been tagged as being part of the 'Greatest Generation' (unwarranted hyperbole), I am in awe of those truly brave men and women of IVAW whom I listened to for four days in the middle of March. I salute them for their courage in speaking their truth about the evil and the horrors of the wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. I salute them for their passion and energy and

commitment to the task of bringing the occupations of those two countries to an end immediately. I salute them for their recognition of the depth of evil and greed in those in this country who are responsible for initiating this holocaust and who refuse to bring it to an end. I am proud to be working beside IVAW in our war for, not against, humanity."



ARNOLD STIEBER IS THE VVAW MICHIGAN CONTACT, A FATHER, AND BUSINESSPERSON. HE SERVED IN THE ARMY, 52ND INFANTRY, VIET NAM, 1/1970 - 3/1971.

New Legal Clinics for Veterans Open in Illinois

LINDA ENGLUND

Legal help for veterans has taken a hopeful step forward in the last few months in Illinois. A group of young attorneys, prompted by a growing concern over the legal plight of recently returned Iraq vets, has taken a very commendable step to help our state's veterans. In the past several months, two legal clinics have opened and begun to provide free legal representation and advocacy to veterans and their families. As the mother of an active duty soldier wounded twice in Iraq, wife of a Vietnam vet, and board member of Military Families Speak Out, I have felt both compelled and honored to become involved in these efforts.

The new federal law governing veterans' legal rights has made it easier for attorneys to provide legal services. In December 2006, Public Law 109-461 was signed into law. This law, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care and Information Technology Act, provided that claimants before the VA could hire an attorney or agent earlier in the claims process than previously allowed. Until last year's change in law, lawyers could only charge \$10 to help vets with VA claims, until it was eligible to be heard in federal court, at which time they could get their 20% of retroactive benefits. The catch-22 was that no new evidence could be added to the case at that point. So, lawyers preferred to take cases winnable on the already submitted evidence or precedent-setting cases they intend to appeal all the way. Now, vets can sign up lawyers as soon as the VARO makes a rating decision.

The first clinic to open is the Veterans' Rights Project, founded in Chicago in the fall of 2007. It grew out of a desire on the part of a few concerned and dedicated attorneys to provide today's veterans with the help they need on a variety of legal matters related to their military service. The project is part of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago (LAF) and is open to income-eligible veterans and their dependents, residing in Cook County. John Costello, a young attorney in a prestigious law firm in Chicago, left that firm to direct this project.

The Veterans' Rights Project advocates and provides legal representation in several areas. Representation in civil matters

helps veterans not just with federal protections, but with additional protections in Illinois law of which veterans and their families may not be aware. At the Appellate level of the VA benefit process, veterans may receive advice and advocacy on issues that may include service-connected disability claims, discharge upgrades, and establishing appropriate disability percentages. The project is also conducting outreach to homeless vets to provide education to them concerning their legal rights, vocational rehab, medical benefits

and other concerns.

The Veterans' Rights Project formed an Advisory Board that is working to get information out as widely as possible about their services and those of John Marshall's clinic (John Marshall Law School). It includes representatives from prominent area law firms, veteran's service organizations, employment service projects and concerned individuals. VVAW is represented on the advisory board by Ray Parrish, and I represent Military Families Speak Out.

At about the same time that this clinic was opening, a major 2-day Veterans' Law Conference was held in Chicago to train up to one hundred veteran advocates. Organizers of this conference were careful to include ten spaces for non-attorneys to be trained. I was fortunate to be allowed to attend this intense training along with the private attorneys and VSO's. Although I was definitely at a disadvantage with my limited legal knowledge, this two-day training gave me a sound overview of the rights, problems, and issues involved in veterans' legal advocacy, and increased my determination to be of service. It was encouraging to see so many attorneys, of all ages and at all stages of their careers, eager to take on veterans' problems. Since the training, I have talked

to a few of these attorneys who have taken on veterans' cases pro bono. I have been moved by not only their commitment and determination to see their cases through to successful conclusions, but also by their outrage at the difficulties the veterans they are representing face.

This past January, 2008, John Marshall Law School opened the second new legal clinic for veterans in Chicago. The John Marshall Law School Veterans Legal Support Center (VLSC) is one of the nation's first law school

new, a special effort is being made to spread the word to veterans about this newly available legal help. Attorneys and volunteers from both the Veterans' Rights Project and the John Marshall Veterans Legal Support Clinic are targeting congressional offices, VSO's, National Guard armories, homeless shelters, the Stand Downs at armories, IVAW and public service announcements.

If you live in Illinois, or if you know veterans in Illinois who are in need of legal help, you will want to let them know about these new resources. The projects need the help of Illinois VVAW members to spread the word about their services. Contact information for both of the clinics is provided below.

I feel somewhat encouraged for Illinois vets by several things – the dedication of the attorneys, the addition of a veteran's advocacy course to a law school curriculum, the willingness to include many voices, the law students' commitment, and the determination of everyone involved to succeed. I am working now primarily to spread awareness of these new resources and to seek increased funding sources for them. I look forward to soon beginning to work more directly with vets under the leadership of Ray Parrish.

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veteransrights@lafchicago.org

Veterans Legal Support Center
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312-427-2737 ext. 346
vlsc@jmls.edu
www.jmls.edu/veterans



LINDA ENGLUND SERVES ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MILITARY FAMILIES SPEAK OUT. HER SON IS AN ACTIVE DUTY ARMY STAFF SERGEANT WHO RECEIVED TWO PURPLE HEARTS AND THE BRONZE STAR FOR VALOR IN IRAQ. HER HUSBAND, DEAN, IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. THEY LIVE IN CHICAGO.

It grew out of a desire on the part of a few concerned and dedicated attorneys to provide today's veterans with the help they need on a variety of legal matters related to their military service.

clinics opened expressly for the purpose of addressing the legal needs of veterans.

The VLSC clinic was co-founded by veterans, attorneys and law students concerned that newly returning Iraq veterans in Illinois had no place to quickly and fully obtain the legal aid that would assist them to receive the benefits they deserve. One of the young founders, Iraq veteran Ryan Coward, recently returned to active duty as a JAG attorney in South Korea. The clinic is staffed by law students working under the supervision of clinical attorneys and professors. And John Marshall now includes in its curriculum a Veterans Advocacy Course, which includes the study of the federal, state and local laws that pertain to veterans' advocacy.

The John Marshall clinic is also recruiting a network of pro-bono attorneys throughout Illinois to assist veterans in the VA appeals process. The VLSC is supporting and training these attorneys in veterans' law, matching them with veterans who have applied for help, and assisting them with research and informational support. Several additional training sessions have been held. And very quickly after the clinics were founded, they both began working to extend their models to locations in southern Illinois.

Because both the projects are

If Not Us, Who? If Not Now, When?

RAY PARRISH

Local peace and justice groups cannot make their priorities any clearer than by working in coalition with social service agencies and veteran, community and faith based groups to help vets.

After returning from Winter Soldier, it's obvious to me that a healthy and growing Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is critical to ending the occupations of Iraq and Afganistan, getting decent treatment for the returning veterans as well as the people of those countries. IVAW has developed programs, such as their Homefront Battle Buddies to provide peer counseling, PTSD treatment, family support and help with VA claims and discharge upgrading. The more funding they get the more veterans and families they'll be able to help, including themselves. Now is the time for all the groups and individuals of the anti-war movement to show our "support for the troops" by donating to IVAW as much as we can during these hard times.

One key to this effort is Veterans Helping Veterans, (which is title of the weekly cable TV show and website that I co-host with IVAW's Jeremy Archambault). Those of us whose experiences best suit us to help these veterans and their families; VVAW, VFP, MFSO, GSFP, members of the GI Rights Hotline and many others, are beginning to work together to bring IVAW-based GI & veterans counseling to every community and military base in the nation, and beyond. It's time for mentoring and peer counseling. An example is the Citizen Soldier and VVAW sponsored, Different Drummer, which hosts the IVAW chapter at Ft. Drum. I have pending requests for similar efforts near Ft. Knox and Ft. Campbell.

The most important part of this effort is doing effective outreach to GI's, veterans, their families and friends and making contact with appropriate local counseling services. Both of these can best be accomplished by putting on hold our own anti-war sentiments. We should be confident that those who we work with will all come around to agree with us after they get a chance to recover their emotional stability and start to think rationally again. In order for us to reach as many

vets as possible and gain public support for IVAW's counseling work, we will have to learn to bite our tongues at some points.

In Chicago I have been successful in selling to colleges the Vets4Vets veteran discussion groups because it is explicitly non-political, although I proudly wear my VVAW button, and provide IVAW contact info. Triton College, in the Chicago suburbs, tries to avoid the stigma of mental health by calling them "vets' club" meetings. Callers to me may be a referral from the GI Rights Hotline, so my greeting is a generic "Military and veterans counseling. This is Ray." After getting the help that they need, veterans who would never dream of coming to VVAW because of the right-wing lies, begin to question those sources. In a similar effort, I have a network of doctors and therapists volunteering to help veterans, as do other groups.

You could help a church to host weekly veteran discussion groups, or a law library to sponsor monthly veteran benefit seminars and carry relevant reference books. Providing simple referrals may inspire you to seek specialized training and more intensive work as a counselor in the GI Rights Hotline or as a veterans' advocate doing VA disability claims. The small office supporting a weekly veterans' rap group may evolve into a full-time magnet for both vets looking for help and those looking to help vets.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affects most combat veterans to varying degrees of severity and with various symptoms. This must be kept in mind at all times. The military refuses to acknowledge that a conscience bothered by regrets or guilt is a common factor, which is why your work as an anti-war activist is so vital. While qualified mental health professionals are needed to provide therapy to these survivors, most veterans find it difficult to acknowledge that they need this help and are reluctant to ask for it. Those who are disabled the most may never get help. Your efforts to reach out to them for any reason may motivate them to talk about their experiences, which will start the healing process. Just as importantly, the vets will be in a position to find help from another

vet through you.

The skill that most mental health professionals lack, and that can make you invaluable to their efforts to help veterans, is familiarity with the requirements of VA PTSD disability claims. Properly worded medical opinions can be used to prove to the VA that the PTSD is service connected for treatment and compensation. These can also be used to get less than honorable discharges upgraded by military Boards and, regardless of Board decisions, benefits in VA "character of service" hearings.

It's possible that local veteran service officers may be unwilling to help with VA claims. If you can't find local legal help, acquire the needed expertise yourself and guilt-trip the local law school into adding the service to their legal aid clinic. Being able to help vets understand the rules is the objective for most, so few will go on to the exciting world of researching records and writing appeals.

You don't have to be a lawyer or work as a VSO (Veteran Service Officer) to represent vets in VA claims. You can represent any one vet as a friend. If you pass a test, you can become an accredited Agent, represent as many as you can handle and charge a fee. Now that the \$10 fee limit has been lifted, lawyers can make a living by winning VA claims. See the article on the previous page by Linda England (MFSO) for more on the recent legal training and efforts in Chicago.

For twenty years I have relied on resources from the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP). They publish the Veterans Benefits Manual (ISBN 1-4224-4057-5) and the Federal Veterans Laws, Rules and Regulations. You can order these through LexisNexis at 800-562-1197. NVLSP also publishes a Discharge Upgrade Manual, the quarterly Veterans Advocate and a Basic Training Correspondence Course on veterans' benefits. Call 202-265-8305 to order these.

You might ask the local library to order the Manual if you raise money to pay for it. Librarians are most responsive to groups who offer to help pay for books that they order, but that may not be necessary if they see that their

neighbors are holding bake sales to pay for the Correspondence Course and training materials. When the books come in, have a press conference to start your outreach. Keep a small group together to undergo training and conduct monthly veterans' benefits clinics at the library, restaurant or some other meeting place.

Most American towns have a veterans' organization such as the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. While it may be uncomfortable for many people in the anti-war movement to reach out to these groups whose leaders have been so antagonistic to our goals, it's worth it. You will be challenging them to put aside political differences and demonstrate our common concern for the returning troops. After all, you'll be reaching out to offer help to their members and giving their members an opportunity to help their fellow vets. They will likely be more accommodating when they find that local churches and counseling agencies are also supporting this work.

All communities should have at least a small group of anti-war people reaching out to help GI's, vets and their families. Those near military bases will face a demand for these services which may overwhelm established local peace and justice resources and IVAW may actually be looking for you to join their efforts in your area. Vet Centers are swamped and there are already discouraged, young veterans sleeping in shelters and on the streets. As this forever war drags on, its support will wane, and increasing numbers of GI's, vets, family members and civilians will be joining our work. You can be the key to mobilizing local resources and people to help our vets and their families. If you're near a base, contact IVAW to volunteer your help. Go to girightshotline.org for a list of GI counseling groups to join. Or call me.



RAY PARRISH IS VVAW'S MILITARY COUNSELOR AND CAN BE REACHED AT (773) 561-VVAW OR CAMBLUE@VVAW.ORG

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

National Contact List

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

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

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

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SECTION B

The Veteran

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United We Stand

SGT. SELENA COPPA

When, as an active duty soldier, I first started to turn against the war, I believed that I was alone. I don't remember when precisely the turn came, but I remember being yelled at by leadership for signs I displayed in my barracks room, and I remember thinking that that was the way it always would be. One lone voice against a horde. That it would be lost in the shuffle. Even when I began talking to soldier after soldier, and they all told me that they did not believe in the war, I believed I was alone in wanting to speak up and do something about it.

Then I joined IVAW – Iraq Veterans Against the War. They promised that "you are not alone", and as I grew more active in the movement, I realized that it wasn't just lip service. I was not the only individual speaking on the platform. I was not the only person marching in formation, calling anti-war cadence. I was not the only person organizing an event that I thought would alert the American people to the problems inherent in an occupation.

But I still didn't understand the full meaning until I attended Winter Soldier. Winter Soldier was, and I think always will be, a pivotal moment both in my life and for IVAW. Fifty testifiers, all raising their voices, with hundreds of IVAW members and supportive VVAW and VFP members there to watch. Media finally covering the stories they'd been ignoring so long, walking around like excited schoolchildren, eager to touch a piece of history. Every word, coming out of every mouth, was painful to speak and painful to hear, but as soon as you got outside the testimony room, you were enveloped. Members everywhere, members with their wives, members with their children, members playing frisbee on the lawn. Members dancing the night away with the bands. Coming in at three in the morning, back to the room, and seeing VVAW and VFP members in the testifier support room, just waiting for someone to walk in.

I will never forget Carlos



Active Duty Sgt. Selena Coppa addresses the crowd at the conclusion of IVAW's 2 Day, 25 Mile Ruck March, from Philly's Constitution Hall to Valley Forge

Arredondo embracing the marines who had served with his son, tears in his eyes to finally touch them, love them, the men who had been with his child when he could not. Just as I cannot forget how everything was shared: food, liquor, cars, rooms, clothing. I saw Jabbar Magruder give another man the suit off of his back when that testifier's own formal clothing wasn't ready in time for the panel. You could not go hungry, not be tired, not lack a single thing at Winter Soldier, because there were always others there who were ready to provide it.

Was it hard? Of course it was hard. Anytime you shove a lot of people with PTSD into a small

space and ask them to relive their traumas, it is bound to be hard. Everyone knew that: everyone testifying and even everyone attending knew that that was the cost which had been named, considered, and accounted for. It wasn't easy even to be present at a single panel. I myself was only able to sit through one in its entirety, and I was shaking through the end of it. I was shaking through the panel I chaired as well. Tempers flared, the demons in the darkness were triggered. Things that had been buried for a long time were rising to the surface. I considered myself strong before, but I nearly broke down twice. Were it not for the strength of Jason Washburn,

one of my fellow testifiers and someone I am proud and honored to know, and the support of an anonymous VVAW member working as a Homefront Battle Buddy that I wish I did know, I would have. "It took me twenty years to learn to hit pillows instead of walls" that Vietnam veteran told me, and it broke on me like a revelation, like the dawn. Because I didn't have to wait twenty years to learn it for myself. I didn't have to reinvent the wheel. Those who had gone before were there for me. Those who had experience at handling their rage and grief were there with their wisdom, to help

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Eli Wright testifies on the The Crisis in Veterans' Healthcare panel

The Success of Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

GEOFF MILLARD

There are many ways to mark the success of Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan—Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations. One could say that the largest gathering of IVAW members in history was a success. One could say that having forced the Pentagon to address WSIA was a success. Our membership increases, the stories in *Stars & Stripes* or all the military times publications, are sure signs that we made history at the National Labor College, just outside of our nation's capital.

All of these things show that Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan: Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations was not only a greater success than any of us could imagine, but the best of what WSIA did for IVAW can not be seen unless you were one of the many organizers working behind the scenes. The true success of WSIA was that it turned our organization from a group of great speakers to a group of great organizers.

We have empowered not only ourselves, but other veterans to take charge and speak out. Even the pro-war group Veterans For Freedom has been empowered by



Geoff Millard testifies at the Racism and War: the Dehumanization of the Enemy panel

WSIA to travel the country and tell their experiences from Iraq. Members of the US military and its subsequent veterans community have been empowered by our actions so much that we have heard from members serving in Baghdad as well as at bases all over the US.

Our membership made Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan: Eyewitness Accounts of the

Occupations a success, because our membership organized and turned out in force. This is a sign of things to come with our declaration that we will no longer be bit players in the movement to end the occupations but we will be at the tip of its organizing spear.

Last year, when IVAW did Operation First Casualty, we took the reigns of the movement but Winter Soldier Iraq and

Afghanistan: Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations marks the moving of directions from a movement involving veterans, to one that is lead by veterans!



GEOFF MILLARD WAS IN THE MILITARY FOR 9 YEARS WITH 13 MONTHS OF OIF INCLUDED. HE IS CURRENTLY THE IVAW CHAPTER PRESIDENT IN WASHINGTON DC.

United We Stand

continued from page 25

me through.

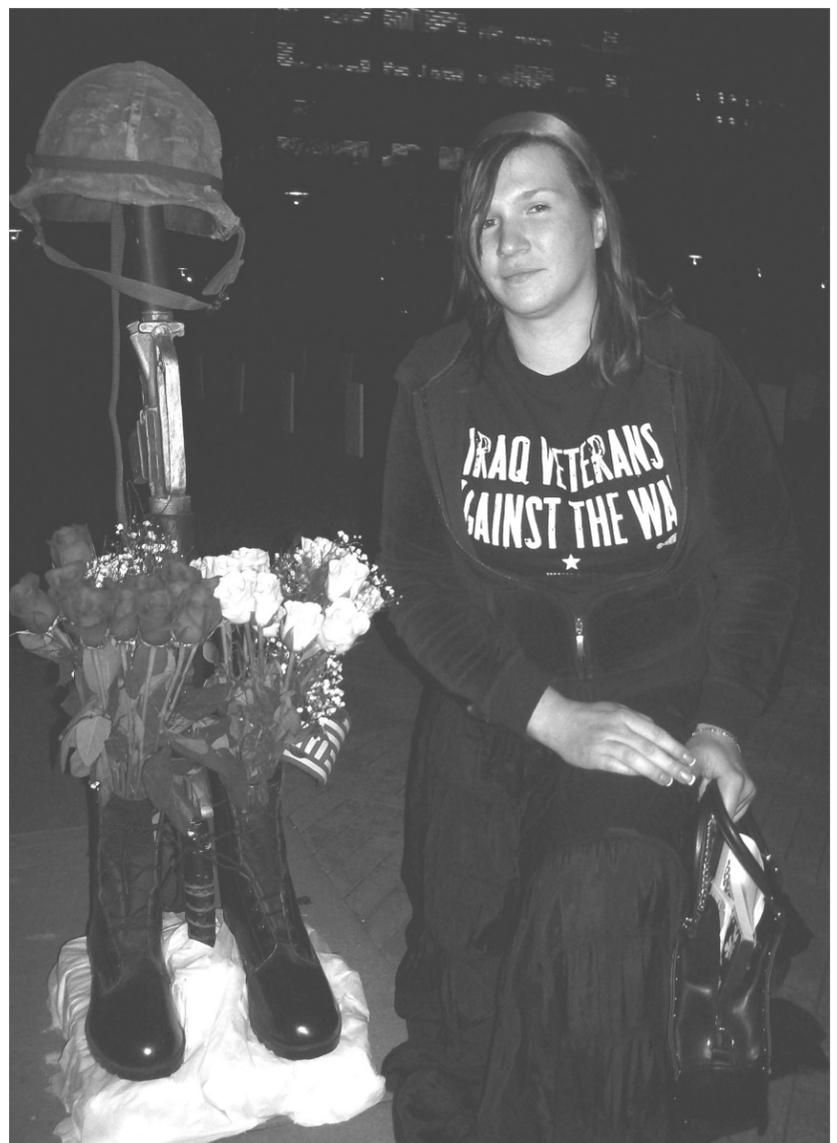
And it wasn't over when the last of the diehards convoyed out on the evening of the 16th, a rag-tag troop carrying the last of the baggage to Philadelphia, packed into cars and trucks like a gypsy caravan. No, the toll and the impact of Winter Soldier was only beginning. Disowned by family, with former military friends refusing to associate with me, it would have been impossible to recover from, if I were truly alone. Instead I found family where I never thought to look for it. Hart Viges, Jason Hurd, Ronn Cantu, Zollie and Daisy Goodman...I can never possibly name all of my brothers in the IVAW without which I would never have been able to continue. Nor can I name the countless allies, who knowing that IVAW would need some space to recover from the emotional drain, stepped up into the gap to make sure that we would never suffer what they did.

These people are and will always be my family now. The

people I testified with, the people who watched and helped and supported me, those people will always be my family. The people that helped me up when I fell, that held me while I shed blood and tears on them, that offered themselves at any time of night, no matter what I might need...those people will always be closer than my own blood to me. I know that as long as they live, I will never be alone, and while I live, they will never be. It's as though Winter Soldier were its own small war and we survived. We survived, and we will continue to survive—we will survive because we have to fight. And we're going to fight until this war is over, and we're going to fight until every one of us has the treatment we deserve. But we're not—I know now with every fibre of my being we're not-going to fight alone.



SELENA COPPA IS THE IVAW GI OUTREACH TEAM LEADER, AND CAN BE REACHED AT ARMYSERGEANT@IVAW.ORG OR ACTIVE DUTY PATRIOT.BLOGSPOT.COM



IVAW Combat Medic Jen Pacanowski, an Army Vet of Iraq

You Are Not My Enemy

You are not my Enemy
my brother my sister
but I have done something wrong
and perhaps I am now yours

I went to your home
I went inside
soiled your rug and
bullied your children

You are not my enemy
my father my mother
I drove on you
threw garbage in your window
burned your garden
and spit in your water

You are not my enemy
my grandmother my grandfather
I built walls between us

Rubble made sound
sand scattered plastic bags all around
rifles and checkpoints
bright lights into your eyes

No, you are not my enemy
my partner my friend
We were betrayed

you are not my enemy
are not my enemy
not my enemy
my enemy
enemy

You are not my enemy
my child my self
Our blood is the same

You are not my enemy
my memories and rage
Re-making sense now, together

You are not my enemy
you never were

You are a part of me
as I am with you

You are not my enemy
we shall stay true

You are not my enemy
we will change this
with you

— Drew Cameron, IVAW

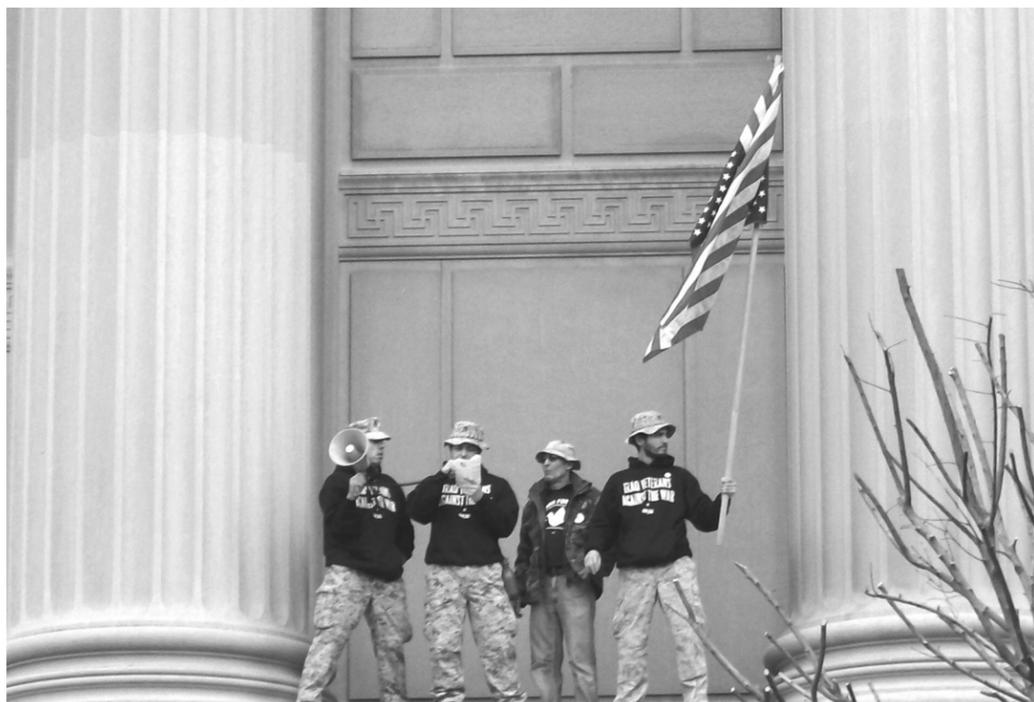
I Am A Christian

I am a Christian
Who survived 9 commandments but violated one
Thou shalt not kill
Plain and simple right?
It's more complicated than that
I followed my leaders with a long black crucifix in my hands
I loaded proverbs into magazines and shot them out of my crucifix
I carried bibles in my grenade pouches.
Forgive me father, for I have sinned
I have allowed bearers of false witness to burn you in an oil fire
I have allowed false idols to drop you on innocent victims, killing some, and disfiguring others
I have killed and allowed killing
I shall never kill again
I shall never get lost in the sandstorm of lies and shoot my way out
Who survived?
I might have, but my faith didn't

— Cloy Richards, IVAW



IVAW members James Gilligan & Adam Kokesh on March 19 in DC



After scaling a 10 foot high wrought iron fence, at the top of the National Archives steps, and taking the high ground, 30 feet above the throng, our Winter Soldiers educate the 1,500 tourists who wrap around the Archives on Constitution Ave and 9th St, NW.

Organizing Winter Soldier

AARON HUGHES

In the basement cafeteria of an oversized, modern styled, dorm building at the University of Illinois, I sat drinking coffee and listening to Barry Romo and Joe Miller talk of the struggle. The conversation went back and forth between memories, ideas, thoughts, ideologies, and today's political landscapes. In some ways I was really afraid of these two men. Barry was rocking back and forth in his seat like a preteen and speaking in bursts that I thought were going to knock Joe over. Joe was so cool and collected it was hard to think that he was some type of radical. Regardless, I sat there unsure of myself and waiting for my opportunity to spring Barry with the question that had been on my mind for days. Finally, I broke in with the question, "Barry? What about doing another Winter Soldier Investigation?"

Barry stopped his rocking and looked me in the eye and said coldly, "People will never forgive you." I was unsure of what Barry meant with that response and I still am unsure. But perhaps it has to do with the fact that he still has not, nor have I, and I am sure many of you have not...forgiven ourselves.

That was the winter of 2006. I was still an undergrad, had only been back from the war two years, had never met another Iraq veteran outside of my unit, let alone an IVAW member, and had just become an IVAW member myself. I was convinced though...that if just enough veterans gathered, if just enough of us told the truth about the war, if there was just another Winter Soldier, the shroud that covers the complex realities of war, occupation, dehumanization, racism, and hate would be torn in two and the war would come to a screeching halt.

A few months earlier my cell phone rang and it was Harrell Fletcher an artist and professor that I really looked up to. He called to ask me if I had ever seen a documentary called Winter Soldier. I had not, but told him I would check it out. He then suggested remaking the documentary and hence the idea of Winter Soldier-Iraq and Afghanistan was born.

January 2007 UFPJ March in DC

It was my first time meeting other IVAW members and it was an emotional marathon. I mean it was crazy. We went from marching to cadence calling to drinking to speeches to poetry readings to lobbying to karaoke...and in the mess of all that two crucial ideas were shared between Garrett, Geoff, and myself. 1.) The idea for Operation First Casualty or a combat patrol of Washington DC for the anniversary of the war. The idea was to bring the truth of the war home. 2.) Winter Soldier or in other words veterans to no longer let others speak for them but instead to stand up and claiming a space to be heard. Garrett and Geoff took off with the ideas for OFC and told me to talk to another member named Fernando out of NYC about Winter Soldier.

March 2007 Operation First Casualty

Ryan Lockwood and I flew out to DC to patrol the streets with other IVAW. Once again the day was intense. But during our lunch break I took a few minutes to hand out Winter Soldier postcards. I was trying to get more guys involved with helping make it a reality. Luckily some of the guys were interested. Perry, Liam and Adam all thought it was a good idea but it was still on the back burner and washed over by the theatrics and spectacle of OFC.

August 2007 NYC

By this time Fernando and I had developed a pretty good relationship. We had talked a number of times about Winter Soldier and spent a good amount of time researching the first Winter Soldier. We thought we were on our way to making it happen. I started to mention the idea on the strategy team (a national team of IVAW members that worked to develop tactics that made sense within our national strategy) calls and trying to get more members involved. Liam got re-excited by the idea and started thinking of a way to share it with other members at the national meeting later in the month.

August 2007 IVAW National Meeting and VFP Conference

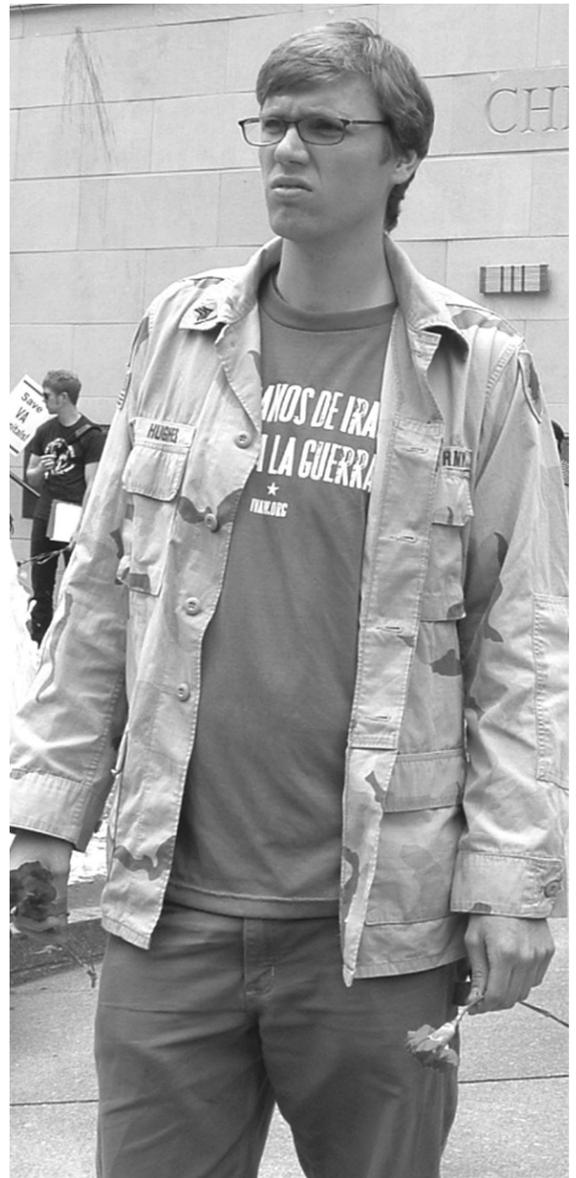
Liam (IVAW Boston) and Fernando (IVAW NYC) really sat down and started to work through a first questionnaire draft. (This is funny thinking back on it now. The questionnaire was maybe redrafted 20 or so times for the next 6 months.) The three of us tried desperately to get more members involved to talk to other members as much as possible about this idea called Winter Soldier. And to be honest we barely made any headway and to be honest I think it was the ANSWER march that was on everyone's mind.

October 2007

The strategy team blew up. A number of newly motivated members started to show up on the call and there were heated debates about what was to come next for IVAW. I still remember pacing the streets of New York in heated discussion unsure of where I was walking or what was passing me. The discussion, I believe, revolved around a Truth In Recruiting campaign and the different tactics that members had come up with. There were posters, fliers, bases, recruiting stations, civil disobedience, chapters, allies, and even buses to consider.

Winter Soldier was brought up but it was still so far off. You see IVAW was a reactionary organization always reacting to other organizations events and leaving as short amount of time as possible to plan our own event. That was at least true until the Winter Soldier campaign got into full gear.

The team kicked into full gear when Adrienne (IVAW Northeast coordinator) and Perry (IVAW NY) joined the team. Martin (IVAW IL), Jethro (IVAW Staff),



Aaron Hughes at Chicago VVAW's Memorial Day event, 2007

Nick (IVAW staff) joined shortly after rounding the team out to a solid group dedicated to weekly calls hundreds of emails.

November 2007

Weekly calls and we still had no common orientation. The calls dragged on wavering this way and that with out having consensus on what Winter Soldier was and what the goals were. In fact we had not even agreed on the name we were going to use. I think the ideas ranged from Summer Soldier to Desert Soldier to Winter Soldiers Speak Out. Nothing had been decided. Not the location, not the name, not the goals, nor the roles of the organizers.

Liam, Fernando, Perry, Adrienne, and I started having two-hour phone calls daily about what we were doing. I drew up an organizing diagram and came up with some team roles. Perry started coming up with some goals. Members of the team started to identify what roles they could fill and what roles we still needed

continued on next page

Winter Soldier

continued from previous page

to fill.

Liam took on media, Perry and Fernando took on verification, Adrienne and I took on outreach, but we were still missing key organizers like fundraising, audio visual, housing, travel, and I am not sure what else but the task looked daunting. Jose (IVAW NYC) stepped up to help with mental health and we recruited Lily (DC organizer) to help with logistics. By the end of the month we had filled out our team. Bringing in key people like Emilie (DC media coordinator) to help with media and Amadee (IVAW staff) to help with fundraising/finances.

December 2007 Winter Soldier Face to Face Sit-Down in Philly

Ok so now that this thing called Winter Soldier was planned for less than four months away we finally all came to a sit down. The first thing on the agenda was reaffirming the goals of Winter Soldier. The second was starting a discussion around messaging. This was a battle. We argued the better part of the day about what was the message. From giving veterans a space to speak and claim their own agency to the ideas of honor and that it was honorable to

speak out. We were able to come to some agreements and begin to construct goals for our different teams. With the goals we started to develop a time-line... a time-line that took us from the dozen or so members in that room to the day of the first panel.

January 2008

The calls get intense and the board steps in and asks if we are actually going to be able to pull this event off.

"Yes, we are!" was the response. The organizational structure was nothing like we had done before. The regional coordinator and the chapter leaders had to play a crucial role to get members involved. This was no longer an action that a few motivated members recruited a group of other members. No, instead the outreach was on the grassroots level. All the RCs and Chapter leaders started calling members asking them how they wanted to be involved in Winter Soldier, what it would take to get them to help with the organizing of the event, if they were interested in testifying. The number of members involved went from ten to twenty to a hundred to two hundred over the next month and a half.

February 2008 Winter Soldier Sit-Down in Washington DC

This meeting was more than twice the size of the first meeting. We had locked down a space at the amazing National Labor College. We had over 100 confirmed members attending and close to 80 members ready to testify. We had a director to do the documentary. We had raised a fair amount of funds from VVAW, VFP and MFSO and were on our way financially. Members had started to get press around the value of Winter Soldier. The organizing machine was in full swing. We spent a large portion of the time working through the panels and finalizing the messaging.

March 13 Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan

Over 200 members of IVAW arrived at the National Labor College by car, bus, train, and plane. Members came from as far away as Europe. Over two hundred media outlets were there and the panels started with out a hitch.

Over two hundred members claimed the space of Winter Soldier to assert the value of their voice and tell the stories that are locked away trapped by guilt and shame. The testifiers sat in front of their nation and put all they had on the table. Taking that guilt that

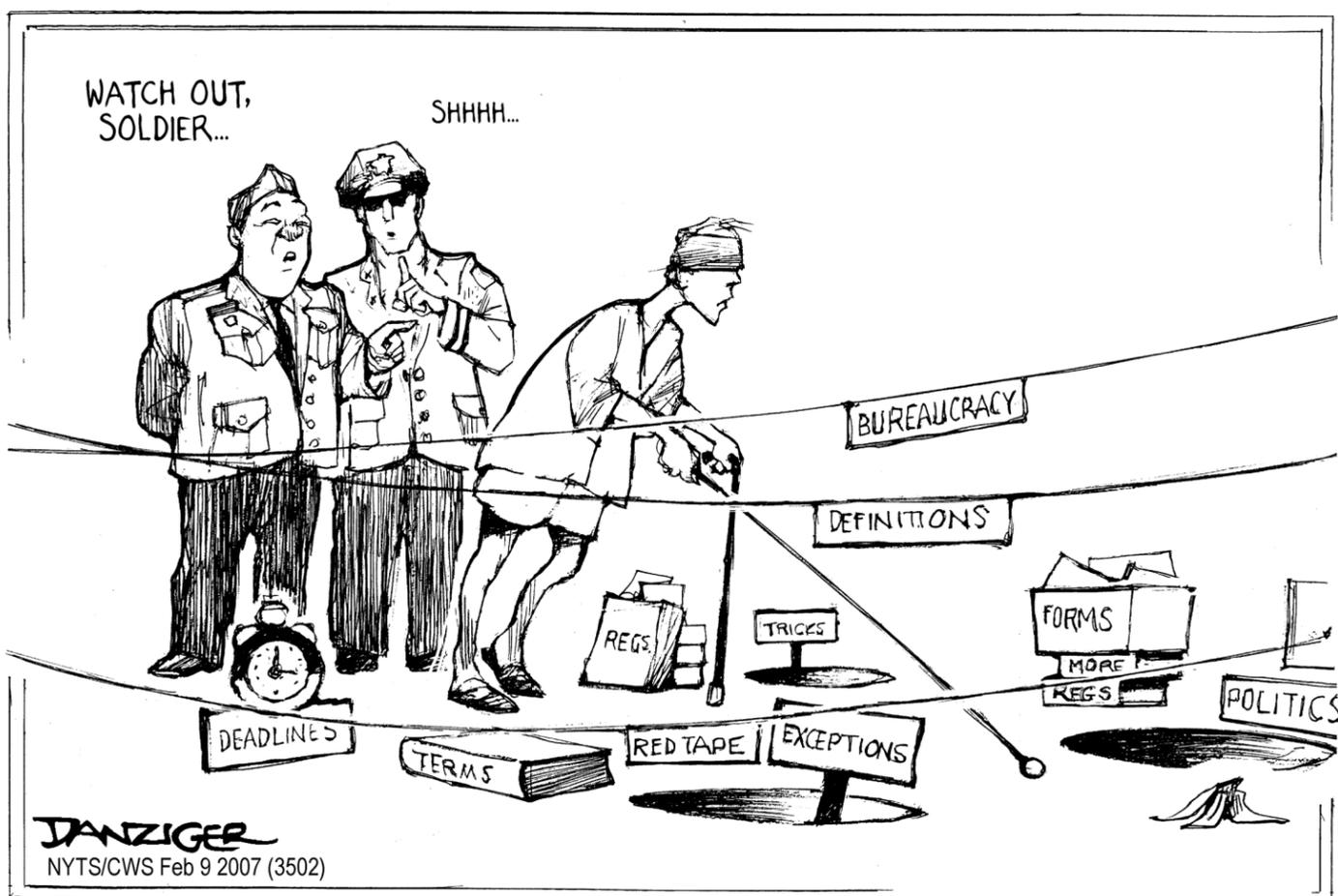
sat on their hearts and placed it on the table so the rest of our society could help them carry it. That guilt is not just a veteran's guilt to carry but all of ours to carry. Perhaps when our society denies and represses a connection to the guilt (that is the missing and silent pain of war) that society finds it hard to accept that shared weight and forgive. So perhaps when Barry told me that, "People will never forgive you," he meant that parts of our society would never be able to help carry the burden of guilt. I do believe Barry was right about that but I am here to help and we as a movement must be prepared to help carry that weight as we struggle up hill to peace and justice.

Thanks to all that helped make Winter Soldier a reality. This is a short timeline of Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan and I apologize to all the hard working members of the WS team that were not noted above.



AARON HUGHES WAS DEPLOYED TO KUWAIT AND IRAQ IN APRIL 2003 TO JULY 2004. HE IS CURRENTLY A REGIONAL CO-COORDINATOR OF THE IVAW GREAT LAKES REGION AND LIVES IN CHICAGO

Pentagon Tells VA Not to Help Wounded Vets With Benefits Appeals



An Open Letter to the Warriors: Past, Present & Future

CALIXTO CABRERA

It's been several weeks since I attended Winter Soldier 2: Iraq & Afghanistan, at the National Labor College in Silver Springs, MD, March 14-16, 2008. It was déjà vu all over again. Same damaged souls, same tormented psyches, same thousand mile stares. Only this time it wasn't me, or any of my fellow Vietnam veterans, but veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The places and the stories were different, but the horror, the shock, the detachment, the rage and remorse are all too familiar.

As I listened to the testimony I cried quietly to myself. I experienced my own anger rise as I felt that somehow in some way I should have protected this generation from this journey into hell. I did not, I could not protect them.

Now all of you must begin the long arduous journey to heal if you are to recapture your humanity, and more importantly, your peace of mind. God, I hope and pray that you choose your path well. For it is obvious to me that not all of the veterans of Vietnam, Korea or World War II have chosen to make the journey back to themselves.

In a convoluted and insane kind of way, the war you fought will be the easy part. For now, the enemy is no longer outside shooting in, but inside causing havoc with your thoughts and feelings - causing you to see, to hear, to taste and smell those events over and over again, until it feels like your heart will implode from a sadness so profound, from

a darkness so complete, that no light anywhere can get in.

You Iraq and Afghan vets have taken an important first step on the road to healing. You have told your story or at least a part of it. Tell it again and again, as much and as often as you need to, to whomever will listen. Don't be discouraged by the pain and the crying each time you tell your truth because it is part and parcel of the tale. Actually, welcome it, for it will be part of the cleansing your body and soul will need if you are to get through this and feel like a whole human being again.

During those first few years after my return from the war, I felt like a monster, a creature lower than an animal. For how could I in the name of "God and Country" do the things I did? It just didn't compute.

- I took shelter in my anger, for it was large and all-consuming.

- I railed against the government and their representative on the street, the police.

- I decided that I had been betrayed by my government and I wanted justice.

- If I couldn't get justice, than payback would suffice.

- I was a ticking time bomb.

In all honesty brothers and sisters, the thoughts that ran through my head back then were so crazed, that I scared myself. I was the personification of the crazed Vietnam vet. I carried a gun (military 45). I slept with it under my pillow. I pondered killing cops for I had changed the face of the enemy to them.



Calixto Cabrera at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

I was not ready to end the war.

It was by the grace of God that I did not follow through with some of my intentions at the time. I had great feelings of guilt for having left my troops behind. But strangely, I didn't leave them behind. We all came home together. So, go figure.

It was a hard path you patriots walked, and it may be a harder one that you have yet to walk. In looking at my own "Hard Walked Path," time and time again, I discovered answers to questions I didn't even know I had. Like, "Why did I get sick when I saw my first kill? After all, this is what I trained for in boot camp and ITR, right?" Although it was a process, I slowly came to terms with what I did. That allowed me crucial insight into why I did it.

It took me 21-1/2 years before I crested the mountain of my hate, rage and self loathing, to come to terms with this new view. This brought me peace of mind, and as a result, I forgave myself. Maybe your journey will be shorter. It all sounds so simple now, but it required a revolutionary change in my thinking.

Finally, let me say this to all you warriors: I am an ordinary guy who underwent an extraordinary experience, just as you have. It

damaged my mind, wounded my heart deeply and caused years of rage - but I have come out the other side, a better man for it.

There is a saying, "That which doesn't kill you, makes you stronger." But it doesn't necessarily make you happier or allow you to enjoy life more. Those two elements - happiness and joy - are what I'm working on now to make these healings even sweeter.

If I was able to crest my mountain, you can crest yours.

To be continued.



CALIXTO (ALFREDO) CABRERA SERVED 6 YEARS IN THE US MARINE CORPS, INCLUDING TWO TOURS IN 'NAM. HE WAS BORN PUERTO RICO 1948 AND MOVED TO NEW YORK AT ABOUT 3 YRS OLD. IN JULY 1965, HE JOINED THE MARINE CORPS AND WAS DISCHARGED AS A SERGEANT IN 1971 WITH AN HONORABLE DISCHARGE. IN 1972, HE JOINED VVAW AND IN 1977, HE GRADUATED WITH AN AA DEGREE IN AIR TRANSPORT (COMMERCIAL PILOT, FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR). HE HAS TWO CHILDREN, SAGE AND AMBER; IS ABOUT TO BE A FIRST-TIME GRANDDAD TO TWIN BOYS. HIS JOURNEY HAS TAKEN HIM FROM RAGE TO PEACE. CALIXTO@VETSPEAK.ORG



Alfredo Cabrera

Talking War Crimes

BEN CHITTY

Last month the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War brought over 200 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD to testify about their military experiences. IVAW called this event "Winter Soldier – Iraq and Afghanistan," partly to claim the legacy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War and their Winter Soldier hearings in 1971, and partly to echo the words of New Rochelle's Thomas Paine, writing during the dark days of December 1776. The mainstream media mostly ignored Winter Soldier, as it mostly ignores the war altogether these days. VVAW means to spoil that silence. But we also mean to accomplish something more revolutionary. We do want to end this war; we also want to prevent this kind of war from happening again.

To do that we have to understand some things about the kind of war our country is fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Consider the treatment of detainees. Everyone has seen the Abu Ghraib pictures, though the worst were never released, and the CIA does admit waterboarding three detainees. But forget the interminable debate whether waterboarding is really torture or whether Abu Ghraib is an isolated instance. Between August 2002 and February 2006 almost 100 detainees died in US custody, at least 34 of them ruled homicides by military medical examiners. Military commanders failed to report deaths; investigators failed to interview witnesses or collect and keep evidence; records were lost or never kept at all; overlapping criminal and administrative investigations compromised one another; relevant information has been classified and withheld from investigators. Only 12 of these murders have resulted in the punishment of any US official, and none of them employees or contractors for the CIA.

Consider the rules of engagement. The Iraqi town of Haditha was under insurgent control in November 2005, when marines from the 1st Division's 3rd Battalion killed 24 civilians including 11 women and children as they cleared streets and houses near where a roadside bomb had just killed one of their comrades. Maybe this just happens in war?

Or just happens in this kind of war? Maybe the marines had poor leadership? Maybe it was partly because of defective rules of engagement – respond with deadly force to every perceived threat. These are the same rules given the Marines for the two-week-long assault on Fallujah in November 2004, where they used white phosphorus explosives, a tactic they called "shake and bake." Fifty US troops were killed. 300,000 people fled the city. An estimated 1,200 dead Arabs were counted as

a free-fire zone.

All of these incidents violate the Geneva conventions; all these policies permit or encourage the commission of war crimes.

War crime allegations raise two different but related issues.

First is the relation of criminal acts to military policy. How can the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib be the result of poor training and leadership when even more deadly abuse was inflicted on prisoners in Bagram and elsewhere. How can "shoot on suspicion" be ex-

Generals and politicians lie to hide these crimes from us, the citizens they serve. They lie to avoid disgrace, to keep their jobs and their pensions, to stay out of prison.

insurgents. Arabs charred beyond recognition must be insurgents, right?

What about air power? The number of close air support strikes in Afghanistan in 2007 is nearly 13,000, almost twice the number three years earlier. The number of bombing runs in 2007 is around 2,300, more than thirty times the 2004 number. Last year in Iraq there were almost 18,000 close air support strikes, about 25% more than in 2004, and more than a thousand bombing runs, almost four times the 2004 number. The use of unmanned Predators with Hellfire missiles doubled over the first ten months of 2007. In just ten days this January the US dropped 100,000 pounds of explosives on a farm district south of Baghdad.

The use of air power against insurgents means civilian casualties. The official review of US air strikes in Afghanistan during 2002 concluded that over-reliance on air strikes combined with misinformation from informants on the ground led to hundreds of unnecessary civilian casualties. Five years later this still happens: a strike last April in West Afghanistan killed 57 villagers, half women and children; last June's attack on a madrassa in Datta Khel in Pakistan's North Waziristan killed 30 people; a strike near Kandahar last November killed 31 people from a nomadic clan. The suspected presence of an insurgent or a terrorist turns an entire neighborhood into

exceptional at Haditha but not in Fallujah or every checkpoint in Iraq? How can extensive and unnecessary civilian casualties in air strikes continue to occur years after they were identified, if not as the result of policy?

Second is command responsibility. Commanders are always responsible for the actions of subordinates. Where a commander suspects a crime has been committed, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice as well as international law, the commander must investigate the report. When the criminal action is the result of a direct or standing order, the investigation must proceed up the chain of command to determine who gave the order which permitted or directed the criminal act.

The rules of military life are mostly straightforward – the West Point motto "duty, honor, country" sums them up well enough. A soldier's duty is to fellow soldiers. Just as one crooked cop makes the work of every honest cop harder, one soldier's criminal behavior makes life harder and more dangerous for good soldiers. An honorable soldier accepts responsibility for his or her actions. And every soldier owes the truth to the country he or she serves.

IVAW's winter soldiers tell us the truth about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. What we do with the truth is up to us.

First we have to understand that generals and politicians don't

lie about wartime atrocities to hide them from the enemy. The enemy already knows. Generals and politicians don't lie to hide atrocities from the soldiers. The soldiers know too. Generals and politicians lie to hide these crimes from us, the citizens they serve. They lie to avoid disgrace, to keep their jobs and their pensions, to stay out of prison.

Second we have to understand how a culture of impunity works in the military. Lower ranks are scapegoated. Higher ranks never question orders. And the people who make the policies are never brought to justice.

Some of the many war crimes committed in my war in Vietnam occurred during a six-month campaign in the central highlands by a unit of the 101st Airborne Division called "Tiger Force." This unit was designed, in the words

of its first commander, "to out-guerilla the guerillas." The Army investigated these allegations for four and a half years, and finally turned in a report recommending that eighteen soldiers be charged with crimes ranging from killing civilians to torturing prisoners to scalping the dead, and worse. When that report landed on the desk of the Secretary of Defense, Gerald Ford was President. Behind the desk was Ford's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. The report disappeared. Three decades later Rumsfeld does not remember that report or whether he discussed it with the White House Chief of Staff Dick Cheney. This is a text book case of impunity.

And if we let these folks get away with it again, we will condemn our soldiers – our sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, neighbors and friends – to serve in this kind of rogue military, and to fight this kind of criminal war again, and again, and again.



BEN CHITTY IS A DISABLED NAVY VETERAN OF TWO DEPLOYMENTS TO VIETNAM, AND A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW IN THE METRO NY AREA. THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM A TALK DELIVERED ON APRIL 13TH IN WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK, ON RECEIVING ONE OF THE 2008 PEACE & JUSTICE AWARDS FROM THE WESPAC FOUNDATION.

Degrees of Difference: From 1971's Winter Soldier Investigation to 2008's Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan

BILL PERRY

I was a Paratrooper Combat Veteran in Vietnam, from Dec '67 through Aug '68, including the Tet offensive which raged from January through June of 1968. At the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation (WSI), I related some of my personal experiences witnessing the assassination of civilians, the illegal use of chemical warfare, and other inevitable excesses caused by our Governments' policy. Since I attended the 2008 Winter Soldier Investigation Iraq and Afghanistan (WSII&A), I have been asked about my perspective on the two Winter Soldier Investigations, and what may have changed in 37 years.

The causes of both wars are similar, fear and oil. During the Vietnam era, communism was supposed to be the big fear. Commies were going to destroy our homes and our way of life. If we didn't stop them in Vietnam, all the world's countries would fall like dominoes. Now, it's terrorists. The Administration uses Al-Qaeda as an excuse for war in the Middle East as well as the shredding of the US Constitution, imprisonment without charges, and torture. Everyone is familiar with petroleum in Iraq and the oil companies' desire to control it. But, Vietnam? As early as 1951, the US government was mapping potential oil fields on and off the coasts of Indochina. Today, Vietnam is pumping crude, 25% of which is sold to the US.

When it comes to racism and war, the WSII&A testimony made clear that nothing has changed. Reducing battlefield enemies to being less than human makes it so much easier to kill them. This well documented practice is as true today as it always was. The US military has sensitivity training, but it is aimed at limiting racism in the ranks, a not very successful effort.

WSII&A spotlighted sexism, sexual harassment, and rape - it's never about sex, it's always about power. WSI didn't cover this area; not because the problem didn't exist, but because there was a smaller proportion of women in fewer different jobs in the military back then.

Health issues for vets and

GI's were covered at both events. Acute and chronic illness as well as mental and emotional health were discussed.

At WSI, we were fortunate to have testimony from Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, Dr. Hy Shatan and Dr. Jon Bjornson. They spearheaded the study of Vietnam Syndrome, now recognized as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. A decade later, their empirical studies and intense lobbying resulted in worldwide acceptance of PTSD. At age 75, Dr. Bjornson is a driving force behind Philadelphia VVAW, and Delaware Valley Veterans For America. Today, vets and GI's still struggle to have PTSD recognized and treated.

Agent Orange poisoning, from the herbicide sprayed extensively over Vietnam, was a major issue at WSI. Vets continue to die from this plague and VVAW still co-sponsors the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign. Most of us old timers will be long dead before the DoD settles up for its modern poison, depleted uranium, widely used in ammunition in the Gulf War as well as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Winter Soldier 37 year bridge began with the Legacy of GI Resistance, spanned 10 topics of extreme importance, and closed with the Future of GI Resistance.

Those of us who testified at WSI had virtually no peer pressure. Few of us went to 'Nam in whole unit PCS's. Most went as individual replacements to whichever units took the highest losses in the previous week. Our RVN Tours? Just "one and done." We came home. We had campus and 'hood ties that brought us together.

IVAW members who participated in WSII&A, often had State and regional National Guard and Reserve ties to specific communities. It's a lot easier to have your hometown local yahoos slap you on the back, and call you a hero, than it is to stand up to the inhumanity of this war, yet, IVAW members do exactly that. They don't take the easy way out.

IVAW networks, with MySpace, FaceBook, 42 IVAW Chapters, and ivaw.org, telling

their stories on internet sites that reach round the world, to all 731 US Military bases. Active Duty, everywhere, will have access to the courageous stands, in defense of our Constitution, that IVAW members take, because that Oath, to "Protect and Defend our Constitution, against all enemies, Foreign and Domestic" NEVER expires.

The IVAW Veterans are afraid of NOTHING. Fearless is what your Logan Laituri's, Augie Aguayo's, Hart Viges', Camilo Mejia's and hundreds of other CO's who have already completed one tour, are. They've seen the real deal. They've said "hell no, I won't go back." Fearlessness is what IVAW members display, when they stand up to the sad sack caricatures who wave the flag, and protest anything sponsored by IVAW. We had 3 or 4 of them, standing in the slush, in February, '71, across from our WSI hearings.

Fearless is what Active Duty Sgt. Selena Coppa says, at Ft. Hood, and every other military

venue: "I love the Army...but I can't be quiet anymore. One of the major things they teach us in the Army is values. Honor, Integrity, Courage." This Active Duty Sgt., and many others, empower GI's everywhere to question authority, and refuse illegal orders, as per the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and Nuremberg Accords.

In these dangerous times, we need these Soldiers and Marines to stand up, and fight back from within the Occupations.

IVAW's strategy is to mobilize the Military Community to withdraw its support for the Occupation of Iraq. IVAW is the Vanguard of the Movement of Veterans and GI's who are working to bring home our troops, and take care of them when they get home. I'm incredibly proud of them.



BILL PERRY SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM 1967-1968. HE TESTIFIED AT THE FIRST WINTER SOLDIER IN 1971. HE IS A CONTACT FOR VVAW.



A Sea of Tombstones, at Philly's Liberty Bell, memorializes the 3,860 KIA of our War in Iraq. The Cost of War Display takes up nearly 3 acres on Federal land between the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, & the Constitution Center, attracting 10's of Thousands of visitors, from around our Nation, and the world.



Big Red 1 (1st I.D.) Cavalry Scout, and Combat Vet, Steve Mortillo is the brains of the of the Ruck March, and the President of the Philly Chapter of IVAW.



Mike Hoffman and Kelly Dougherty - two founders of IVAW at Winter Soldier

"Just Crazy" War Vets?

The Vietnam War is over for most
Strange homecoming without a toast
"Just crazed" vets back on the block to endure
Looks, questions, and talk from the unsure

You're not one of those "just crazed" vets are you?
Please don't take it personal in this job interview
I'm not hiring anyone with combat flashbacks
Have you been engaged in any militant acts?

Did you kill anyone while you were there?
Your eyes look so distant with that stare
How did you feel about killing innocent babies?
"Just crazed" war vets like mad dogs with rabies

Images of the dying held in your arms with grace
Blood, sweat, and tears running down your face
Who killed whom and how does anyone really feel?
Ask a "just crazed" war vet about war and "real"

Time is of the essence but not really a cure
Flashbacks of horrific images always to endure
Hospitals, meds, homelessness are the placed bets
Peace of mind never comes to "just crazed" war vets?

— Paul Cameron
Vietnam War veteran

The Iraq War: Five Years Later Winter Soldiers

MADELEINE MYSKO

First published in the Baltimore Sun on March 19, 2008

Nation must heed the horrifying words of those who have returned from the front lines

From testimony of Jason Hurd of the Army's 278th Regimental Combat Team:

"One day, Iraqi police got into an exchange of gunfire with some unknown individuals ... and some of the stray rounds ... hit the shield of one of our Hummers. The gunner atop that Hummer decided to open fire with his 50-caliber machine gun into that building. We fired indiscriminately and unnecessarily at this building. We never got a body count, we never got a casualty count afterward. ... Things like that happen every day in Iraq. We react out of fear, fear for our lives."

On the fifth anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq, my reflections go back much further - to the spring of 1969, when I entered basic training at Fort Sam Houston as a newly commissioned second lieutenant in the US Army Nurse Corps. I had volunteered to serve, but not really out of patriotic duty. I was young and naive, and somehow had begun to picture myself as an angel of mercy who would tend to wounded soldiers.

I knew little about why we were fighting in Vietnam. I hardly ever read the news and had little interest in politics.

For us nurses, basic training was less about nursing and more about acclimation to military life. We were taught how to wear the uniform, how to salute, how to read a map in the wilderness, how to shoot a firearm, how to put on a gas mask in a hurry.

"Car bombs are a real danger in Iraq. But as time went on ... individuals from my platoon would fire into the grills of civilians' cars and then come back ... and brag about it. I remember ... how appalled I was that we were bragging, that we were laughing, but that's what you do in a combat zone. ... That is how you deal with that predicament."

What I recall best about basic

training is the lecture on "Chain of Command and Esprit de Corps." We were told to visualize chain of command as authority that was linked, rank by rank, all the way from the commander in chief high above us to the last private in line below us. Orders were to descend along that chain. Moreover, concerns about carrying out orders were to be communicated back up the chain no further than the rank

directly above.

The strength of the armed forces was lodged in that chain. To break it was a serious infraction.

As for esprit de corps, all these years I have not forgotten our instructors' fervor in speaking about the spirit in a military unit. We were to visualize the fighting strength as extending outward, like limbs on one body: Should the spirit of one member fail, so too would the spirit of the entire body. Perhaps because I was a nurse, that corporeal metaphor stuck with me. I saw failing esprit de corps as a sickness moving from the extremities toward the vital organs, threatening the life of the entire armed forces.

Those two concepts - chain of command and esprit de corps - were on my mind this past week as Iraq Veterans Against the War set up their microphones and began recording and broadcasting the disturbing testimony of soldiers who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

They called the event Winter Soldier, after an event by the same name organized decades ago by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Alluding to Thomas Paine's famous speech that described the "the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot" as withering at the time of moral crisis, VVAW considered themselves true patriots - "winter soldiers" who would speak the

hard truth for the good of the country. Unfortunately, much of the American public didn't see the VVAW that way.

"A woman we met began to tell us a story. ... Her husband had been shot and killed by a United States convoy, because he got too close ... A few weeks later Special Forces conducted a raid on her home ... detained her son and took him

corps; all of us, regardless of rank, worked with one accord for the sake of those terribly wounded soldiers, alleviating their pain when we could, cheering on the remarkable survivors, trying to make the others comfortable until the end.

Meanwhile, beyond the gates of the post, veterans in beat-up uniforms were angrily protesting against the war. Their stories about atrocities and lies and failed policies were too much for me to take in. I still had no time to read the news. But with all my heart, I wanted the war to end as much as they did, so that the days of burned flesh and amputations would be over.

It was a very long time before those days were over.

"An Iraqi man looked at me straight in the eye, and he said, "Mister, we Iraqis know that you have good intentions here. But before America invaded, we didn't have to worry about car bombs in our neighborhoods, we didn't have to worry about the safety of our own children as they walked to school, and we didn't have to worry about US soldiers shooting at us as we drive up and down our own streets."

As I write this in my comfortable office, the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq are following their orders, ever in danger, looking out for each other until they are allowed to come safely home.

I picture myself - a civilian now - as joined to these soldiers in a national esprit de corps. I picture my whole family and all the neighbors up and down the street as joined to them too.

If those good troops are stricken by what they have seen during their deployments, or by what they have done, isn't it vital that we pay attention? Their sickness with this war is a symptom we cannot ignore. We must carefully attend to them. The life spirit of the larger "corps" - of the nation itself - is at stake.



MADELEINE MYSKO, A TOWSON, MARYLAND RESIDENT, IS THE AUTHOR OF THE NOVEL BRINGING VINCENT HOME. HER E-MAIL IS MMYSKO@COMCAST.NET.

I saw failing esprit de corps as a sickness moving from the extremities toward the vital organs, threatening the life of the entire armed forces.

away. Two weeks later, the Special Forces team rolled up, dropped her son off and, without so much as an apology, drove off. It turns out they had found they had acted on bad intelligence."

Though soldiers returning from Afghanistan and Iraq can expect to be honored and thanked in a way that those returning from Vietnam were not, this might not be true of Iraq's winter soldiers. Who wants to hear about American soldiers firing into the vehicles of innocent families or carrying around photos of Iraqis they have killed?

Kelly Dougherty, former sergeant in the Colorado Army National Guard and present executive director of IVAW, warned that it would not be easy to listen to these testimonials. "But we believe that the only way this war is going to end is if the American people truly understand what we have done in their name."

A certain kind of patriotism closes off a lot of otherwise good minds. It accepts the testimony of the decorated general without question but shuns the testimony of the ordinary soldier as seditious.

After my basic training in 1969, I was assigned to the burn ward at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. It was hard work, but I think I was a good nurse, maybe even a good officer. Our unit had an ironclad esprit de

Eyewitness Report from Winter Soldier II Investigation

CAROL RAWERT TRAINER

My husband and I attended the Winter Soldier II investigation by the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). The testimonials and the images they created are etched into my mind and gut forever. As members of VVAW we helped provide security for the event. I was at the main hall entry working security on 12-hour shifts so I was privileged to hear and see most of the first 3 days of testimony.

After months of threatening emails "Eagles Up" ended up more like "turkeys down." They showed up, on the first day for a few hours without even a busload. Of course to be "fair and balanced" the *Washington Post* had an article on their meager showing at a protest downtown that was equal to the write up they posted for IVAW's historic 4 day event.

The weekend was bustling with excitement and emotion as many groups (Iraq Veterans Against the War, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, Gold Star Moms, GI Rights Hotline, etc) connected with each other and lent support to the testifying IVAW members. With media cameras and bloggers from all over the world and many left wing media the mainstream American media was conspicuously absent. Before leaving Louisville, I sent a press releases to the local media about this historic event but got no response. The media was in a big rush to get us into this illegal and immoral war but takes no responsibility to get us out. *The Washington Post* wrote a

perfunctory report on 3/14. IVAW immediately passed out a counter statement to the attending media. I feel that if every American were required to attend the event, watch or listen to the broadcast, the war in Iraq would soon be over, but most Americans prefer to take no action. So here we are going into the 6th year still wearing ourselves out trying to end the war.

I commend the brave young soldiers and marines who spoke out against the atrocities they witnessed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many were in Iraq for 3-5 tours. During the Rules of Engagement testimonial veterans said that there were few, if any, rules. The rules seemed to change constantly. The rules were to shoot anyone they felt threatened by whether the Iraqi was a threat or not. This included: pregnant women because they could be women pretending to be pregnant and hiding arms under their dress; children and old people because they sometimes were used by the 'insurgents;' men in robes (which were many) because they could be hiding weapons. This means they could actually shoot anyone whenever they felt like it. Oftentimes it would be covered up. In addition to death, the soldiers and marines witnessed and participated in manhandling, injuring and harassing and terrorizing the Iraqi people.

Some were commanded to shoot and kill those they felt were innocent. Many were pressured by peers to kill, to put "notches" in their guns so to speak as if it were a game. Many are dealing

with PTSD and all of them said that testifying was more important than anything they had done in the war. At first they believed they were going to Iraq to help the Iraqi people achieve democracy but soon learned the brutal truth that freedom for the Iraqis was not "the agenda." In fact Iraqi lives counted for little. Most of the time the Iraqis that they killed, roughed up or terrorized in their homes and on the streets were innocent civilians who carried no weapons. Slides were shown depicting the "weapons" for which the troops were to be on the lookout. The weapons consisted of kitchen knives, saws, wires and some everyday innocuous tools that everyone uses in their homes. Anyone could be labeled an insurgent for possessing them. One soldier testified that when he questioned why a saw was classified as an insurgent tool he was told that the saw could be used by terrorists to dismember bodies during torture!

Many times the troops shot at cars or at people so they could speed their vehicles along the streets. Those who shot kids, old people and women were especially affected by their actions, ashamed of what they had done. Many got caught up in the "fog of war." In the segment Racism and War: Dehumanization of the Enemy panelists talked of how the Iraqi civilians were called "Hajji's," "sand niggers" or "sand rats," etc. Of course when the "enemy" is dehumanized, which is done in the field and in training, it is easier to

kill them.

One soldier directly addressed Gen. Petraeus in an emotional statement saying that the general had awarded and placed a meritorious medal on him in the battlefield. He tore up the commendation and threw it to the floor, exclaiming "General Petraeus, you are no longer my leader!" He received a round of applause and standing ovation as did many who testified.

Ex-Marine Jon Turner, who served two tours in Iraq, ripped his medals from his shirt and threw them on the ground, crying "I'm sorry for the hate and destruction I and others have inflicted upon innocent people. Until people hear what is going on, this is going to continue. I am no longer the monster that I once was."

One soldier said he came face to face with "the enemy," a boy of around 18 years of age. Both scared, they stood appraising each other and the soldier came to the realization that the boy was just like him and he let him escape.

In the Civilian Testimony panel two Iraqi nationals who now live in the US said they were in Iraq when the war broke out. Their families have lost their homes and have suffered injuries. They appealed to the American government to leave their country now. They think more harm will come of Iraq if we stay than if we leave. They spoke of how gracious the Iraqi people are and that one day they hoped they could return home and welcome us into their home.

These emotional testimonies often brought me to tears. At one discussion of the Cost of War at Home the parents of Jeffrey Lucey talked of how their son returned home a changed man. He had severe PTSD and received less than adequate treatment from the VA. They watched their son grow progressively worse and medicate himself through alcohol and dangerous behavior. One day the son asked his father if he would rock him. The father sat rocking, holding and patting his son for over 45 minutes. Soon after his son was discovered dead, having committed suicide by hanging himself in the basement with a



Adam Dzagulones, Carol Trainer and Don Dzagulones at Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

continued on page 36



Amy Meyers and Jim Murphy on Front Entrance Security



Buzz Doyle on Front Gate Security



Kurt Hilgendorf, Lian Alan, Annie Hirschman, Jeff Machota, Dorothy Day and Bob Gronko

Eyewitness Report

continued from page 35

garden hose. The mom began reading the son's suicide note that was found by the police, but became choked up and the dad finished reading. In the note the young man apologized to his parents saying that he was not the man he was and that he was not proud of what he had become and he could no longer live with himself. I cannot remember this or write it now without becoming emotional and crying. I hate this war and hate our government and people who went along with it. No, I can forgive those who went along in the beginning, but I will never forgive those who support it now or do nothing to stop it.

Jeremy Scahill, a renowned investigative journalist and author of the book *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* was one of the

impressive panelists of Corporate Pillaging and Military Contractors. For the Louisville people, he is a good friend of Bob Moser who wrote in *The Nation* (Oct 1, 2007) about our peace efforts here in Louisville.

One of the panelists on the Aims of the Global War on Terror: The Political, Legal and Economic Context of Iraq and Afghanistan was Michael Schwartz, author of *Beyond the Green Zone*. Schwartz has appeared on *NPR* and has spent much of his time in Iraq and the middle east and presented rousing testimony of the atrocities he witnessed. And wonderful Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* chided the American press for "clear-channeling" information to the American public. She blamed the media for inciting Americans into accepting the war beating the

drums to start our involvement. She also received several standing ovations.

The panel on Divide to Conquer: Gender and Sexuality in the Military discussed treatment and mistreatment of women and homosexuals in the military. Women gave testimonies of sexual harassment and being pressured by peers and authority. After hearing it I mentioned to one of the panelists that some things never change. I told her that as a veteran from the 1960's I could have spoken on the panel. We shared a knowing hug.

One veteran talked about seeing his commander kill an innocent Iraqi man. Then they put his body in a truck. The commander pulled the body out of the truck and let it fall on the ground in front of the dead man's family. The commander told the soldier to take his picture with the dead body (all this in front of

the family who was crying and mourning their dead!) And the soldier told the commander that it wasn't right and that he couldn't do it. Back at the camp the soldier was reprimanded with mental and physical punishment for refusing an order in front of his men.

I met various IVAW members and GI Rights Hotline members whom I hope will be able to help me start an IVAW group here and to assist GI's wanting to leave the service.

Attending this event was the most meaningful thing I have done to help stop the war in the past 5.5 years. There was so much more to the amazing 4 day event I wish I could describe. I wish everyone could have witnessed it. .



CAROL RAWERT TRAINER, USAF 66-68, IS A VIETNAM ERA VETERAN AND IS THE LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY CONTACT FOR VVAW.

Broken Toy Soldiers

We buy broken hearts, and boil them in white pots
 We mix 'em up, cook 'em up, and feed them to our dogs
 And when the dogs have had their fill, and say they've had enough
 We wait until they shit 'em up, and gather up the stuff

We put the hearts in buckets, and give 'em to the chefs
 Who roll them out on baking sheets, and stick on top the chips
 Then they throw them in the oven, and cook them till they're well
 Then we feed them to the kiddies, who say "Gee sir, they're swell!"

Then we hand the kids a little flag, which they begin to wave
 Stick 'em in the audience of a Veteran's Day Parade
 As the troops go marching by, with flashbacks in their eyes
 They see the bright-eyed angels, and they begin to sigh

For once a long, long time ago, they stood on the side
 Till a recruiter came to them and told them all his lies
 Then they're standing in an office, standing proud and tall
 They look all around 'em, see a hundred others in the hall

They hold up their right hands, they say they'll do it all
 Then we send them off to war, they see all around them fall
 Kids, soldiers, dreams, hopes
 Till all that stands are broken toy soldiers

Yes we buy broken hearts of now-childless moms
 And sell them in ribbons in booths at strip malls
 We buy broken hearts of now-widowed wives
 Who work hard everyday to keep her kids alive
 We buy broken hearts of now-broken men
 Then make them re-enlist, for heartless men will do it again
 We buy broken hearts of now-fatherless sons
 Wait till they grow up, and sell them all our guns
 Send them off to fight in a different-but-same war
 Tell them "Hadji killed your dad," so they'll kill more and more
 Yes, we buy broken hearts and stick 'em in our songs
 We buy broken hearts and insert 'em in our speeches
 We buy broken hearts and stick 'em on the back of our pickup trucks
 We buy broken hearts to help our war machine go round
 And soon one day we'll buy yours, and throw you in the ground

— Mark Wilkerson, IVAW

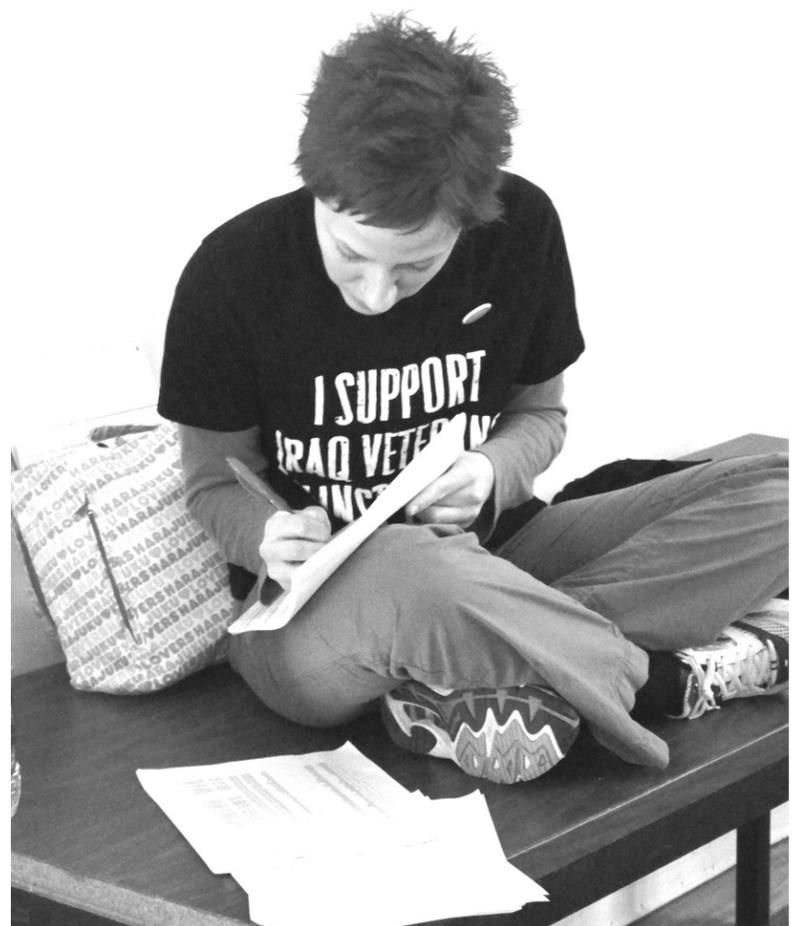
Mary's War

Mary is a wife and mother
 with a hole in her life
 that the sun won't shine through
 since her husband was killed in Iraq,
 a vacuum like a coffin
 that holds him away from her
 Her Donnie looked so handsome
 in his uniform when he came home
 when he came home all the other times
 Mary prayed to God to watch over him
 but now she has sandpaper feelings
 about that
 Their baby will never know his father
 and a part of him is all that lasts
 Mary is so lonesome now
 as she remembers dancing with Donnie
 she can still smell him when they slow danced.
 She cries and tears drop on Jason's face
 as she changes his diaper again
 she vows he will not fight in any war
 that the government comes up with all the time
 her tears stop as she gets angry now
 war does not care about babies
 war does not care about husbands
 and war does not care about her.
 Mary wipes the tears off of Jason's face
 she picks him up in her arms
 and dances a slow dance with him
 across the baby's room floor.

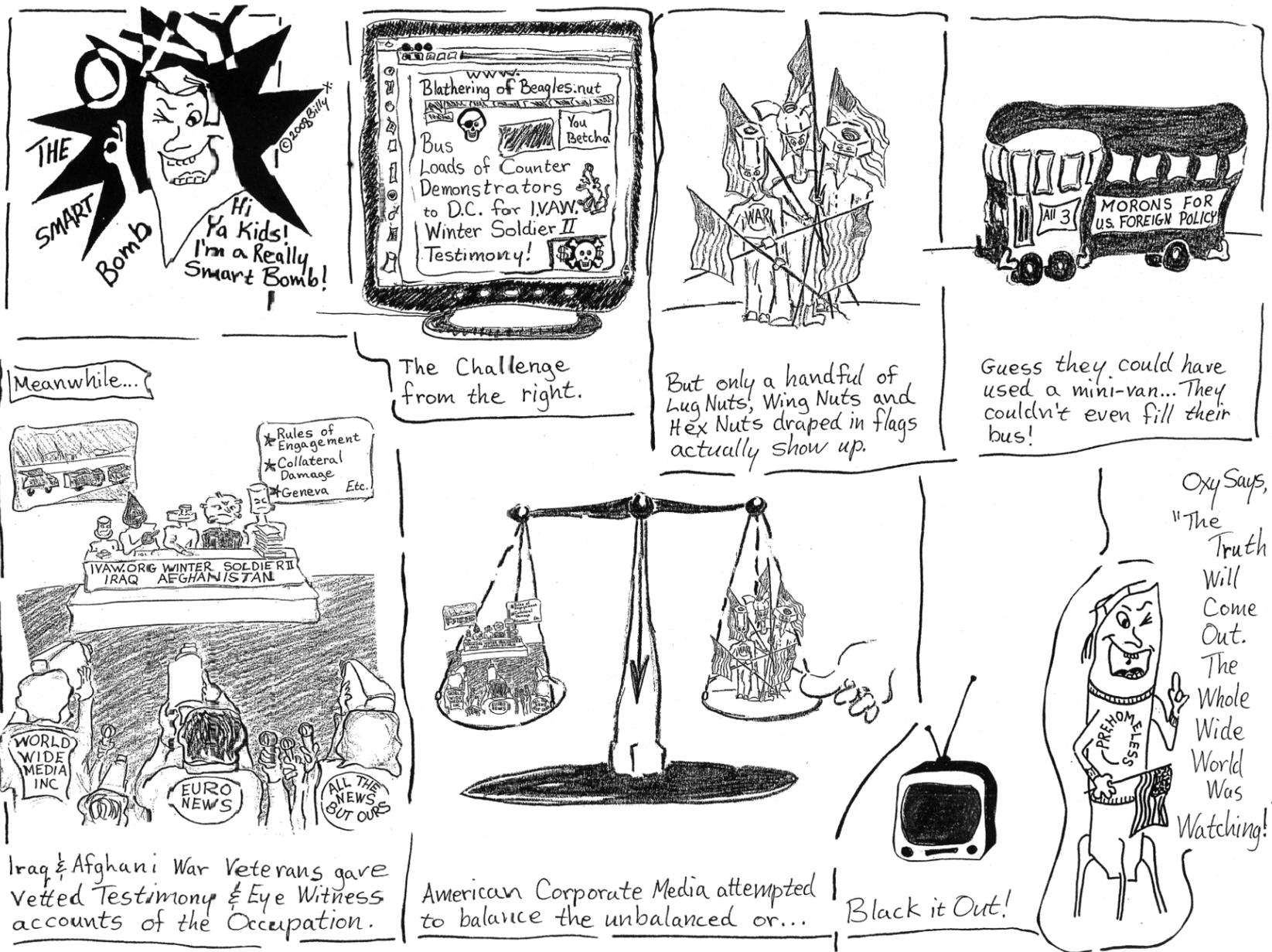
— Dennis Serdel
 VVAW Perry, Michigan



Ken Nielsen and Buzz Doyle checking in with the cops at the front gate



Cat Miller working on Winter Soldier housing



Send "Oxy" your ideas: billyx@ridge-runner.com

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Kelly Daugherty and Barry Romo at the Winter Soldier and the Legacy of GI Resistance panel

Interval

JOSEPH GIANNINI

Booby traps and mines were a deadly problem in Nam, as they are now in Iraq, where over 60 percent of our KIAs are caused by improvised explosive devices. The Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army had many types. They even booby-trapped our own dud artillery rounds, buried them and rigged a trip wire to a detonator installed in the nose. In Iraq the insurgents are also booby-trapping artillery rounds, remotely detonating them with cellphones. The VC also rigged landmines normally used to destroy tanks and trucks to explode when a person stepped on them.

Most Marines who set off a booby-trapped artillery round or landmine were killed or severely wounded. Some survived severed in half. On patrol we kept the interval: five meters between each Marine. An attempt to limit our casualties. In Nam we rarely had mine detectors. We cut bamboo branches into "walking sticks," which we used to prod the ground ahead as we went. Our walking sticks saved many lives—including mine

Quang Tri, South Vietnam February 3, 1968

Dark, just before dawn. Delta Company—three rifle platoons with attachments, boards 10 slicks lined up on the airstrip at

the Quang Tri combat base. I climb aboard and face forward in the open hatch. Brace my back against the bulkhead. Hang my right leg overboard. The slicks lift off. Cool air rushes over me. The sun rises behind as our formation flies west into a sea of foothills. Beyond them, dark green mountains shrouded in grey clouds and the Khe Sahn combat base, where 5,000 Marines are fighting 20,000 NVA. We chopper into the LZ without any incoming. Jump off the hovering slicks. Fan out to establish a perimeter. Still no enemy fire. We move out in a V-formation heading west: Delta One and Delta Three abreast followed by Delta Two. We hump through hills covered with low shrub. Mid-afternoon, my command, Delta Three, finds a hidden cache of 60 mortar rounds. Our combat engineers blow them up in place. The sun starts to set on the mountains to our west. We move onto high ground, to set up and dig in. The night passes without enemy activity, but our own Harassment and Interdiction artillery fire keeps us up all night. Next morning the sun is gone. Grey mist hugs the earth. Delta moves northwest through a steady drizzle. We're in a combat column. Delta One is on point. I follow with Delta Three. Delta Six, the Company Commander, is with Delta Two in the rear, out of sight.

Mid-morning. The drizzle has stopped. Delta One is moving onto the crest of a small hill. There is a village across a large stream to our left. I'm just starting up with my platoon. "Boom! Boom!" I duck. Freeze. A large piece of gray shrapnel spins by my left. I follow its flight, see several villagers running. Guilty knowledge taking flight. Delta One has hit two land mines. Screaming from the crest of the hill: "Corpsman up, Corpsman up!" I yell down the line to my Marines, "Stay in place. Face outboard. Could be an ambush." I can't see the crest and won't move up to take a look. Why take the chance of setting off other mines? My Radio Operator says Delta Six wants to speak to me. I take the radio handset. "Delta Six, Delta Three Actual Over." "Lieutenant, move up to Delta One immediately. Give me a situation report. Out." "Yes Sir, Delta Three Actual out." Fuck. Why can't Delta One Actual give a situation report? I tell my RO to stay put. I'll use Delta One's radio to call back. I start to ascend. I'm looking for hidden wires. Also for rocks and broken branches arranged in unnatural patterns. Looking down at each step I take. I slowly move up, reach the crest. The situation: to my right, seven Marines down with serious shrapnel wounds, mostly to the lower body. Delta One Actual, the platoon leader, is standing off to my left. He's facing away from me and his downed Marines. I approach him. "Rob." No response. He continues to face away. "Rob," I say again. Still no response. I reach with my left hand and grab his left shoulder. He turns to me. Tears streak down his burned, soiled face. "Joe, I can't do this anymore. I won't take them one more step." He falls to his knees, wraps his arms around my legs. Rests his head on my stomach. I put my left hand on his right shoulder. Hold him firmly. Bow my head. Tears crease my dirty face. His RO approaches to my right. "Delta Six wants to speak to Lieutenant Giannini." I raise Rob to his feet. Release my grip. Take the handset. "Delta Six this is Delta Three Actual. Over." "Lieutenant, what's going on up there? Over." "We're in a minefield. Seven seriously wounded. Over." "Lieutenant, what do you suggest? Over." "We can't go forward. Get slicks to lift

us out of here. Over." "I can't get slicks. Over." "Then we'll have to retrace our steps. We might walk into an ambush. Over." "Two medevacs are on the way. Let me know when the wounded are on board. Delta Six out." "Yes sir, Delta Three out." "Rob, get your men ready to load the wounded onto the medevacs. We're moving off this hill. Your platoon will be tail-end Charlie." He nods. Walks slowly into the midst of his downed Marines. I turn and move cautiously to the nearest wounded Marine. He's lying prone on his poncho. On a slight incline, his head tilted downhill. He's calm. The morphine has kicked in. I kneel down beside his right shoulder, facing his lower body. His jungle trousers have been mostly blown away. Each leg a color abstract. Burned, torn slabs of white gristle. Burned, torn slabs of red muscle. Burned, broken protruding bones. I say to myself, "This isn't real. Just plastic and rubber." An attempt to suppress my emotions. To control getting sick. "Marine, you'll be off this hill shortly. You're on your way back to The World." "Sir, can I have some water?" I look him over. Make sure he doesn't have any stomach or belly wounds, then remove my canteen and unscrew the top. He remains calm. His head is still tilted back. I slowly pour water between his slightly parted lips. "What's your name, Marine?" "Webb, sir, Corporal Webb." "Where you from, Webb?" "Ocean City, Maryland, sir." Whooping to our west. I look up. Two medevacs are approaching fast. "Green, the medevacs are coming in. Hold tight. We'll be moving you, O.K.?" "O.K. sir." The chopper swoops down to the hill. Hovers about three feet off the ground—trying not to set off other mines. We have to move. I suppress my fear. Webb is the furthest from the chopper. He'll be the last one out. Four men carry, then lift, four of the wounded Marines onto the waiting chopper. Rising fast, it is gone.



JOSEPH GIANNINI IS A FORMER MARINE GRUNT WHO FOUGHT IN 'NAM 1967-68 WITH THE 1ST BATTALION, 3RD MARINES. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE THE FIRST GULF WAR.

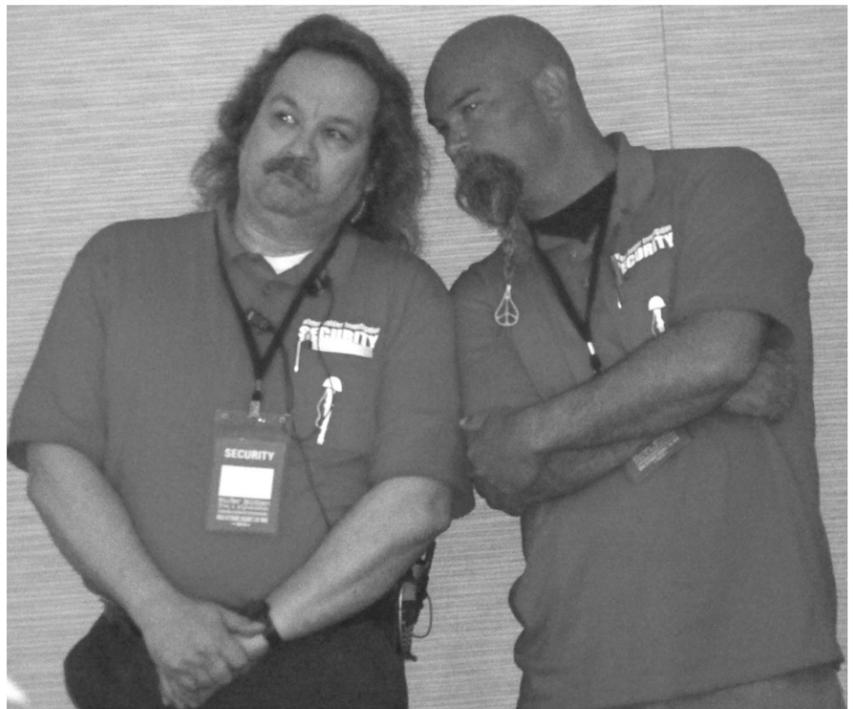
Inso-mania

I haven't slept in 3 days
I am tired
Closing my eyes does nothing for me
It gives me fear
Fear gives me rage
Rage makes my mind race
My racing mind keeps me awake
Staying awake drains my body
My drained body still produces energy
My energy makes me pace
Pacing tires my legs
My tired legs make me sit
Sitting makes my back sore
My sore back makes me lay down
Laying down makes me tired
Being tired helps me close my eyes
Closing my eyes does nothing for me

— Jon Turner, IVAW



Louis De Benedette and Marty Webster at Winter Soldier



Bruce Hyland and Mark Rutter at Winter Soldier



Wille Hager, Barry Romo and Jan Ruhman at Winter Soldier



Tom Morello performs at Winter Soldier



Amy Meyers, Zoe Curry and Meg Miner at Winter Soldier

Letter to Editor

Dear Editor:

I was in Vietnam with the 5th Marines in 1970 when the mass graves around Hue City were discovered. President Nixon and others denounced the Viet Cong/NVA for having killed and buried all those people during their brief occupation of Hue during the Tet Offensive of 1968. That remains the common belief of what happened.

The 5th Marines were involved in re-taking the city, and there were people with us in 1970

who were doing a second tour, etc. who had been part of that re-taking battle. They chuckled at how our government had once again turned reality on its head and had sold the world a pack of lies - that during their time holding Hue City the VC/NVA had no opportunity to create mass graves, and that, in fact, most of the mass graves were not in areas they controlled. What really happened was that, whether or not the VC/NVA ever had the time or opportunity to wander around looking for particular people to assassinate, a greater loss

of life undoubtedly occurred in the bitter street fighting involved in our side re-taking the city. It was a "take no prisoners" time when pretty much anything Vietnamese was fair game, and hand grenades were tossed in doorways before anyone poked their head in to see who, if anyone, was there. That result was an immense number of dead Vietnamese, some of whom were undoubtedly VC/NVA, but many of whom were undoubtedly civilians. What to do with all of those dead people? Mass graves, which only our side had the time

and wherewithal to create.

I would love to hear (here in *The Veteran*) from people who were there. What is the true story of the mass graves at Hue City?

Sincerely,
John Arnold

(Communications/Field Radio, 5th Marines, 1st MarDiv(Rein) out of An Hoa, Hill 37, LZ Baldy, Dec. 69-Nov. 70.)



Madelyn Moore: Rest In Peace

JIM DAVIS

I was present at the creation of the legend of VVAW, the week before Dewey Canyon III, when I joined Madelyn Moore in the DC VVAW Office. The office building was adjacent to the now well-known mall, which became the site of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall.

I was a member of the United Farm Workers union, led by Cesar Chavez. The UFW's New York office was located at Broadway and 27th streets, right around the corner from the VVAW National Office. The lettuce boycott was ending and the spring anti-war demonstrations were coming up, so I met with Al Hubbard and Scott Moore, as well as Madelyn, and joined VVAW.

Madelyn ran the national office in New York and took care of the logistics so that Al Hubbard, John Kerry, Mike Oliver, and other national VVAW officers could plan the demonstrations. She was in DC for Dewey Canyon III, in charge of setting up the office there. I spent some of my

time helping her, but as we got into the week of demonstrations, which preceded the week that all of the other anti-war groups were going to come to DC, I was mostly on the mall and involved in the activities.

Mike Oliver did a really smart thing when he sent a letter around to all the police precincts stating the VVAW did not come to DC to hassle "their brothers in uniform, the police, or to break any laws or engage in deliberate misconduct."

Later when Nixon's people tried to declare the occupation of the mall illegal and remove the vets, the police chief at the mall refused to enforce the court order. When asked about what he was going to do about the demonstrators—about a thousand vets milling about—he said, "What demonstrators? I don't see any demonstrators."

I particularly remember standing near the senate steps when everybody took turns throwing away their medals. Rusty

Tillman said, "We broke through! We finally broke through with this!" John Kerry was sitting on the grass with his girlfriend, later his wife. His head was down and he was crying. Ron Dellums, the African American congressman, said, "I guess I don't need these either," and threw away his medals from the Korean War.

But that week's events are too well known to recapitulate here.

I saw Madelyn back in New York at the VVAW office after the May Day demonstration where a group of us, including Al Hubbard, were arrested for "Operation Chickenshit" at the Pentagon.

She was still in charge of everything. After the exhilaration and success of Dewey Canyon III, her presence kept things under control. My areas of expertise were organizing demonstrations and fundraising. I worked with Al and Scott on the former and with Madelyn on the latter. When Scott left in the summer, I took over his desk, which was in the room with Al. Then when Madelyn left in the

fall I took over her office. I left the next year, 1972, to work on Bella Abzug's congressional campaign. I stayed active in electoral politics and was the Executive Director of the New York chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in 1976 and after that I left politics for good.

Then came the US war in Iraq. Since I've been fairly lucky in life, I send donations to Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), as well as VVAW. So I guess you could say, that in a way, I'm back where I started—being a fundraiser for VVAW, as well as for this group of younger vets.

I was really saddened to hear of Madelyn's death. She didn't seem that old at the time I remember her, and her spirit and goodwill made her seem that much younger. One of the few really good people you meet in your life.



You Really Would Have Liked Him

RENA KOPYSTENSKI

My husband and best friend, John Kopystanski, passed away in his sleep early Sunday, April 6th, 2008. I am so grateful to VVAW for allowing me to write my own thoughts about John, but this is going to be another side of the VVAW brotherhood; because this has nothing to do with war or a corrupt government. Of course it does have to do with the fact that they killed my husband in Vietnam in 1966 and then the inept and corrupt government finished the job in 2008.

John was a simple man who lived for his family. He wanted only the best for his wife and children but I can't remember him asking anything but the most meager things for himself. He was a very strong man who returned from NAM to become a paramedic and then a fireman in Newark, New Jersey, right at the time of the '69 riots but he braved the danger in order to help people and save lives. John was a humble man who loved football but could also watch movies like, his favorite, *The American President*, a million times. There was nothing that

Johnny Kopy wouldn't do to help out a fellow vet, from opening up our home when someone needed a roof, to giving jobs to those who needed work (even if his business didn't need anymore help). No one came to our home without being fed and encouraged. Over the past 40 years, John and I took in approximately 16 teenagers who were either throwaways or castoffs but we never took a dime from anyone to raise those boys because John's belief was "you can't teach a boy that he's worth anything if you're making a buck off his butt." That was how John lived his life and inspired me to live mine.

Over the years, vets from all over the world came to know my name, Rena Kopy, because of the stand I took and the work I did, but, the reality was always that John was the wind beneath my wings, or as he in his Jersey Polack way would say: "the hydro fan under your ass."

John had been very sick for a very long time and, as tough as I like to think I am, I lived in awe of how much pain he endured 24/7 but kept on keeping on. The last



thing that he did before becoming too sick to function was to buy a trailer and have it converted to a concession trailer in order to raise funds to help the guys and girls coming back from Georgie's War. There are a million words that I could write about the man that I was blessed to know and who knew me and loved me so much anyway, but space and time are

limited, so all I will say is that, if you knew Johnny Kopy, you were enriched by the friendship and if you never met him, boy, did you miss out. Rest in Peace my husband, my lover, my friend and inspiration, it's so lonely here without you.



Veterans' Survival Guide

AARON DAVIS (REVIEWER)

The Veterans' Survival Guide: How to File and Collect on VA Claims

By John D. Roche

(Potomac Books Inc, 2006)

Why do veterans have to fight the Veterans Administration for the benefits promised for serving their country? It is a large bureaucracy (1,400 hospitals, medical clinics, and vet centers; 250,000 employees) and is budget driven. So how do we, just average veterans, stand a chance of getting our VA Form 21-526 Application for Compensation and/or Pension approved at 100%? Become a veteran advocate or read *The Veterans' Survival Guide: How*

to File and Collect on VA Claims by John D. Roche. Every veteran activist, advocate and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) counselor should have a copy in their desk. John Roche worked for the VA as a Claims Specialist for three years. Roche documents the government's history of denying claims due to budget constraints from the Bonus March of 1932 to the present. His common sense approach to filing claims is easy reading, and necessary prior to commencing the claims process.

Roche says a veteran must "gather evidence that will substantiate the claim." Four facts must be established:

*That you were in active

service;

*That an injury or disease did occur on active duty and was not considered acute or transitory;

*You can show a direct link between the incident on active duty and current medical problems;

*And are currently suffering the residuals of this service-related medical problem.

After recommending vets to file an informal claim, he walks you through the Compensation and Pension Exam, a selection of VSO (AL, DAV, VFW), and most importantly, the notice of disagreement (NOD) and appeals.

This book is filled with references, helpful hints, and

information only your VSO and the VA know. It is a must-have. Roche also wrote *The Veteran's PTSD Handbook; How to File and Collect on Claims for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Potomac Books, 2007), which I highly recommend as a companion.



AARON DAVIS IS A VETERAN ACTIVIST, OUTREACH COUNSELOR AND COORDINATOR OF THE G.I. RIGHTS HOTLINE IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH. HE IS THE UTAH REGIONAL CONTACT FOR VVAW. HE SERVED AS A MARINE SERGEANT AND ARMY OFFICER.

The Dumbing Down of Redacted

KEN NIELSEN (REVIEWER)

Redacted

By Brian De Palma

(Film Farm, 2007)

Brian De Palma should be ashamed and embarrassed for making such a film. It insults all troops in the Middle East fighting for a lie, the storyline sucked, it was technically flawed in terms of its military jargon, and the acting was worse than a b-horror flick. He took the mostly unintentional and somewhat original quirks and flaws of other films (*Kids, Blair Witch Project,*

etc.) and used them as gimmicks to exploit viewers' emotions while attempting to explore a very serious incident in Iraq - the rape, killing and burning of a home and its inhabitants in 2006. These gimmicks undermine the extremely disturbing significance of the event.

This film is an outright insult to the soldiers serving and who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. It depicts soldiers as one-dimensional stereotypes and has no analysis of the causes of the war. Thus, the movie

comes off as completely out of tune with reality, aside from its beginning pseudo-documentary film style. Additionally, De Palma, supposedly a friend of the left, couldn't have given war hawks better ammunition to use against the anti-war movement than his portrayal of soldiers in such a weak and negative light.

My only hesitation in writing this short review of De Palma's piece of crap is that it might encourage readers to see for themselves how bad this film really is. Don't waste your time or

money. In my opinion, your time would be better spent watching grass grow or pounding your head with a hammer, and your money would be better spent by sending it to our brothers and sisters in IVAW.



KEN NIELSEN IS A CHICAGO MEMBER OF VVAW AND VFP, HE SERVED '91 - '93 IN THE 4TH BATTALION, 9TH INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION.



Day 2 of the Ruck March - IVAW Winter Soldiers pass 1777 Log Cabins of Original Winter Soldiers

Warning: Scott Camil Is Not A VVAW Member

Scott Camil, who is featured in the 1971 VVAW documentary, *Winter Soldier Investigation*, was unanimously kicked out of VVAW in 1973 for financial irregularities, to wit, he allegedly helped himself to \$100,000. People may remember that he was a member of the VVAW Gainesville conspiracy trial. He was supposed to report

to the VVAW National Steering Committee with the books, but he disappeared taking with him the books and the mailing list.

At the 1971 VVAW National Steering Committee Meeting in Kansas City, Camil suggested VVAW pull a "Phoenix Program" (a US assassination program that targeted opposition civilian

leaders) on the US Congress. Of course, this was voted down unanimously.

We didn't hear from him again until 2004 when former VVAW leader John Kerry ran for President. Camil showed up in Florida claiming he was heading up a Vets for Kerry group. Then, during that campaign, the Swift

Boat group used him to attack both Kerry and VVAW.

Now he has reappeared and we want to warn people to keep their hands on their wallets. Camil can appear charismatic, but most con men and thieves are charming.



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

Coming Home: A 40-Year Journey that Began in 1968

BILL CHRISTOFFERSON

My first set of dress blues, issued to me with only six months left on my enlistment, should have been a clue.

The Marine Corps didn't hand them out willy-nilly. Fresh from 17 months in Vietnam, mostly as a combat correspondent, I was going to end my military career behind a desk in Philadelphia, editing a monthly magazine, not to be a recruiter.

The blues were not to wear to the office. They were for funeral duty. I could not have imagined how often I would wear them during February of 1968, when the Tet offensive rocked everything we thought about the status of the war when I had come home a few months earlier.

As someone who was in country fairly early, in 1966-67, I joke now with the later arrivals that we were winning when I left, before they screwed it all up.

But we did think, in those days, that if we weren't winning we were certainly holding our own, and not just in body counts, but other measures like the number of villages listed as "pacified," or the miles of Highway 1 a convoy could travel with relative safety.

Those illusions were all blown sky high by the Tet offensive. As the newspapers reported on major battles in the I Corps, and I read about heavy

fighting in some of the "pacified" areas where I had been a few months earlier, it was clear we had been fooling ourselves.

Militarily, the US won the battle of Tet. But that was the beginning of when we lost the war. We clearly were not winning the battle for the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, and we never had been.

The year 1968 opened my eyes, changed my politics and, eventually, my life.

In April, just before my discharge, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. fell to an assassin. In June, another outspoken, charismatic opponent of the war, Robert F. Kennedy, was slain. In late August, as the editor of a small daily newspaper, I watched the Democratic Party self-destruct at its chaotic Chicago convention.

And sometime that summer, I got a call from a fellow ex-Marine combat correspondent, Mike McCusker, asking me to lend my name to a newspaper ad for an organization called Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I begged off, saying that as a newspaper editor I couldn't take that kind of stand, but had to remain objective.

I wasn't at all objective, of course. The Chicago convention was a time when you had to choose sides, and it was clear to me which

side I was on. I wasn't a VVAW member, and wouldn't be for many years. But I was a Vietnam veteran and I was against the war. I began to write about it in my columns, about a boot camp buddy I lost to a booby trap, about the continuing waste of lives, American and Vietnamese, in this lost cause.

I didn't hear again from McCusker, who was a VVAW organizer in the Northwest and testified at Winter Soldier in 1971. And I purposely didn't get in touch with any of the other Marine correspondents I'd served with in Vietnam. I did what I could, personally, for peace, but put Vietnam behind me, in a closed compartment in my cranium.

Twenty-five years after coming back to the States, I reconnected with many of those Marines when one of them tracked me down and invited me to a reunion. I went with more than a little ambivalence, but I went. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I had made in 25 years. The bond, the brotherhood, was still there. A couple of those guys are now the best friends I have.

They're not all anti-war. Whatever tension there is at our biennial get-togethers is usually a hawk-dove conversation that escalates. But the closest bonds these days are with those who share my politics and my revulsion

at the current debacle in Iraq.

It is the war in Iraq that finally brought me into the ranks of VVAW, ending the journey that began in 1968.

When I retired in late 2006 I decided to put my energy into a limited number of things that are important to me, and ending the Iraq war and occupation was at the top of the list. That led me to the January 2007 march in Washington against the war, and also led me to joining VVAW and Veterans For Peace. Two of my Vietnam buddies, from Texas and Pennsylvania, met me in DC, and we marched near the head of the column behind the VVAW banner.

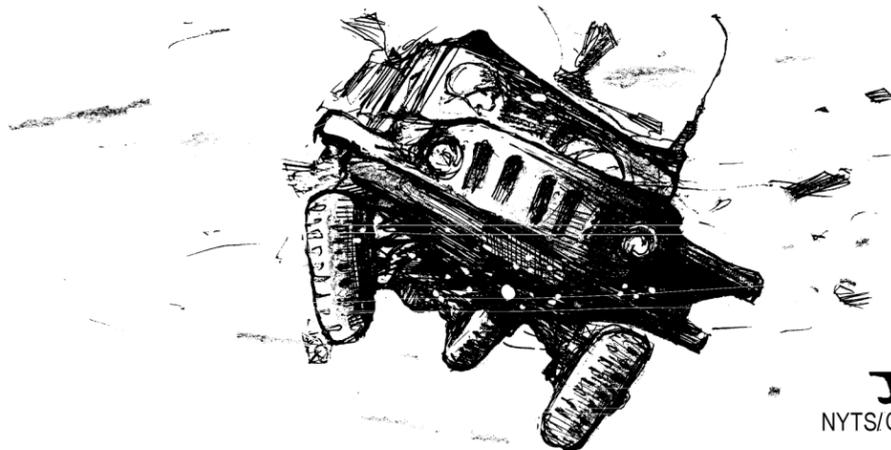
"Welcome home" has seemed like a cliché at times when I've been greeted that way by fellow vets. But marching with VVAW last year really did feel like coming home, even if it was almost 40 years late.



BILL CHRISTOFFERSON, A FORMER JOURNALIST AND LONGTIME POLITICAL CONSULTANT, NOW RETIRED, LIVES IN MILWAUKEE. HE IS A VOLUNTEER MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL IRAQ MORATORIUM COMMITTEE (WWW.IRAQMORATORIUM.ORG), WHICH URGES INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE ACTION ON THE THIRD FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH TO END THE WAR.

US Dead In Iraq, as of March 23, 2008

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DANZIGER
NYTS/CWS Mar 24 2008 (3544)