



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Still Dying from Agent Orange

BARRY ROMO

VVAW was the first veterans organization to bring up the horrible problem of agent orange poisoning. AO was one of a rainbow of dioxin laced defoliants. When we first brought it up in 1971 we didn't know it was affecting Vietnam vets. We did know that it was poisoning pregnant Vietnamese women and causing horrible birth defects. We

protested its use and the Nixon administration was forced to officially stop using it. More than 10 percent of the land in Vietnam was poisoned. In early 1978 VVAW learned through Maude De Victor, a Chicago VA worker, that dioxin based defoliant was also poisoning Vietnam vets.

VVAW was the first vets

group to bring up the question of American vets being poisoned with defoliants like Agent Orange. In 1978 we held a national investigation in Chicago into the damage done by dioxin based defoliants. We went on from there to explain the problem to the American people and joined a national lawsuit against the chemical companies

involved in dioxin production. Victims, veterans, scientists and others concerned came and testified. We also went to Washington several times starting in the 1980's to demand disability payments for the affected veterans and compensation for their families. We were praised by some professionals for doing a professional job of lobbying. The class action lawsuit got bigger as more and more veterans and their families signed on. The chemical companies hit back saying that dioxin wasn't a problem at all. Their press releases couldn't compete with the photos of children severely affected by this poison. In the mid 1980's the chemical companies offered a pretrial settlement of \$160 million. The lawyers, including our lawyers wanted to accept this, the veterans did not. VVAW members spoke against the settlement north, south, east and west. We were angry. We knew that this would not even come close to covering

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Agent Orange Demo protesting Dow, Los Angeles, April 18, 2010

Stop the Deportation of US Veterans

JAN A. RUHMAN

When I first heard of the deportation of veterans I said, "Bullshit, they don't deport veterans." After 62 years I should have known better. At first I became pissed off at yet another example of our government treating veterans like condoms, "use them once and throw them away." When I calmed down I took action.

If you had Googled "deportation of veterans, deporting US military veterans, banished veter-

ans" or any combination of words to describe this national disgrace in January of 2009 you would have found very little on this injustice. Since then we have, with the guidance and assistance of a dedicated immigration and criminal defense attorney, Heather Boxeth, who serves as lead council:

•Formed a National Banished Veterans Defense Committee and Clearing House in San Diego California.

•Drafted the proposed Amendment to the Law and Legal Rational.

•Created a Banished Veterans brochure with an outline of the issue, proposed change in law, a brief history and talking points.

•Created a letter for concerned citizens to send to the President of the United States and to the Director of Homeland Security requesting that they stay further deportation of former US military veterans

•Gave dozens of interviews to newspapers, radio and television.

•Spoke before the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the American Legion as well as numerous community groups in Southern California.

•Presented the issue to the Veterans For Peace National Convention in 2009 and put on a workshop with a panel that included a Vietnam era veteran and

member of VVAW, Louie Alvarez, who is facing deportation, a family member, Angelica Madrigal, our lead attorney, Heather Boxeth and me.

•Traveled to Washington DC, walked the halls of Congress and lobbied members of Congress.

•Lobbied Congressional Representatives in San Diego, Orange County and Pennsylvania.

•Presented the issue to the 2009 National Lawyers Guild Convention which adopted a resolution to form a National Banished Veterans Committee of the NLG to advocate for a change in the laws to make all veterans "US Nationals."

•Submitted a Resolution to the Democratic Caucus process in Colorado that is currently being shepherded through the system by Calixto Cabrera of VVAW.

•Met with all five members

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From the National Office

BARRY ROMO

In every book on VVAW, we get praised for understanding and using the media to get our point across.

VVAW has to isolate its enemies and gain as many friends as possible.

VVAW, with help from our friends, got PTSD recognized as a service connected disability. When we first came across this illness, we called it Post Vietnam Syndrome. We learned more and came to understand PTSD better as we helped more of our

members and other vets deal with its devastating symptoms. It was this work that led to its recognition. We didn't get it by burning flags or insulting our neighbors. We did it by explaining the problem and then moving forward with concrete solutions like disability payments and vets centers.

The same goes for Agent Orange poisoning. We publicized the problem, built a movement and got results even if they were limited.

It is our responsibility to

do that again with the upcoming comprehensive Agent Orange bill.

It vital that we help Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). We must support our brother and sister veterans by participating in their events and fundraisers.

Finally, it is important that we recognize three staff people who do outstanding work for all of us and who help make VVAW what it is. Ray Parrish helps vets win their benefits. Hans Buwalda gives psychiatric counseling and

intervention, literally saving lives. And last but not least, Jeff Machota puts out this paper, mails it to you, mails our fundraising letters, handles the web site and answers the mail. If they were paid by the hour we would be broke. They accept a salary now for things they were doing for free. These people truly embody our slogan, "fighting for veterans, peace and justice."



BARRY ROMO IS ONE OF THE VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATORS.



New York City VVAW, Veterans Day 2009

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Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Horace Coleman, Steve Crandall, Hans Buwalda, Mathieu Grandjean, Mike Kerber, Bill Perry, Aaron Hughes, Ann Bailey, John Zutz, Ben Chitty and others for contributing photos.

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Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

When the GIs came home from World War II there were ticker tape parades, kisses from unknown women and pats on the back all around. Then came a very solid GI Bill which rewarded these veterans with a middle class life. Not much was known about PTSD at the time and medical care was pretty basic, but in general, they were treated well.

Then came Korea and Vietnam and the general decline in respect for veterans and the ignoring of our problems. In the late seventies and in the eighties a movement to honor Vietnam veterans came into being. This has resulted in respect for the veterans of the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the kind of respect not seen since the welcoming of the World War II vets.

This change in attitude has resulted in a change in the social and political atmosphere. Now it could be possible to provide veterans with all the needed benefits, ranging from medical care to PTSD support to schooling. The ironic thing and the sad thing is that this positive atmosphere has come at a time when the economy has tanked, and the government will be trying to spend less on everything. So, while the political will to support vets is there, they'll still be telling the same excuses for why this or that benefit is impossible.

The government is good at pretending veterans' problems don't exist. Only recently did the government recognize that World War II Filipino veterans who fought for the US were to

receive reparations for the benefits promised them in 1944, only then to be denied. Think of how many died off and how much the government saved from that. Reminds you of the denial of Agent Orange benefits for so many years.

This situation brings to mind the Civil Rights era in the sixties. African-Americans fought to gain civil and political rights. They then moved into the area of economic rights, working to end job discrimination and creating an opportunity to move into the middle class. Then in the seventies good jobs started to disappear, and real wages started to decline. So just about the time the door was opened, there wasn't much behind it.

The door for veterans is now open, but there is little behind it. Money is short. There won't be government money for many things. So-called discretionary spending will likely be inadequate across the board, and this will negatively affect what's needed for vets.

The reasons for the lack of money for needed social programs include spending too much money by the Defense Department, fighting unnecessary wars, tax cuts for the wealthy and bank bailouts. Change some of these things and you might secure better benefits if only in the short term. Such changes, however, do not seem forthcoming. They'd rather choose inadequate and unfair solutions such as cutting Social Security or Medicare.

The larger picture is also bleak. Our bubble economy burst,

and there is no bubble in the forecast. Not that it would help. What is needed are all the jobs that have been lost. Over the last couple of decades our nation's wealth has been increasingly invested in financial markets as opposed to the manufacturing area where it would have ensured jobs. This has meant the disappearance of good paying jobs and the movement of jobs out of the country - all leading to a reduction in the tax base.

It now looks like unemployment figures of 5 or 6% (official) and 9-10% (unofficial) are a thing of the past. Now the best figures we'll probably see are something like 9% (official) and 17-18% (unofficial). This country's economic gurus and upper class pirates let it all go. I'm no economist or historian, but my best guess is that no country in history has willingly shed so many jobs and good jobs as has the USA. None dare call it treason.

If one thinks in terms of what is the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens, we seem to be moving in the opposite direction. The wealthy are separating themselves off from the rest. Indeed, economic reports suggest the recession ended last quarter. There was only one glitch. Jobs were missing. Mortgages couldn't be paid. Homes were lost. And last year the number of millionaires went up 16%. At least some Americans can receive the best health care money can buy. Jobs for the little people? Let them eat Twinkies.

Both parties are complicit in this decline which is why we're

seeing the development of things like the Tea Party. It's good that people are on the move. Unfortunately this populism is of the right wing kind. I suppose the Left is still waiting for the Democrats to bail us out. I hope Obama can develop millions of green jobs, but best guess is that even if he gets it started it won't make a big enough dent.

And veterans again have to suck it up. Money for veteran's needs is being spent in Iraq and Afghanistan where ironically more veteran's problems are being created because of those wars. As usual vets get screwed by these political decisions.

So now the hopey, changey thing is in the hands of people who believe 9-11 was a government conspiracy and Barack Obama is a Muslim Maoist born in Kenya. Pretty soon we'll be hearing that they made an alliance with the black helicopter people.

During hard times, many people seem to gravitate toward the easy solutions. It's the illegal immigrants. It's Big Government spending. It's the Chinese. Really it's class warfare. The wealthy are winning and will continue to win until there comes the kind of involvement seen in the 1930s and the 1960s.



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

Days of Decision and I Refuse Now Available as Kindle eBooks

VVAW member Jerry Gioglio announces that two highly acclaimed titles on the Vietnam-era peace movement are now available as eBooks; *Days of Decision: An Oral History of Conscientious Objectors In The Military During The Vietnam War*, by Gerald R. Gioglio, and *I Refuse: Memories of A Vietnam War Objector*, by Donald L. Simons.

The *Days of Decision* Kindle Edition features the peace and war stories of 24 soldiers, sailors and airmen. Some went to Vietnam

as noncombatant combat medics. Some went to prison for standing up for their beliefs. Some were discharged for war resistance and their conscientious objection to the war. *Days of Decision* resonates with Vietnam veterans. It provided inspiration to anti-war GIs during Operation Desert Storm and it continues to speak to military men and women struggling with issues of conscience. This title was honored with a Booklist starred review.

The *I Refuse* Kindle Edition is also set against the backdrop

of the Vietnam War. It details the author's attempts to be true to his conscience and to obtain justice from the Selective Service System and the courts. According to Gioglio, who edited the work, "This is an excellent title for Vietnam era historians, peace activists and those seeking to understand the experiences of average young men struggling with issues of conscience. The focus here is on the civilian experience, however, active duty military personnel considering conscientious objection will also

find it an inspiration and a help."

Kindle eBooks are compatible with Apps for BlackBerry, Mac, iPad and iPhone. Both titles can be ordered online from Amazon.com or in print and eBook editions from GRGbookseller at:

<http://grgbookseller-brokenriflepress.books.officelive.com/BrokenRiflePressTitles.aspx>



Notes From the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

During the last weekend in February, the Campus Anti-War Network held its annual convention twenty-five miles north of my little Boonies hideout, at the University of Illinois at Urbana. I am ashamed to say that I had never heard of the Campus Anti-War Network. On the other hand, I routinely speak to Tuscola citizens who, from all appearances, do not appear to have heard of our current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Or if they have any knowledge of them, those far-off occurrences do not register prominently upon their radar screens. In fairness to my Tuscola friends, I would suggest that this is a nation-wide affliction. If your kid isn't over there, and your taxes aren't going up to pay for it, why the hell should you care?

We'll let that one speak for itself. Anyway, Joe Miller e-mailed me a week before the event, for what I assumed was to suggest that I may wish to attend. Upon further reading of his communication, it became apparent that he wished me to sub for him as a presenter, as part of a panel discussion to include a VVAW member and two IVAW vets. Let's break this down a little.

At the risk of seeming self-deprecating, this did not appear to be a good fit. Joe has a PhD in political science; I took nine years to get a Bachelor's degree. I try to read some books about Vietnam; Joe teaches a college course on the subject. I don't speak much good English; Joe speaks fluent Chinese and three other languages I have never heard of. What's wrong with this equation?

Well, I guess you do what you have to do. I showed up, shared the stage for an hour with Jake and Duane, and had a great time. I hope

that I had something meaningful to say to these really fired-up young men and women. The last thing I wished to do was to come off as another old guy telling war stories about something that ended fifteen years before they were born.

Borrowing a term that was almost iconic in the 70's, I hoped to make my presentation "relevant," i.e., to suggest some connection between Vietnam and our current Middle East involvements. OK, lying Presidents and cowardly legislators kind of jumped off of the page, so I dismissed those as too obvious. I decided to talk about relations between the troops "on the ground" (I really hate that term) and what we may refer to as the "indigenous populations." I suggested that, in some circumstances, appearances may have been wildly deceiving.

While I am painting with a pretty broad brush here, it may be fair to suggest that in Vietnam, the troops stationed in rear echelon areas (base camps) experienced a wholly different relationship with the Vietnamese than did those serving in forward areas. To be real blunt, almost the only Vietnamese with whom the former dealt were the bartenders, drug dealers and women whom they paid for sex. Please note that I did not call them prostitutes. They were girls doing what they had to do to survive in a world which we had turned upside down upon them (and their parents), and we were reluctant to deny them the opportunity to do that. As may be expected, all of these Vietnamese never missed an opportunity to tell us how much they appreciated our leaving our warm homes in America to rescue them from Ho and those Godless bastards trying to enslave them.

The common expression was "GI number one, VC number ten." I guess that it never occurred to us that we were paying them to be nice to us.

Out in the field, I suggested, things were different. A lot different. We did not deal with many civilians, and the few with whom we dealt didn't spend a lot of time schmoozing us. To be honest, we pretty much hated them, and they returned the favor. First of all, we blamed them for our being there. I guess it never crossed our minds to blame Nixon or LBJ or JFK, because, well, they weren't there. But mama-son and papa-son sure as hell were. And that wasn't the biggest reason we hated them. Look at them for God's sake, I pointed out. They just looked suspicious. They spoke this funny-sounding gibberish language, and we suspected that when they did talk they were saying bad things about us. (I'm sure they were.) They didn't love Jesus either; strike two. Finally, well, as I said, they were there.

Let's flash forward to 2010, Iraq and Afghanistan, places to which I readily confessed to the students I had never been and about which I knew little. But there may similarities looming here: lots of people with swarthy skins who disdained to speak the King's English and – wouldn't you know it? – didn't love Jesus either. What could possibly be to like about these people? And what may be the final component linking Vietnam and 2010? Maybe it's just us.

I suggested that, with all due respect to our troops serving in the Middle East, many of them are post-adolescent, maturing young men and women, some of whom

may plausibly be as ignorant (I do not mean this in a disparaging way) as I was in 1968. And they may be, to use a legal term, scared shitless. Unlike me and Joe and Barry, and the rest of us really old guys, they are denied the luxury of sitting around with a scotch and a cigar like William Shatner and James Spader at the end of Boston Legal, pontificating upon the sins of their youths. They are There. God love every darned one of them, and we hope that they return safely. And if they do, what have they left behind?

Based entirely upon my experiences with the 3/5th Armored Cavalry, 9th Infantry Division, Republic of South Vietnam – about a week of which I spent being schmoozed in base camp by bartenders and all those other indigenous people – I cannot imagine that there is going to be a lot of winning hearts and minds in Kabul or Baghdad or any of those other places I can't pronounce. I hope that I may have suggested why not. Finally, I guess that I'm reminded of the line from Bob Dylan's "Frankie Lee and Judas Priest," circa 1968. "The moral of this story, the moral of this song, is that one should never be where one does not belong."

If Bobby Zimmerman said it, you can take it to the bank.



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.



Chuck "Mutt" Winant of VVAW riding his hog in the San Diego Veterans Day parade, 2009

Never Give Up and Don't Back Down!

STEVE CRANDALL

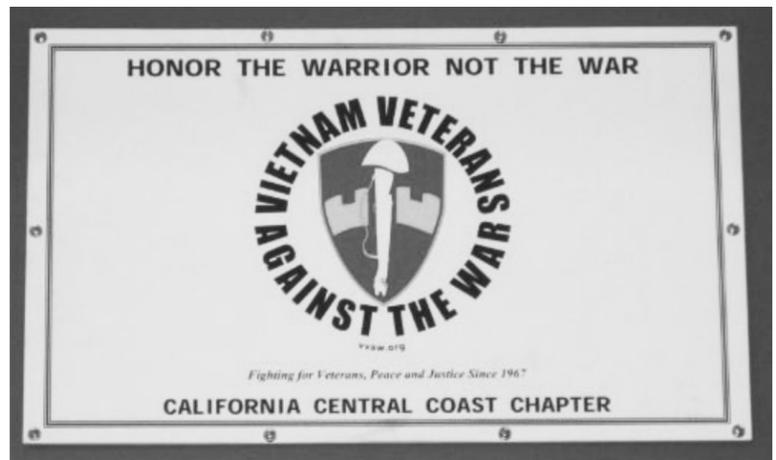
If the economy hadn't taken a downturn we would have had one more opportunity in 2009 to raise public awareness of our veterans needs, putting an end to unjust wars and raising funds for our chapter. But due to the continued recession and lack of city funds, the Ventura City Christmas Street Fair was canceled. So in the VVAW tradition of not giving up we put our heads together and decided to turn our annual poinsettia "request for donations campaign" into something different. The idea was simple. Since the poinsettia is a flower that only blooms in the winter it became the Winter Soldier Poinsettia. In 2008 we only requested donations from individuals but in 2009 we decided to take our idea one step further. We decided to request donations from local establishments as well as from individuals. We placed a thank you card on a long stem card holder in each poinsettia plant which boldly announced that these poinsettias were from the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. We knew the poinsettias would be displayed but we figured the cards would be tossed. To our surprise

every business not only displayed the poinsettias in prominent areas of their establishment but the cards remained in place for all to see.

Our next challenge for the year was to get our VVAW Chapter banner displayed at the new California Veterans Home. Throughout the year we managed to collect over 1,200 books, 400 cds and 200 vhs movies for their library but were we and our efforts really going to be recognized along with DAV, VFW, AL and all the other well established veterans groups?

The answer is HELL YES! The CA VA management was not only supportive of our efforts but displayed our chapter banner right above the pull down projection screen while all the other veterans group banners were located in much less conspicuous places throughout the room.

Enter 2010 – our chapter talked about plotting out our events for the year and what we can do to top 2009. I called Jan Ruhman, VVAW San Diego, to see what they had going on and we talked about the philosophy of the VVAW West Coast Tour to



network and join forces with other likeminded groups. Jan mentioned that VFP was considering moving last year's regional conference that took place in Oceanside up the coast to the Ventura area but that Ventura VFP needed some help. Timing is everything. Why not take the lead, in a collaborative effort, to create a larger conference. With the help of VFP we called others to join forces for this conference. VVAW, VFP, MFSO, IVAW and Gold Star Families Speak Out came together to co-sponsor an event called the CA Regional Conference of Veterans and Military Families. So far we have nearly one-hundred participants in the workshops and hope to draw

another two-hundred attendees to the public speaking event.

These are all challenges that at one time or another we wondered if we could accomplish successfully. But we continued to keep in mind in the 43 year, time-aged tradition of VVAW, **We Never Gave Up! and We Never Backed Down!**



STEVE CRANDALL IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE CALIFORNIA CENTRAL COAST CHAPTER OF VVAW.

The War Racket

MIKE BURKE

Start with a book published 75 years ago, by a two-star Marine general holding two Medals of Honor, add an original member of Chicago's 1970's Black Panther Party, a handful of "jail-hardened" but still sweet Atlanta Grandmothers for Peace, four VVAW members and a street-savvy trio of anti-war poets and what have you got?

You have some of the main

ingredients that went into a free afternoon workshop on March 27 at Atlanta Friends Meeting House in Decatur, Georgia. Presented by Free Afternoon Workshop Productions, the 4-hour program produced a now whittled-down 110-minute version that is being edited for an upcoming program on June 26. From there *The War Racket* will be further edited,

detailed and polished to near perfection, while it's transformed into a streamlined 70-minute synopsis of Smedley D. Butler's biting 1935 book, *War Is A Racket* -set for widespread presentation to teachers, taxpayers and taxi drivers alike--available live and on dvd.

This 2010 version of a highly decorated Marine's 1935 indictment of the war industry, going back to World War I, is an incredible awakening process, even before an audience of non-shrinking anti-war choir members. What reactions do you suppose will come from audiences comprised of PTA groups, board of education members, clergy and elected officials, parents, grandparents, students and even military recruiters?

The War Racket is a powerfully informative and educational work made possible by Free Afternoon Workshop Productions, under the wings of such organizations as Amer-

ican Friends Service Committee, Atlanta Friends Meeting, Veterans for Truth in Military Recruiting comprised of members and friends of VVAW, VVA, VFP, IVAW, IVAW and other organizations and individuals throughout Georgia's social justice community.

War Racket workshop doors are open at no cost to guests who would like to consider adapting localized versions or similar workshop-theater projects in their own locales. Invited guests are able to attend and record or film *War Racket* workshops without cost--there is no cost attached to participating in Free Afternoon workshops other than travel and self-sustenance. Look for follow-up reporting in upcoming issues of *The Veteran*.



MIKE BURKE IS THE VVAW ATLANTA CONTACT. FOR MORE INFORMATION GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM AT VETERANSFORTRUTH@YAHOO.COM OR 678-517-6790.



Because They Were Happy and Free by Mark Lipman.

California Regional Conference of Veterans and Military Families

STEVE AND CAROLYN CRANDALL

Ventura, CA - April 16-18, 2010

It was over a year ago when the VVAW West Coast Tour came to our home in Camarillo, CA. From this tour came the spark to create a gathering of like minded groups that support veterans and want to put an end to war. Enter 2010 and you will understand how we took this spark and made it grow.

The conference was held April 16th-18th. We had VVAW members come from Florida and Colorado to participate in the workshops as well as VFP members from Texas. We were honored to have visitors and workshop participants from Vietnam representing the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign. Our younger brothers from IVAW came from as far north as San Francisco along with members of VFP and MFSO. VVAW, VFP and MFSO came from as far south as San Diego and stretched inland as far east as Palm Springs to bring in members of VFP. Locally we were represented by all participating groups and then some. You couldn't ask for a much better California geographical representation of like minded groups that want to support veterans and put an end to wars.

We kicked off the event Friday evening with a social meet and greet. We listened to tunes from Annie and the Vets then later blues from a local singer and song writer Teresa Russell.

During Saturday's 7:30am breakfast Capt. Paul Chappell led the conference opener with *Development Strategy and Actions Towards Peace – Why Peace is*

Possible and How to Achieve It. After breakfast we heard National Organizational Campaign updates, learned about Banished Veterans and how our voices can be heard and ways to link through VetSpeak.

We posed for a group picture prior to starting the workshops and as the day went on, more and more people arrived to bring our final headcount to 130. Some of the groups tabled and displayed brochures and sold t-shirts,

dvds, caps, buttons and bumper stickers.

The first of nine workshops started at 10:00am. Because we only had one day for the workshops some of them had to compete with each other for the hour long time slots. We considered adding another day but were concerned that having a four day conference might be problematic for most attendees due to work schedules and the cost of lodging.

We put the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign together with Depleted Uranium into one workshop. It only seemed fitting since DU is the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans

Agent Orange. Again, like Agent Orange in the beginning, the government is denying that there is any real proof or concern that DU presents a hazard to our GI's health.

Jeff Paterson presented the *Courage to Resist* workshop. Jeff was brought to tears as he played a cell phone message from Marc Hall, received that morning. Marc was released of all charges and will be discharged immediately. Marc was jailed back in December for

book, hosted by Jeff Merrick and Marshall Blesofsky.

After lunch we continued the workshops with *Membership Expansion and Fundraising* by Doug Zachary of VFP. *War's Hidden Wounds, Effects of PTSD on Troops and Families* by Dr. Judith Broder and *Informed Enlistment Strategies* by Peter Dudar, Sally Marr, Arlene Inouye and Michael Cervantes.

On Saturday evening, we hosted an event that was open to the public featuring the following speakers: *Sexual Assault in the Military* by Col. Ann Wright; *Empire vs. Veterans: Who Pays and Who Benefits from Global Wars* by Dr. Michael Parenti; and *Rules of Disengagement* by Professor Marjorie Cohn.

Sunday morning a breakfast was held to wrap up the three-day event and to discuss what we got out of the conference, what went right and what improvements could be implemented for the next conference. We hugged, shook hands and congratulated each other on an event that we believe accomplished our goal of bringing together veterans and veterans' families to listen, learn and take back information to share with others who were not able to attend. In the words of VVAW and VFP member George Johnson, we got a 97% rating and this was after George realized we just ran out of coffee.



CAROLYN AND STEVE CRANDALL ARE MEMBERS OF THE CALIFORNIA CENTRAL COAST CHAPTER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

From this tour came the spark to create a gathering of like minded groups that support veterans and want to put an end to war.

writing a song about the personal impact of being forced to remain in the military beyond his contract date due to stop-loss.

Also sharing the 10:00 time slot was the workshop about *Rethinking Afghanistan* hosted by Jeff Merrick of Orange County MFSO.

The three workshops sharing the 11:00 time slot were *Sexual Assault in the Military* by Ann Wright, who later gave an evening presentation to the public regarding the same subject. *Homeless Veterans* workshop by Maurice Martin and Lane Anderson and a *Media* workshop on how to put your news on You Tube and Face



photo by Mathieu Grandjean

Teaching Vietnam with the Class of 2012

JANET CURRY

Those of us working in classrooms are becoming aware that a generational page is turning again. Students now in the midst of their 10th grade year remember 9-11, but almost from beneath the usual level of consciousness, a foggy dread with a (somehow) flash point label. The killings at Virginia Tech might resonate with their periodic lock down drills, but recede in relation to Haiti and earthquake preparedness. At the Midwestern affluent suburban and voluntarily bus-desegregated public high school where I teach, Darfur was a cause taken up by older siblings and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are entirely misunderstood. Not only the Russian

Revolution but the Soviet Union itself must be explained from scratch. The Cold War, typically taught as ending around 1990, apparently involved a protracted conflict between their home superpower and a group of pitiable countries scattered through Eastern Europe, South East Asia and Latin America, as if these latter had stubbornly insisted on hiring a cheap tutor and wound up with predictably substandard ACT scores. Marxism-Leninism, socialism, communism become synonyms for dictatorship. The capitalist business cycle is described over US history, but not comparatively analyzed. While most social studies curricula now make room for Vietnam within their 20th century coverage, the story tends to trail off somewhere around the US prediction of a bloodbath upon our 1975 departure. Vietnam's current low GDP, if mentioned, registers as a confirmation of its continued, willful cluelessness as it shuffles toward the free market.

With the Vietnam War increasingly a war of their grandparent's era, this is a generation that needs VVAW as a resource as much or more than any other so far, to help them analyze the instigation and the nature of the unfinished business between these two countries.

At my high school, the social studies department presents an an-

nual day long, in-school field-trip known as Vietnam Day for the 10th grade. Outside academic and veteran speakers are invited and faculty from several disciplines join them in offering around 30 period-long session choices on a variety of topics. This year VVAW national coordinator Barry Romo covered two sessions on Vietnam and political activism. I prepared one on the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and one on Vietnam since 1975.

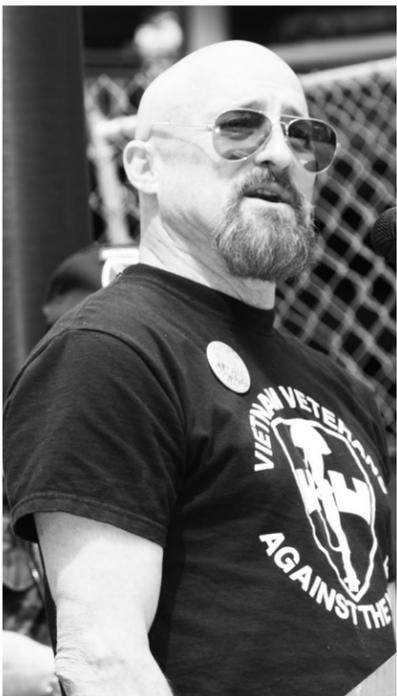
The opening session was given by an Air Cav vet, in Vietnam during Tet, whose story of white against black racism within US ranks referred to Vietnam only as a backdrop. Romo brought his students right into the heart of the war machine and up very close to interactions with the Vietnamese. He carefully traced his enlistment, the church and military's dehumanizing teachings, and how it felt to kill someone. He mentioned his Bronze Star for valor, complete with the friendly fire details left off the official citation. He talked about his nephew's Project 100,000 recruitment and eventual death in Vietnam. Romo also laid out how it was to try to return to civilian life, un-spat upon and in fact taken in by anti-war students who were drawn to arguing out positions with him. He detailed how he linked up with VVAW. He gave some history of VVAW,

citing how they put together the personal and demographic pieces of PTSD; the hardscrabble and long haul fight to advocate for PTSD and Agent Orange recognition, compensation and treatment; the coalition work with SCLC, NAACP, International Tenants Association; can-canning on the Supreme Court steps; and how it was to commit to the organized activism that became the decades-long prerequisite for the Obama presidency.

During Q&A, students asked more about biographical narrative than wider issues, more about war stories and favorite weapons. Then came the questions that transformed the room: how is it to speak about the war and what is it like to have PTSD? Romo let them know it helps to speak the truth of it to power and to them. What they heard was that they are needed, as more than just listeners in a class, but as holders of truth, as emotional and/or political participants - right when they thought they were getting away with sliding straight into spring break. I know these students and you could see their eyes and postures shift to deal with the world becoming larger and more interesting. Dang



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



Getting the Word Out

MIKE KERBER

Vietnam was an unnecessary war and as veterans, it is our role to tell people. Recently, I have had the opportunity to work with our local historical museum that provides speakers to high school classes in our community of Bloomington/Normal, Illinois. This is a perfect opportunity to show the high school students where Vietnam is, show some pictures of where I was in the Ashau Valley, some artillery fire bases and some shots of life in the mud of a fire base.

Mostly it gives me a chance to talk about the political climate that led to such a useless war, why it lasted so long and how Vietnam went back to doing what they wanted to do before the war. The statistics on the number of soldiers killed and wounded on both sides, citizens killed, the number of women that turned to prostitution to survive and the

suicides committed by US soldiers that followed the war always get their attention.

These talks also give me a chance to relate the Vietnam War to Iraq and Afghanistan. The students can relate to them because they may know someone that has served. Vietnam may be ancient history to them. I am probably ancient in their eyes also.

The question and answer parts go well if the teacher has planted some questions with the students. If not you have to be ready to ask them some questions about what they know about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the politics surrounding them. I once heard a vet talking to students about Iraq and one student said he believed that the war was necessary. The vet then challenged him to go sign up for the Army and ask to be sent there if he really

believed in the cause.

If this is something that sounds like what you as a Vietnam Vet would want to do, try calling your local high school or historical

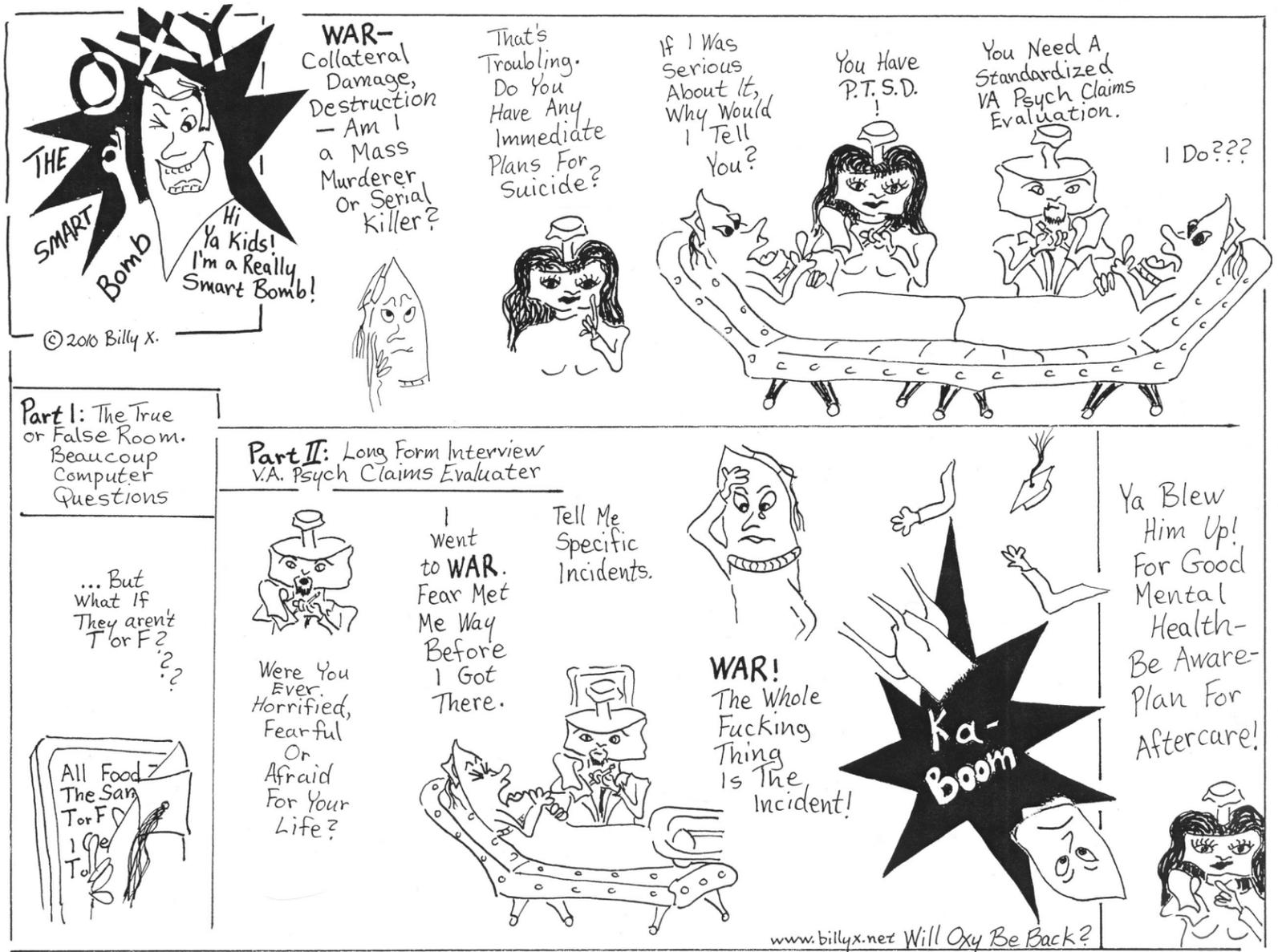


museum. They are usually looking for someone who has firsthand experience to talk to students. The teachers welcome it because they get a break.

I love to do it because it gives me great satisfaction to maybe have planted a seed in the young minds of high school students that not every war is necessary. If just one of them learns to question their government leaders and make their voices heard then I feel that I have done something to keep another Vietnam from happening.



MIKE KERBER IS A VIETNAM VET. HE SERVED IN THE 101ST DIV. 2/319TH ARTY 'NAM 69-70.



Regards, Marc Speaks Out

MARC LEVY

Anyone can say they were in Vietnam. Anyone can say I was a medic humping the boonies, did two, three tours, got shot at, plugged guys with bandages and morphine to ease the pain. Anyone can say they were in Vietnam. But not me. I'd never do that. I'm the genuine article. The real deal. I have the papers and medals to prove it.

At a warehouse in Secaucus, NJ surrounded by electrified chain linked fence, armed guards with six legged pit bulls who speak in tongues guard over my hundred thousand medals of honor. On Tuesdays I charge three dollars for the radical walking tour.

I've been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross so many times the Army sent me a telegram in 1978: SIR, PLEASE BE ADVISED WE HAVE RUN

OUT OF SHEET METAL AND RIBBON FABRIC. THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF HAVE COMMISSIONED A TEAM TO SCULPT YOUR LIKENESS ON MT. RUSHMORE. CONGRATULATIONS AND GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Silver Star is the third highest decoration for gallantry in combat. I keep all 2,000 one for every citizen in Dentville, Wisconsin in six hundred solid oak treasure chests. When the moon is full, I lift the lid of one such chest, sink my hand deep into the glistening pile, hurl them high with all my strength. When the tinkling stars shower down, winking, it reminds me of the Milky Way.

Do not doubt me. You have my word all this is terribly true.

I was no ordinary medic during those dim days of yesteryear. No, sir. No, mam.

I performed brain surgery in the dark, twelve men at a time without benefit of anesthetic to obtain the element of surprise. I called in B-52 strikes using my sinus cavities to broadcast outgoing signals. I was born in a bomb crater on the third of July.

In my pack I carried entire battalions of tanks and cannons. The blades of helicopters poked out from beneath my helmet. Snagged on clouds, slowed me down. I fired my M-16 eighty two trillion times. It never once jammed or malfunctioned.

I dug five hundred million foxholes. I ate nine billion cans of C-rations. I drank thirty nine hundred million gallons of water. I defecated six hundred sixty six

million metric tons of highly enriched government issued poo. A not immodest sum don't you think?

Anyone can say they were in Vietnam. But I'm the real deal, the genuine article. I have the papers and medals to prove it. You meet me 2:30 in the afternoon in Secaucus, NJ I'll give you the tour. But those under eighteen will not be admitted.



MARC LEVY SERVED WITH DELTA 1/7 CAV '70 AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC. HE CAN BE REACHED AT SILVERSPARTAN@GMAIL.COM. ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN WILL WORK FOR PEACE, ZERO PANIK PRESS, EDITED BY BRET AXEL, 1999.

Survivors Guilt: A Life of Atonement?

GREGORY ROSS

When I first met my wife, the woman who married me, as opposed to the woman I refer to as my "first wife," who didn't marry me, not just because I didn't ask. It was the early 1970's; marriage was out of vogue and I was stoned all the time. But, I digress: when I first met my wife in November, 1975 I had a white canvas backpack that I carried everywhere. I got it when I moved to California and used it as a billboard for all the things I wanted to say to the world. Some of the information I remember putting on it was the amount of lives and money the war cost and two phrases: "How Many Vietnamese Died In Our Civil War?" and "Working Class America: 100,000 die each year in work related accidents, injuries and diseases. 58,000 died in the War." There was more on the Billboard Back Pack but those are all I remember.

Upon first meeting my not yet wife's parents, I was marginally employed and in her parents estimation the latest mistake she was making in regards to men. Her first husband turned out to be a disappointment to them. Now she was taking up with a long haired crazy veteran freak who always wore a Vietnam Veterans Against The War pin

and that embarrassing Billboard Back Pack. Eventually I won her mother over but her father and I were locked into the "useless, no good, boy friend/father protecting his rebellious daughter" scenario. Even when we got married he died before he and I could finish the work we had started of getting out of the stereotypical "father-in-law/son-in-law" hostile roles. Though her mother accepted that I was going to be a part of their lives and even began to like me, she couldn't understand why I had to carry that Billboard Back Pack everywhere. Truthfully, I didn't totally understand the reason then either; it just felt wrong to be without that visible statement at all times.

The first few years with my wife, who wasn't my wife yet, was one of the most emotionally active periods of my life. I had met the woman whose love I was convinced would save me. I worked Child Care which involved relating to a large group of 5 to 9 year olds. I was part of a group of men called Men Against Sexist Violence[MASV], learning from and working in conjunction with San Francisco Women Against Rape[SFWAR]. We did outreach in schools to offer boys another view of relationships

and the committee I worked with did counseling with Significant Others of rape or sexual trauma victims. I also worked with the War Resisters League[WRL]. A man in MASV once pointed to my Billboard Back Pack and said, "That is a heavy load to carry." I replied, "Not as heavy as when I don't carry it." A revelation to me, the first acknowledgment of "Survivors Guilt."

Eventually, with the exception of my wife, who married me anyway; it all imploded. I would break down crying at work when boys insisted on playing "War Games." The relief on my boss's face when I quit confirmed my guess that she was struggling with my continued employment. MASV self destructed when the Socialist, Communist and "Feminist Male" factions endlessly argued over the "Primary Contradiction: Classism versus Sexism" and polemics ground the group down. I am still friends with a few of the original founders but we are scattered all over Northern California. I left WRL as our small group was successfully taking on recruiters in the schools. I left because I brought up that as we got more successful we needed to be more careful. This was after all the age of Co-Intelpro. The other two

working class members agreed but the middle class people thought we were just paranoid. Soon, PTSD and drugs put me over the edge and I went down to the VA Program in Menlo Park, CA to clean up and heal enough that my wife actually did marry me in March, 1982.

For a long time I went back to keeping my Veteran status a secret, telling only people I loved or trusted for some other reason. I have no idea what happened to the Billboard Back Pack but, over the last few years I have not left the house without a Veterans For Peace patch sewn onto my hat. Total strangers come up to me and say, "Nice Hat." I figure they mean the sentiment of the patch. It is not such a heavy load anymore, but I feel anxious without my hat.



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY VETERAN, SERVED ON THE GUN LINE OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM [1968-69]. GRADUATE OF A VA DRUG, ALCOHOL AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; A DETOX ACUPUNCTURIST [1989] AND PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE." AVOIDS HAIRCUTS, SHAVING. LIKES FEEDBACK, EVEN CRITICISM, CAN BE REACHED AT: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM



The Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW gave a Veterans Service Award to Kirk Rodman and Nancy Rodman. They have given years of their time and energy as volunteers at The Highground Veteran's Park in Neillsville, WI. Their efforts, along with those of other volunteers, rescued the park from financial difficulties and provided the impetus to expand and improve.

Jumping in with Both Feet

RAY PARRISH

Like it or not, we're in a position to help all those veterans who can't find help anyplace else, because we're the ones they are calling for help. Luckily, new developments make it possible for most of you reading this to become part of a support network we're setting up. My priority is to provide mental health and VA claims support for each IVAW chapter, GI coffeehouse, GIRH counseling center, military base and prison with a veterans group.

The VVAW hotline and my email get referrals from the GI Rights Hotline, IVAW, VFP, MFSSO and AFSC among other groups, the VVAW website, several other websites, web searches that turn up our TV show, veteranshelpingveterans.us. The calls for help are on a variety of topics, although PTSD comes up in most. Many callers will avail themselves of the services of our therapist, Hans Buwalda, for treatment or get a referral from her for a local mental health professional. Many are impressed with the fact that we're the only veterans' group offering such

comprehensive services.

Many are still on active duty and a family member will call us because they can depend on our confidentiality to protect their military careers. There are the veterans who can't go into a VA facility because they no longer trust the government that sent them to war or they felt betrayed when they returned. Some vets' PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is so severe they ended up with bad discharges and were turned away by the VA. Some ended up in prison, and some don't even ask for help because they are ashamed to be seen as weak.

VVAW members are already working within local groups to help in these efforts and you can join in. Go to the IVAW website and contact the nearest chapter to find out what they need. Do the same with the GI Rights Hotline website or call a nearby prison to get contact info on any veterans groups. You may be directed to a vet who called before you and is already coordinating support. You might be asked to call area mental health or VA claims professionals

to find volunteers.

You might decide to become certified as a veterans' peer-counselor, get accredited as a VA claims agent, or get trained to answer calls through the GI Rights Hotline. For the first, call your local VA Medical Center and ask for the coordinator of PTSD peer counseling or "vet-2-vet" program and if there are none go to the VAMC Director and offer to help get one going. VETNET in Chicago got the grant to develop the veterans' peer-counseling curriculum and the week-long trainings are happening in VAMC's nation-wide. Training in VA claims has recently taken a giant step with the release of a new 6 hour dvd titled *Veterans Benefits Advocacy* from the National Veterans Legal Services Program (nvlsp.org) the same people who write the Veterans Benefits Manual (VBM) I depend on. This dvd should give you the skills needed to pass the VA exam to get accreditation and the VBM will enable you to win cases that the mainstream veterans service offices call unwinnable.

When the 2010 edition of the VBM comes out this summer, the publisher is donating all the unsold 2009 editions to me for distribution to support incarcerated veterans. We'll start with the Maine State prison just before the Veterans For Peace convention there. Since there are so many prisons, and so many vets in them, I expect to run out of the freebies early.

You may decide to actually become a veteran-owned service provider business by taking advantage of loans and grants from the VA, EPA or Small Business Administration to buy an apartment building and lease through the VA Supportive Housing program or start a business (plenty of money for green businesses) to provide jobs or training for vets. Whatever you decide, I'm here to support your efforts.



RAY PARRISH (SGT., USAF, 72-75) IS VVAW'S MILITARY COUNSELOR. IF YOU NEED HELP, CALL HIM AT 773-561-8829 OR EMAIL HIM AT CAMIBLUE@VVAW.ORG.

PTSD and "Bad Discharges"

RAY PARRISH

Many veterans suffering from PTSD are denied VA benefits because of their less than honorable military discharges. This is based on the presumption that there was dishonorable service which bars benefits. Often the VA personnel tell these vets that they must get their discharges upgraded before the VA can help them. THIS IS A LIE!! Let me repeat this: Vets with service connected PTSD can get all VA benefits (except educational benefits) and VA personnel who say otherwise are misinformed, ill-trained or lying. There are VA regulations that enable the VA to provide these veterans with health care and monthly disability checks.

The VA has two branches; the VA Health Care Administration and the VA Benefits Administration. They each have their own rules allowing them to serve vets with an old UD (Undesirable Discharge), an OTH (General discharge under conditions Other Than Honorable) and BCD (Bad Conduct Discharges) given at a Special court martial (not a General CM).

According to the VA Health care "Fact Sheet 16-8, October 2008," when a vet with an OTH/BCD comes in for PTSD treatment, they are supposed to register the vet, place the vet in "pending verification status" and make an application to the VA Regional Office for an "administrative decision" regarding the "character of service" for VA health care purposes. VA employees are directed to VA Manual M21-1, Part IV, Chapter 11 "Special Determinations and Administrative Decisions." A separate character of service determination by the VARO is needed to pay disability benefits. The veteran is entitled to health care until the VARO denies service connection. This window of opportunity may allow the veteran the time needed to get a psych evaluation which can be used to overcome the "dishonorable service" bar.

One of the most immediate and severe symptoms of PTSD is just the kind of behavior that can result in UCMJ charges and a discharge for misconduct. Following the directions in their

M21-1 Manual Part III, Subpart v, 1, B.11.a, the VARO can decide that there is no "dishonorable service" to bar benefits. The "insanity" definition in 38 CFR 3.354 allows the VA to see that there was no "dishonorable service" for eligibility purposes.

A psych evaluation explaining that the service connected PTSD caused the misconduct is needed. It can also be argued that the military is responsible for the misconduct because they failed to provide treatment for the PTSD. So the psych evaluation needs to say that the vet served honorably until the service connected PTSD (or any other mental disorder) affected the vet's "ability to serve honorably," so there was no "dishonorable" service. (It is also possible to get ANY diagnosis, like depression, anxiety or bi-polar disorder, a "direct" service connection if the symptoms were present during service or within one year of military discharge.)

The VARO will likely deny the claim at the beginning and force the vet to request a "character of service determination"

even if the psych evaluation has already been submitted. When the eligibility issue is won, the VARO will then make a decision on service connection and degree of disability. They could do all at once, but expect delays, under-ratings and appeals.

After winning VA compensation, the vets will have the free treatment and monthly checks which will allow a long battle to get an accurate discharge. The BCMR can change a discharge to a medical retirement discharge. This means the monthly checks come from the DOD budget not the VA, which means less money for bullets and more money for helping vets.



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A National Call To Action: A Campaign for Justice For Veterans

JAN A. RUHMAN

Each and every day in cities and municipalities across the United States of America recently returned Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans as well as veterans from other wars come into contact with our nations first responders, police and firefighters, as a result of a criminal offense. Many of these veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a direct result of their service in combat to our nation. We believe that their service to our nation and its resulting mental health issues must be taken into consideration in sentencing.

Under existing law, in California and many jurisdictions, if a convicted defendant was a member of the military forces of the United States who served in combat and who suffers from substance abuse or psychological problems resulting from that service, the court may, under specified circumstances, order the defendant committed to the custody of federal correctional officials for incarceration for a term equivalent to that which the defendant would have served in state prison.

The Scope of the Problem

A RAND Corporation study dated April 17, 2008 concluded that one in five Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from PTSD or major depression.

Nearly 20 percent of military service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan — 300,000 in all — report symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or major depression, yet only slightly more than half have sought treatment.

In addition, researchers found about 19 percent of returning service members report that they experienced a possible traumatic brain injury while deployed, with 7 percent reporting both a probable brain injury and current PTSD or major depression.

PTSD problems are likely to worsen if the veteran has served multiple tours. Inadequate time between deployments increase combat stress rates by 50%.

Many service members said they do not seek treatment for psychological illnesses because they fear it will harm their careers in and out of the military. But even

among those who do seek help for PTSD or major depression, only about half receive treatment that researchers consider "minimally adequate" for their illnesses.

In the first analysis of its kind, researchers estimate that PTSD and depression among returning service members will cost the nation as much as \$6.2 billion in the two years following deployment — an amount that includes both direct medical care and costs for lost productivity and suicide. Investing in more high-quality treatment could save close to \$2 billion within two years by substantially reducing those indirect costs, the 500-page study concludes.

No veteran comes home from war unchanged but with early intervention and treatment most can recover and lead a productive and healthy life. A key piece of the puzzle is establishing Veterans Diversion and Treatment Courts in every state, county, city and municipality.

Veterans Diversion and Treatment Court: A Key Component for Justice for Veterans

A Veterans Diversion Court, modeled on the courts established in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Buffalo, New York, would provide that if a person is convicted of a criminal offense and alleges that he or she is a veteran and committed said offense as a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse, or psychological problems stemming from service in combat in the United States military, the court shall, prior to sentencing, hold a hearing to determine whether the defendant was a member of the military forces of the United States who served in combat and shall assess whether the defendant suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse, or psychological problems as a result of that service.

If the court finds that the defendant's actions resulted in a crime being committed as a result of one of those factors related to serving in the military, it may "divert" the offending veteran to the Veterans Diversion and Treatment Court and hold the conviction in abeyance while

placing the veteran on probation and ordering the veteran into a court supervised treatment program run by the VA or another Court Approved Program if VA assistance is not easily available due to distance to the facility from the vets home.

(a) Any person convicted of a criminal offense who would otherwise be sentenced to county jail or state prison and who alleges that he or she committed the offense as a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse, or psychological problems stemming from service in a combat theater in the United States military, (b) If the court concludes that a defendant convicted of a criminal offense is a person described in subdivision (a), and if the defendant is otherwise eligible for probation and the court places the defendant on probation, the court may order the defendant into a local, state, federal, or private nonprofit treatment program for a period not to exceed that which the defendant would have served in state prison or county jail, provided the defendant agrees to participate in the program and the court determines that an appropriate treatment program exists.

In San Diego a small but dedicated group of military attorneys, VA and community mental health professionals, police, judges, public defenders and prosecutors has been working on establishing a Veterans Diversion and Treatment Court to make certain that former and current members of the US Military get a fair shake from the Legal System by taking into consideration their military service and their need for help in healing from the hidden wounds of war when they come

home.

It is our responsibility, as veterans, to speak with force and conviction to our elected representatives at all levels of government and to help them see the wisdom in taking care of the troops when they return home from war. The task of mounting a national campaign is done at the community level by activists and community organizers but the funding comes from many sources.

Ask your Congressperson to reintroduce and support H.R. 7149, originally introduced September 26, 2008, to provide "funding grants for states and local municipalities to help establish Veteran Diversion and Treatment Courts."

Ask your Senator to reintroduce and Support S. 3379, originally introduced July 31, 2008, to provide "funding grants for states and local municipalities to help establish Veteran Diversion and Treatment Courts."



JAN A. RUHMAN WAS AN ACTIVIST MEMBER OF VVAW IN THE 1970'S IN LOS ANGELES AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND IS THE SAN DIEGO CONTACT FOR VVAW. HE IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE BANISHED VETERANS DEFENSE COMMITTEE. HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE IN SAN DIEGO AND IS THE OPERATIONS COORDINATOR FOR VETSPEAK.ORG A BLOG RUN BY FORMER MEMBERS OF THE US MILITARY WITH THE INTENT TO PUBLISH THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT VOICES OF VETERANS. HE CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT JAN.RUHMAN@VETSPEAK.ORG OR BY PHONE AT 858-361-6273.



Answering Questions

JIM WILLINGHAM

Answering questions: a high school history class project with Jason, May, 2009

How old were you when you were there?

I was 23 when I got to Vietnam in Sept., 1970 and was 24 when I left in Sept., 1971.

Can you talk about a sense of what you experienced?

My sense is that the Vietnam War was a tragic mistake. It never should have happened. We had a chance to have a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam and Indochina conflicts without war in the 1950's, but we were supposed to be afraid of communism spreading over the globe. Communism never would have expanded beyond Indochina in Southeast Asia, even without the war, as this area is surrounded by anti-communist nations like Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia. This was clearly evident, but the American people

were told we had to stop communism in Vietnam before it went farther. This was a lie. America had offers of friendship and cooperation after WW1 and again after WW2 from Ho Chi Minh, but these were ignored in favor of trying to maintain a pro-western style of government. First, the US supported the French colonization and later a pseudo-democratic police state in South Vietnam. As it is now, we are making friends with the Vietnamese much as we would have had there been no war.

How do you feel about what you lived through?

It was a very heavy military experience flying into all these forts, artillery bases inside "South" Vietnam. At the end of my tour, August, 1971, we flew into 3 deserted artillery bases near the Cambodian border. The US Army just picked up and left. The South Vietnamese made no effort to occupy those areas

What did you think about the war when you were in it and what do you think about it now?

When I was in Vietnam I was not thinking, really. I was mostly focused on doing my job and not-reacting emotionally to what I was seeing, like soldiers killed, destroyed terrain. We would just pass on to the next scene. It was enduring a year that gave me no sense of meaning other than flying about this war-torn country like a bad dream. I came home and marched to end the war with other veterans. Looking back, 40 years later, I still have vivid memories of desolated, defoliated landscape. I know that the land of Vietnam is still healing and that we, as a nation, must not ever do this again.

How were you changed by your experience?

I was ripped out of my innocence. I realized that America

was not always so great after-all. I had seen a dark side and after coming home, lived in poverty and alienation for many years, angry and saddened, without a sense of direction or hope. I eventually went through a Vet Center program with other Vietnam Veterans and rehabilitation counseling. I came to terms with the Vietnam War in a larger perspective. We had been misguided in the past. One real change we need to make is to use our military responsibly for safety and defense and anti-terrorism and NOT for private contractor profits and false ideologies of power and greed. This is the most sacred trust that we share as Americans.



JIM WILLINGHAM IS A VVAW MEMBER LIVING IN ST PETERSBURG, FLORIDA.



GI Press Preservation Project Launched

JOHN ARNOLD

In the Vietnam War era, anti-war members of the US military and their supporters found voice for their concerns in what eventually added up to hundreds of underground newspapers produced and circulated everywhere, inside the Pentagon itself, aboard ships at sea and on and around military bases around the world. With names such as *Left Face*, *About Face*, *Harass the Brass*, *A Four-Year Bummer*, *The Fort Polk Puke*, *RITA*, *FTA*, *Marine Blues* and *Rough Draft* they served as an organizing tool, a platform for discussion of issues the military chain of command should have cared about but didn't and a way

of letting the rest of America know that opposition to the war was widespread in the armed forces.

These newspapers, largely overlooked by historians, had great impact at the time and are now in danger of being lost altogether. They were generally printed on cheap paper that will crumble to dust before too many more years pass.

To insure that this legacy and effort is not lost, a GI Press Preservation Project has been launched in Philadelphia, where several of the best collections of Vietnam-era GI newspapers are located. James Lewes, who worked on the GI Press part of the

movie *Sir! No Sir!* is spearheading an effort to digitally copy all still-existing copies of Vietnam-era GI newspapers so that they will not be lost to history when the paper they are printed on crumbles and can be shared more widely and take their rightful place in the history of the Vietnam War and the GI Movement that opposed it.

Anyone with any Vietnam-era GI newspapers in their possession, or anyone with any questions about the project is encouraged to contact James Lewes at james_lewes@yahoo.com. Financial support of the project is also needed and can be sent to:

Veterans For Peace-31
c/o Thompson Bradley
11 Price's Lane
Rose Valley, PA 19063-4214
noting that the donation is for the GI Press Project.



JOHN ARNOLD ENLISTED IN THE MARINES AT AGE 17 IN 1968, AND ENDED UP CO-EDITING THE SECOND INCARNATION OF THE MARINE CORPS' FIRST ANTI-WAR NEWSPAPER, HEAD ON!. HIS COLLECTION OF 70+ DIFFERENT GI NEWSPAPERS NOW IS IN THE PEACE COLLECTION OF SWARTHMORE COLLEGE'S LIBRARY.

War's Strange Wound

Wearily, I wear my skin reversed—
a strange war wound from the A Shaw Valley,
circa 1969—exposed nerves in constant yelp,

enflamed by bad oxygen, air-of-life machined noxious
by privilege, class, and selfish intent, by
monstrous insatiety and greed.

I gasp for genuine goodwill, simple benevolence,
that crosses the boundary embracing all 'other.'
I know the impossibility; I feel my churning

attachment umbilically nursing my wistfulness.
I demand to go back—stomping feet, angry, sick body and mind—
to unwind the sprockets of evolution,

searching for what was missed the first time
we crept from southern mud
and walked the psychotic path to here.

Defeated by the brokenness of these grand illusions,
I walk mourning upon shards of my crushed naivety
littering psychic hardpan: needle-sharp, piercing, unsweepable.

Can I put my skin on differently? No—
not and still be human.

— *Tim Bagwell*

Mister President

Mr. President, see me below!
A simple goat herder,
your drones overhead
sparkle from reflected sunlight
like giant spoons.
A white flash of hope.

Mr. President, walk with me!
A simple goat herder,
on this rocky hillside.
We will talk as men do.

Mr. President, tend my goats!
They will eat anything, sticks,
twigs, turfs of grass, providing you
milk, meat, leather, hides.

Mr. President, invite me!
to your White House.
We could walk in the garden,
talk of family, take photographs,
sneak cigarettes and sip beers.

Mr. President, hear, listen to Me!
I want only to herd my flock,
return to my family whole,
sleep under the stars with my wife
in my black goat haired tent. .

Mr. President, remember me!
I wait for your change and
tell my daughters it will come
as you do to yours.

— *Dayl Wise*
1st CAVE 2/5 1970

The Ghost of Genocide Past

A Vietnam veteran marches in
a Veterans Day Parade in the
town of Albany, Oregon in pro-
test of the Iraq War in 2003.
Written on the name tag is:
The Ghost of Genocide Past.
Here it is 7 years later,
and the US is still inventing reality
about bringing Democracy to Iraq.
Here it is 9 years later,
and the US is still inventing reality
about bringing Democracy to Afghanistan.

It is all a dog and pony show of smoke and mirrors.
The mirror is the Vietnam War,
and the smoke is the same smoke of death
that is killing massive numbers of people in the Middle East.
It is all about protecting American Corporate Interests,
with its policy of National Offense.
The US National Offense is a swarming locust
of lies and deceptions that have become a parade of
death and destruction.

America--you will get away with nothing.

— *Mike Hastie*
US Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71



Still Life With Dead Hippie

It's all in the point of view. Suppose you have your
sophomores slumped on the sidewalk
in the foreground. Never made it to the bar.
His buddy's embarrassed, his girl outraged.
No fun tonight, Hon!

Or, maybe this feminist witch is exercising her anger
on this newly stricken MCP (male chauvinist pig).
As the stunned bastard in bellbottoms looks for reasons.

It could be a pink-faced VC broad trying to grasp the life that's just flown
from your unfavorable dumb son. And,
she has no right to cry out in plain sight. To be so
full of pain. You have to blame her for the cluck's bad luck.

Of course, what it was, was these dirty, rotten,
vicious whore kids - standing around watching the
overarmed, undertrained National Guard about to go wild.
And, yeah, those kids were fools.
Some of them believing in democracy & free speech & other book stuff.
As if they belonged in the real world.
Out there chunking rocks & flowers & slogans & curses.
Full of dope, sex, & unAmerican anti-war ideas.
They were coming out of class, out of their stupor, sitting on & smoking grass.
Reminding you! something's wrong & someone has to do something.
So, it's their fault it's not their fault!

Then we find out: there were no snipers or
syphilitic commie call girls recruiting on campus.
And that one girl was just a terrified 14-year-old runaway.
Barely old enough to bleed but the right age to understand the deed.

And, did you ever notice how that cheap statue,
down there in Columbus, of that used car salesman
toting forged registrations past the Capitol building
looks just like Governor Rhodes?

— *Horace Coleman*

A Veteran's Manifesto

It don't mean nothin'

That's what we told ourselves
after some of us had died
(or maybe it was only a single friend
who lay mangled and lifeless).
We said it too when
innocents were killed,
our own flesh was rendered, or
we had just witnessed
too many human beings
wasted
by our superior firepower.

It don't mean nothin'

We spoke those words
to avoid our own pain.
We spoke those words because
the horror we experienced
placed our very souls at risk, and
to reclaim our destiny,
we veterans must tell the world
what we have seen.
Kurtz understood,
like him, we have terrible knowledge,
but unlike him,
we won't let it possess us,
we will not go insane,
we will not commit suicide, and
we will not let these words,
It don't mean nothin',
become our epitaph.

— *Paul Hellweg*

A Crescent Among Crosses at a Beach Memorial

Who was he?
Who is she?
A relative / wife / lover / friend / neighbor?
A curious stranger?
From the same "tribe?"
She crouches before the man
laminated in Marine dress blue.
A non uniform Middle Eastern face
in this temporary place where
indifferent gawkers' and talkers'
whims and commands rearrange shifting sands.

— *Horace Coleman*



Los Angeles Agent Orange Demo

HORACE COLEMAN

On Sunday morning April 18, 2010, Dow—a maker of Agent Orange—sponsored a Live Earth Run for Water in Los Angeles. The race began and ended at LA's Exposition Park.

When runners left the park—and re-entered it at the race's end—they passed by a group of Vietnamese and Southern Californians with orange balloons and posters and signs calling Dow to account for the devastation Agent Orange has done.

The Vietnamese contingent included Nguyen Thi Than, president of the DaNang Association for Victims of Agent Orange / Dioxin, and Pham The Minh, a victim of Agent Orange exposure.

Among the US citizens demonstrating were area Vietnamese Americans, Larry Abbott (member of Los Angeles VFP chapter), Merle Ratner and Ngo Than Nhan (coordinators of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility campaign. An Agent Orange widow was present, dressed as the Statue of Liberty.

Horace Coleman, representing VVAW, spoke at the post demonstration press conference.



Still Dying from Agent Orange

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Pham The Minh

the costs. We were thinking more like a billion and it didn't cover the children. The few who wanted to accept the settlement were flown around the country and would arrive in limousines. Despite all the opposition from the victims themselves the judge accepted the offer and kept the issue of agent orange under his control so that everything in the ensuing decades would still go back to him. The lawyers took \$30 million while families of vets who died got only several thousand dollars. The settlement money of veterans who had been on welfare be-

cause their disability kept them from working, was sent straight to the states. Despite the fact that this was the largest settlement up to that time, it took the wind out of the mass movement. People were tired and ill. At places like Times Beach and Love Canal everyone knew that dioxin was causing cancer and birth defects. The federal government did eventually recognize a few dioxin problems as service connected.

Meanwhile the Vietnamese were and are suffering much worse than we were. VVAW was one the first groups to break travel restrictions back to Vietnam. When we would visit we would be told of the continuing birth defects, deaths and poisonings which continue to this very day. The war in Vietnam ended 35 years ago but peace and tranquility didn't come when the bombing stopped. Dioxin is still poisoning a section of the rural Vietnamese population. People born in Vietnam are still suffering

cancers, birth defects and other problems. VVAW has gone to see this and we have sponsored trips by victims from Vietnam. As Americans we have a chance to rectify what we did to American veterans and Vietnamese victims. Congressman Conyers has a bill he is preparing to present to Congress. This is a comprehensive bill that would cover the Vietnamese and American victims. The war really isn't over until the killing and the maiming stop. Killing people and having people being born with birth defects is not really different from shooting them. We are calling on people of good will to endorse this legislation and to get our friends to lobby for this bill. Justice for our children and Vietnamese children calls for it.



BARRY ROMO IS ONE OF THE VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATORS.

Stop the Deportation of US Veterans

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of the San Diego Congressional Delegation and several other districts in Southern California with members of Veterans For Peace, Chapter 91 who have adopted the issue as a main focus of concern for community outreach and congressional action.

•Set-up a website run by the affected veterans at www.banishedveterans.info

In short we have shined a light on an issue that our government would like kept in the dark. But a year later little has changed, and the deportation of US military veterans continues unabated.

It's time to shine a brighter light on this injustice. It's time to take this issue to all Congressional Districts in all 50 states. It's time to take this issue to all veterans' organizations nationally and to ask them to support a resolution to protect these veterans.

These men served. They were willing to die to protect and defend this nation. We can do no less than form and deploy the reactionary squad and march to the sounds of the battle in defense of these veterans.

To view the photos and read the stories of some of the Banished Veterans go to the website that they have created and run at www.banishedveterans.info and if you are so moved click on "Donate."

A NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION

At this very moment as you read this, upwards of 4,000 former members of the US Military who have served from Vietnam to OEF and OIF are facing deportation and in 2009 about that many were deported.

The VVAW National Office has officially adopted this proposal as a national program.

Text of National Resolution

Resolution on amending the United States Code to clearly state that US military service members are "non citizen nationals" and to petition the Department of Homeland Security to stay their removal from the United States of America;

1. Whereas United States Service members are being and have been deported after serving in the military from the United States;

2. Whereas the current United States Code provides: that the term "national of the United States"

means:

(A) a citizen of the United States, or

(B) a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States. 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22)

3. Whereas Federal law requires everyone who enlists or re-enlists in the Armed Forces of the United States to take the Oath of Enlistment. This oath is a permanent oath of allegiance to the United States of America. The oath is traditionally performed in front of the United States Flag and other flags, such as the state flag, military branch flag and states:

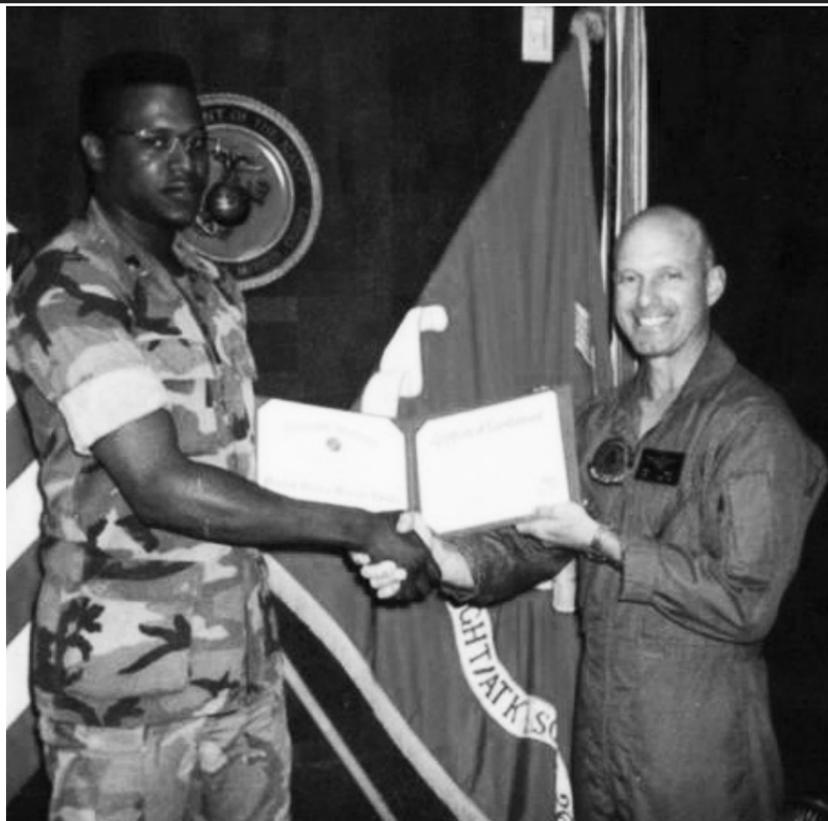
"I, (NAME), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

4. Whereas the Oath of Enlistment is quite similar to the Oath of Citizenship which is also a permanent oath of allegiance to the United States of America and states:

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

5. Whereas US military veterans who are currently being deported or have been deported have a long history in the United States;

a. They are legal permanent residents "Green Card Veterans" prior to entering the military;



*Rohan Coombs, USMC, Gulf War I Veteran
(facing Deportation and being held by ICE in El Centro, California)*

b. They have served in all branches of the military for years;

c. They have served in Vietnam, Grenada, Kosovo, Somalia, Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan;

d. They have lived from 16 – 48 years legally in the United States;

e. Their Parents, Spouses, Children, Siblings, Partners are United States Citizens and Legal Permanent Residents.

f. They are Business Owners;

g. They are recipients of the GI Bill

6. Whereas they are subject to removal or have been removed due to criminal convictions; There is a moral question as to whether the character flaws and, in some instances, the commission of a crime, which would lead to denial of citizenship, are themselves the result of the psychological stress of service in war;

7. Whereas the US has a duty to protect those who protected it, regardless of their personal character. The United States now, and historically, has treated aliens admitted for an indefinite period, whether as lawful permanent residents, refugees or asylees, as other countries would treat non citizen "nationals" or subjects." It requires these individuals to submit to the draft, to have an allegiance of political loyalty to the United States subjecting them to the death penalty for betraying that allegiance, and itself treats the individuals when in uniform as American nationals for a variety of purposes, including American jurisdiction in its Status-of-Forces Agreements.

8. Whereas the removal of

veterans, particularly those who served during times of hostility, present a number of problems that the removal of other aliens do not:

(1) There is the possible loss of native citizenship rendering the individual stateless;

(2) There is the possibility of criminal charges awaiting the alien in their native land for his service in the war; and

(3) There is possible exposure to the jurisdiction of the ICC (even though the US doesn't partake) or the courts of their native lands for alleged war crimes committed while in an American uniform.

Therefore be it resolved that Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. calls upon the US House of Representatives and US Senate to amend the United States Code to clearly state:

"The following shall be nationals, but not citizens of the United States: (1) A person who, by conscription or enlistment, entered any branch of the United States armed forces. This shall be retroactive to service persons previously removed from the United States."

Be it further resolved that Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. calls upon the Department of Homeland Security to stay their removal from the United States of America;

Be it further resolved that Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. will establish a VVAW National Banished Veterans Defense Committee open to all members and chapters to coordinate action by the National Office in support of legislation to clearly state that

continued on next page

Two, Many Vietnams?

W.D. EHRHART

Lately there has been a lot of talk about whether or not our current undertaking in Afghanistan will turn into another Vietnam. And though Iraq is less in the headlines than Afghanistan recently, that war too is hardly over. But are either of these wars "another Vietnam?" Does either have the potential to become another? The fact is that historical analogies never hold up under examination. Our present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan neither resemble each other nor the late war in Vietnam. The differences are almost too myriad to enumerate.

Nevertheless, there are some similarities worth pondering. Each war seems to have been entered into by powerful leaders acting on unexamined assumptions about their own righteousness and infallibility. Each war seems to have been justified on the basis of what at best could be called "misleading" information. Each involves a staggering ignorance of the history and culture of the countries against whom we were going to war.

Consider the Bush administration's insistence that the secularist Saddam Hussein was in league with the radical religionist Osama bin Laden, and then recall that American leaders insisted Ho Chi Minh was only doing the bidding of the Soviet Union and China. Consider the Bush administration's insistence

that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction he could use within forty minutes, and then recall Lyndon Johnson's insistence that our ships had been attacked, unprovoked in international waters, in the Gulf of Tonkin. Consider the recent elections in Afghanistan, and then recall the repeated and transparently bogus elections held in South Vietnam. Consider President Obama's latest commitment of 30,000 more soldiers to Afghanistan, and then recall the incremental escalations of the Westmoreland years in Vietnam.

Have you ever heard of Scott Ritter, the former Marine officer and UN weapons inspector who tried to tell the American people that Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction? Have you read journalist Thomas Ricks's account of the Iraq War, which he titled *Fiasco*? Have you read former Marine Clint Van Winkle's Iraq War memoir *Soft Spots*?

Historical analogies, as I said, are suspect at best. Iraq—with its three major factions: Sunni, Shiite and Kurd—looks almost simple compared to Afghanistan with its dozens of competing tribal, religious and political factions, and neither looks like Vietnam. The people of Vietnam, for the most part, share a common culture and identity. Iraq is the invention of post-World War I British and French diplomats, and Afghanistan is an all but ungovernable

illusion of cartography. If you don't believe me, ask the British. Or the Russians.

But whatever vast differences separate the Vietnam War from our present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are two fundamental—and insurmountable—similarities. Firstly, in all three cases, the US military has been tasked with achieving goals that are simply and utterly unattainable—certainly not by force of arms and probably not at all. Secondly, when you send heavily armed frightened young soldiers into an alien world they cannot understand, nothing good will result.

I hope that I am wrong about the prospects for success in our current wars. But after eight years of fighting in Afghanistan and almost seven years of fighting in Iraq, I do not see much reason to feel encouraged. Calls for more troops, training the Iraqis and Afghans to defend themselves, giving them the breathing space to create viable democratic government—we've heard all this before.

Meanwhile, to a degree unimaginable even during the Vietnam War, the blood burden of military service falls ever more unfairly on a smaller and smaller segment of our citizenry. How long can our armed forces sustain the unrelenting stress? How long will the young men and women on the pointy end of the stick be willing

to go back and back and back?

During the Vietnam War, proud and powerful leaders relinquished their fantastical illusions only when the political cost of continuing that war finally came to outweigh the political cost of disengaging. That tipping point was reached only after 58,000 Americans had come home dead. What will be the tipping point in Iraq, where the American death toll is currently under 4,400? What will be the tipping point in Afghanistan, where the American death toll is currently under 800? In each of these wars, we have a long way to go before we reach 58,000 dead Americans. Will the death toll finally climb that high? Will our current leadership exercise humility and wisdom in place of arrogance and righteousness before that awful tipping point is reached? Or will these wars end in triumph and victory, our goals achieved, our policies vindicated? Anyone taking bets?



W.D. EHRHART TEACHES ENGLISH AND HISTORY AT THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL IN SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF FOURTEEN BOOKS, MOST RECENTLY *THE MADNESS OF IT ALL: ESSAYS ON WAR, LITERATURE & AMERICAN LIFE*.

Stop the Deportation of US Veterans

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US military service members are "noncitizen nationals" and petition the Department of Homeland Security to stay their removal from the United States of America, to work with other national veterans organizations and grassroots organizations, in efforts to strengthen the national campaign; and

Be it further resolved that the VVAW Banished Veterans Defense Committee will help organize and coordinate events at the local, state, and national level to educate the public and to build public participation in the campaign, to push for enactment of legislation and a stay of removal for these veterans without further delay; and

Be it further resolved that the VVAW Banished Veterans Defense Committee will coordi-

nate and assist all willing VVAW members in contacting their respective members of Congress to urge support of the proposed legislation to ask their respective member of Congress to support upcoming legislation, (bill numbers to be announced) and request the Department of Homeland Security to stay the removal of the US military veterans; and

Be it further resolved that the National Office of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. calls upon all other state and national veterans organizations, state and local government bodies, community organizations, labor unions to adopt similar resolutions and to use all their resources to build the campaign to clearly state that US military service members are "noncitizen nation-

als" and petition the Department of Homeland Security to stay their removal from the United States of America; and

Be it further resolved that Vietnam Veterans Against the War will forward a copy of this resolution to the Speaker and the Clerk of the US House of Representatives, to Representative John Conyers, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, to Representative Bob Filner, Chair of the House Veteran Affairs Committee, to the various state and federal veterans organizations, to other peace and justice organizations, other military organizations, and to the news media.

Implementation: By the VVAW Banished Veterans Defense Committee established by this resolution, by the National Office and by all interested mem-



JAN A. RUHMAN WAS AN ACTIVIST MEMBER OF VVAW IN THE 1970'S IN LOS ANGELES AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND IS THE SAN DIEGO CONTACT FOR VVAW. HE IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE BANISHED VETERANS DEFENSE COMMITTEE. HE CAN BE REACHED AT JAN.RUHMAN@VETSPEAK.ORG OR AT 858-361-6273.

What Are You Doing On Memorial Day?

JANE BIGHT

Memorial Day weekend is a 3-day weekend so there will be backyard barbecues, memorial parades and a lot of flag waving. That's how the average American, untouched by war and its devastation, will celebrate the holiday that launches summer.

Memorial Day, originally Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service. Who, besides the families and friends of the fallen, really remember our war dead? Most Americans know little of the two declared wars occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan, the covert, undeclared war in Pakistan and the soon-to-be war in Yemen. Roughly a 1/2 percent of our population has fought in OEF/OIF since they began with the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

President Obama lifted the ban on press coverage of returning war dead early in 2009 yet very little attention is paid to those returning home in transport tubes.

Even less attention is paid to our war wounded. The Department of Defense admits to 6,346 war dead, but we know that the number is significantly higher. At least 30% of the military personnel who have served in a combat zone under OIF/OEF are suffering from PTSD and/or traumatic brain injuries. The DOD conservatively estimates 41,100 physically wounded.

I am of the Vietnam era. My brother was a medic in Vietnam, the father of my children completed two tours in Vietnam. Both suffer continually from their experiences. Shattered and re-made lives are all around me, but nothing prepared me for the devastation of losing my oldest son, KIA on July 24, 2003 in an ambush while guarding an oil refinery. Nothing prepares a parent for this kind of loss. Multiply that by the 3½ million Americans for whom war has come home: the veterans and their families, by the million plus dead and 2

million plus displaced Iraqis and the untold number of dead and displaced Afghans. Why do we continue to wage war and then memorialize the war and its victims? What is it about war that gets our juices flowing?

Given all the dead and wounded on the American side alone, I ask the question – what will you be doing on Memorial Day? Will you be hanging out with your friends and family, having a few beers with the guys and gals in the neighborhood? Or will you be taking action on that long weekend to continue to raise consciousness and wake up the American people to the devastation that is happening on our behalf and in our names by our government. Ask yourself if you are doing all you can do to end the wars and the suffering that the US has rained down on the citizens of other nations.

There is a great deal of money associated with wars of aggression as we've witnessed in our wars

for profit and resources in Iraq and Afghanistan. The American people cannot sustain the psychic damage and the economic debt associated with our wars. We must take the lead in bringing them to an end so that we may celebrate life rather than memorialize death. When peace becomes a way of life Memorial Day will be worth celebrating. Failure to achieve protracted peace is not an option. What will you be doing on Memorial Day?



JANE BRIGHT IS A PEACE ACTIVIST AND LECTURER WHO, TOGETHER WITH HER HUSBAND JIM, CO-FOUNDED THE EVAN ASHCRAFT FOUNDATION AFTER HER SON, SGT EVAN ASHCRAFT WAS KILLED IN COMBAT IN AL HAWD, IRAQ IN JULY 2003. JANE CAN BE REACHED THROUGH HER FOUNDATION EMAIL AT WWW.EVANASHCRAFT.ORG.

Mr. President, Where Do We Go From Here?

MICHAEL CASCANET

"Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it."
- George Santayana

"This is like deja vu all over again." - Yogi Berra

If anyone out there believes that the US learned anything at all from our numerous mistakes in SE Asia in the '60's and '70's, it's time for a reality check. All you have to do is to compare our actions in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11 and you will come to the conclusion that we apparently haven't learned a thing.

Before we sent a single "advisor" to Vietnam in the 1950's Vietnam was a country that had been colonized and

occupied for hundreds of years by the Chinese, followed by the French and the Japanese. During WWII the Vietnamese were allies and supporters of the US against Japanese occupation. Following WWII Ho Chi Minh petitioned the US to support their independence from France which we denied. Despite our halfhearted support of France to reestablish colonial control of Vietnam against Ho Chi Minh's military efforts to gain Vietnamese independence, the Vietnamese defeated France at Dien Bien Phu in the 1950's and the US slowly stepped in. We had a lot on our plate at that time: the nuclear threat, Mutually Assured Destruction, the Domino Theory and the Communist

Monolith (the Soviet Union and China). We escalated from "advising" to "training" to taking the bulk of the military burden from Eisenhower to Kennedy to Johnson to Nixon to Ford. We had a military draft system during the height of the Vietnam war which supposedly included all males meeting physical, mental and moral standards of the time. Never mind that the sons of the rich and powerful (Cheney, Rove, Bush, Wolfowitz) were able to get draft deferments or a slot in the Reserves.

Fast forward to the 21st Century after 9/11: of the 19 terrorists responsible for three aircraft hijackings, 15 were Saudi Arabian, 1 was Egyptian, 1 was Lebanese and 2 were from the United Arab Emirates. In response, former president Bush attacked Iraq and Afghanistan, established the Department of Homeland Security which has stepped all over our constitutional right to privacy and tried to justify torture as legal. President Obama was elected and chose to increase our troop levels in Afghanistan. In addition, despite his promise to draw down our military presence in Iraq, close Guantanamo and outlaw torture and rendition, the

Bush doctrine of the Imperial Presidency continues. The Bush administration began and the Obama administration has chosen to continue a policy of hiring mercenaries (Blackwater and other civilian contractors) at a huge financial cost to augment our military. There is no draft now as there was during Vietnam but the majority of enlistees today come from the urban ghettos and the disadvantaged rural areas of the country.

The biggest difference between the Vietnam and Iraq era is that today we give token respect and appreciation to those who serve in the military. Why not? They're shouldering the entire burden while the average American isn't suffering or being deprived of anything at all.

Our undeclared war in the sandbox has cost us a trillion dollars and some 4,400 American lives. That's bad enough. The worst thing is that it was unjustified, illegal, unnecessary and it has continued without much thought for 7 years.



MICHAEL CASCANET IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND A CPT, CA, USAR (RET.)



Three Hots and a Cot: Living With the Horrors of Vietnam

PATRICK McNULTY

In my experience, the vast majority of people see Navy Vets as having had "three hots and a cot," daily showers and cruising oceans from one sea port to the next. I served in the Navy and am a combat veteran of the Vietnam War. My experiences, and the horror that my shipmates and I are still undergoing, do not fit those biases about the Navy.

Between September 13 and 17, 1966 everything I ever knew to be true changed in a few short days. I was aboard the USS. Stormes, DD-780, a destroyer. My duties consisted of aft lookout. During combat operations my General Quarters station was Gun Turret #2. Our assignment was close-in coastal support (500 to 5,000 yards) of the I Corps, Intelligence Tactical operating in the coastal region of Hue and Da Nang, utilizing Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer (NGLO) area of South Vietnam during operation Lien Kiet-59 supporting the 2nd Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and the 2nd US Advisory Group.

Our region of operation was located east of the mountains and known as "Brown Water." It was a narrow rolling piedmont area which quickly gave way to a flat, wet coastal plain area consisting of rivers and rice paddies beyond which lie the beaches of the South China Sea. Most of the Vietnamese population lived in these flat lands, either in the thousands of fishing villages and hamlets interspersed among the rice fields or in the large cities of Hue and Da Nang.

On 13 September 1966, we received an Emergency Call from I Corps to proceed to Mo Duc, South Vietnam. My General Quarters duty station was in Gun Battery 2, loader station. Very early in the morning, while the people were still sleeping, we began firing on the village of Mo Duc at a range of 1,500 yards off the coast, ceasing fire just before daybreak.

I returned to the fantail area and could see the devastation; fire and smoke, and I could smell the burning flesh of the attack. I did not know what to think! I felt as if a switch had been turned off in my mind.

A few hours later, we were again sent to General Quarters and resumed shelling Mo Duc from an even closer range. Mid

morning, the crew and spotter of PCF-21 Riverine Force, a swift boat, came aboard and informed us that we had destroyed a church and school killing over 235 civilians (women and children) and some Viet Cong.

I was horrified. I had joined the Navy to be a Hospital Corpsman, to keep others alive – make a small difference to others well being - not to be a part of a massacre of innocent women and children! I could not believe that we had destroyed a church and school while the children there were asleep! Who in their right mind would order the destruction of a church and school? We did not win a victory or a battle. We were not shot at or threatened. We simply slaughtered those children at 0300 AM out of nowhere. We knew that we had targeted a church and school from the radio reports by the NGLO, stating that the guerrillas and political agents were concealed among the civilians. I just could not comprehend the justification of ARVN sacrificing those young lives.

In the afternoon we were ordered to resume firing. At this time I was terrified, I did not want to be a part of this slaughter but I felt as if I had no choice other than to go to my station and do my "duty." At some point I began to feel numb about all of it, helpless to do anything about my actions and a sense of intense guilt that remains until today.

That evening, the smoking lamp was lit and many of us gathered in the fantail area. I was to stand aft lookout watch. As we were trying to calm down, I focused my binoculars on the nearest village (about 1,000 to 1,200 yards). There were body parts in trees, women and children lay dead and blown into pieces along the shore line near the fishing boats. I was sick, disgusted with what we had done to innocent civilians, ashamed of being involved...I passed the binoculars to my shipmates so that they could see the devastation. Everyone was curious – so many of us had joined the Navy thinking that we would not be actively participating in the killing. When we saw what we had done, many of us cried, some prayed and some were sick to their stomachs. Many of us were so shocked at the maiming

we could not talk.

At midnight we opened fire on another fishing village destroying homes and the inhabitants of the homes. We ceased fire at 0002 AM and awaited the next "body count" from the swift boat advisors. The ARVN spotter was calling fire into one village, and the next, and the next.

On Wednesday, 14 September 1966, our assignment was to unmask shore batteries supporting Operation Lien Kiet-59. Lien Kiet was a small rice farming/fishing village. When we ceased fire, everything and everyone in that village were burned to bits. The radio chatter from the NGLO and ARVN spotter informed us that a body count would be forthcoming and our attack had been successful. The smell of the burning bodies and phosphorous remain one of my nightmares to this day. My ethics left me the very first day of the slaughter and I functioned as an automaton. I still question my own ethics even though I know right from wrong and I can tell you that our slaughtering of these innocent children was and is wrong. The numbness of my feelings has never left.

That night and the days that followed, we continued firing many rounds of 5"/38 HF-PD, 5"/38 white phosphorous, 5"/38 AAC, on separate targets, all coastal villages. We secured from General Quarters and moved on to our next victims. At times, we fired for harassment and interdiction in the bay areas. Some times, in the darkness, we could not see the targets we were firing upon, but the flames and the stench let us know that again we had devastated a village at close range.

I remember the exact hours of every day that we commenced and ceased firing. I remember the exact coordinates when we commenced firing, the exact number of rounds we fired, and what kind of rounds we used. The body count of that one-day, September 13, 1966, was more than 235. The estimated body count for the week, according to the 1966 Pacific Area Naval Operations Review is over 1,000 killed and 1,200 injured.

Over the past 44 years, I have tried to forget but I cannot. These five days of nearly continuous attack on the coastal and delta villages of Vietnam changed me

forever. I feel such a deep guilt and rage at having been involved in this.

Today, I am still confused about all of it. I do not understand the justification, I get depressed, I can hear those children screaming and crying in fear, I still see the flames! Every time I drive near a school I think of those Vietnamese children we were ordered to kill: they were innocent! I cannot drive past a nursery, kindergarten, school or church without wondering about those children we killed on September 13, 1966 – how did the survivors deal with the anger and rage of their deaths?

At times, the guilt of participating in these slaughters, that should never have happened, brings me to a point of wanting to detach from everyone and everything. I have lived my life in remote areas as far away from people as I could get. I have never had children. I married at age 54 and after 4 years divorced; she could not take my night sweats – nightmares – forgetfulness – depression – and so on. I have no close friends, my relatives think I am insane and we do not communicate. Today, I still can have bouts of that detachment from people and places.

I was raised by the ocean and today, after more than 40 years, I still cannot go to a beach or river; I see those innocent victims and I just cannot cope with it.

I have lost any faith I ever had in God and people. Prior to Vietnam, I was very active in my Catholic Church. Today I find it difficult to have a belief in a God of any kind. I don't know at what point during those five days in Vietnam it happened, but I feel as if I lost my soul.

Sometimes the flashbacks of seeing those bodies blown apart, the children especially, brings about a cold sweat and a confusion with what is real and what is not. Whenever that happens I do not know what to do next. I am not employable. I "space out."

I do not know how to deal with the anger and rage of having been put in the position of participating in such a gruesome act. I have participated in PTSD groups, I have been to the sleep apnea clinic and I continue my psychiatric

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Josh and Conor – Home from War in Iraq

NADYA WILLIAMS

Stand up and repeat these words in marching cadence:

"I went down to the market
Where all the people shop
I pulled out my machete
And I began to chop
I went down to the park
Where all the children play
I took out my machine gun
And I began to spray"

This is a chant our young are taught to march to in our military today, and this is how two young veterans of the Iraq War begin their presentations to groups across the country.

Late last fall, Josh Stieber and Conor Curran spoke to a gathering of Veterans For Peace and civilian peace activists in San Francisco, as part of their six months of walking and biking from the East Coast to the West to engage in dialogue about war and to become involved in community service along the way.

Both young men are from small American heartland towns - Josh from Maryland and Conor from Ohio. They did not know each other until after they got themselves out of the military. They spoke of their motivations for joining the Marines, their experiences in Iraq and the turning points that made them reject violence.

The two called their cross-country odyssey, "The Contagious Love Experiment" - certainly a retro, '60s Hippie Haight-Ashbury moniker to more mature ears. The tag is both innocent and naive, but on a deeper level, it is their counterbalance to the brutality and disillusionment they experienced.

Their story and reasoning are worth listening to.

Josh, a tall, blond, all-American-type in his early 20s, was in junior high school in Maryland when September 11th happened. His determination to, as he saw it, protect his country was initiated when his parents took him to see the damage at the Pentagon, and so he joined the Marines straight out of high school. Raised as a devout Christian, he pushed aside doubts while in basic training and forced himself to answer "yes" when asked, "Will you kill a hostile even if lots of civilians are around who will get hurt?"

Conor, thin and tall with black curly hair, also became a Marine, but spoke more of being alienated during and after high school, wanting to fit in and be accepted, using "lots of drugs," getting into debt, and not having a skill or education to direct him. So at 20 years old, The Few and The Proud seemed to give him all the answers.

At the time, he said, being in the Marines helped him to change his values and gave him a mission accomplished feeling. He became a good soldier. But, during Conor's second tour, it got heavy.

Josh spoke frequently of his Christian upbringing that taught him principles in complete opposition to the killing, fear and hatred he learned in Iraq. There is a disconnect between being told that America is liberating Iraq and bringing Freedom and Democracy and the "chop and spray" chant!

He said fear of and hatred for the Iraqi people would build up in the troops to the point where



L to R: Conor Curran; Fred Ptucha, Vietnam War veteran from Santa Rosa; and Josh Stieber - all members of Veterans For Peace.

ripping apart homes, wrecking gardens and property, and arresting and abusing prisoners became commonplace. On the street, going out of the way to run a truck through mud to spray old people, or, during house searches, taking the dolls of little girls, twisting their heads off then giving them back became acceptable behavior. "Why do we make the locals fear the US military more than the insurgents?" he wanted to know. "We out-terrorized the terrorists!"

Josh vividly recalled guarding a prisoner with another young American soldier right after coming from a church service. Josh thought of the moral and religious lessons he learned at home in Maryland: "blessed are the peace makers;" "turn the other cheek;" and "love thine enemy," as his buddy talked of how he was going to brutalize the prisoner. "Jesus wouldn't let himself get punked around," his friend replied when Josh objected on Christian principles.

The insanity of war gradually became apparent to Josh during his 14-month tour of duty, as when he and his squad detained a man with ample evidence that the Iraqi had been involved in attacks on American soldiers. This man turned out to be the mayor of the town, and US military authorities' regular payments of school supplies and cash ensured a halt in attacks on Josh and his men, at least in that part of town. So much for "we will not negotiate with terrorists," he thought.

These revelations led this idealistic youth into a bleak period. He had feelings of hopelessness. He was always looking over his shoulder. He realized that he'd always let others tell him how to think and how to live up to their expectations.

Neither young man spoke of killing anyone, and no one from the audience asked. But each spoke of turning points when they decided they could not continue as soldiers. For Josh this was a gradual process, but for Conor it came during his second tour while conducting random searches with his squad for weapons caches in Ramadi, without adequate intelligence. They set upon a home with an exceptionally beautiful garden and proceeded to tear it apart and dig it up. "Then the man of the house came out with a tray and served us all tea!" said Conor. "He spoke English and wanted to be our friend. He showed love to us and we were terrorizing him."

Thus the seed for "The Contagious Love Experiment" was planted.

Conor and Josh had many encounters along the roads of America since the spring, but the one that stood out for them was meeting a Vietnam War veteran who told them, "Instead of uniting against a common enemy, we should unite for a common goal - peace."

For more information, see: www.contagiousloveexperiment.wordpress.com
www.ivaw.org
www.veteransforpeace.org



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Jeffrey Haas

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Nightmares

They come screaming
 Crashing silently
 Crablike in movement
 Black
 Amorphic
 Erumpent
 Dark insatiable shades
 Devouring the light
 Eating inside
 And out
 Wife Children Family Friends
 Life
 Holes no light shines through
 Only grating noise
 Shining darkly
 On youths rotting corpse

— August Steiner-Zehender

*7years9months20days-64-5, 68-9 Viet Nam
 Currently paranoid schizophrenic and holding
 VVAW Life Member
 Happy Happy*

Selling a Kidney

Forty years after Woodstock,
 forty years after combat in Vietnam,
 I'm giving serious thought to it—
 selling a kidney to a sick millionaire
 to fund the rest of my life.

Hell, I have two. Why not?
 Interesting: Would I sell an arm?
 A leg? A testicle? Probably,
 if the price was right.

That was the problem with Vietnam.
 I sold myself too cheaply.

— Tim Bagwell

Trash

Stan waited in line in the creepy drizzly cold rain
 waiting to vote for his favorite rich man, who above all,
 wanted his son to carry a weight on his back
 and carry a rich man's gun in a holocaust called Iraq
 Removed forward in the lines lies, but good people
 trying to decide if they will vote for
 Republican and Democrat trash.
 Stan was finally at the table and they found his name,
 then another table where he had to wait.
 At least the people were warm now,
 then they gave Stan his ballot and he stood alone in the booth
 trying to figure out if he wanted to vote for
 Republican and Democrat trash.
 Stan was switching from one leg to the other for a long time
 trying to decide which rich man would let a few pennies
 trickle down to him or cut off welfare
 and send jobs to China or stop the war
 when they were making billions
 and voting for Democrat and Republican trash
 Make him have to be a Christian to live in the USA
 and round up the gays and gas them
 make elementary classes have a course how to breakdown
 a M-16 and put it together.
 Build walls and make it legal for minute men
 to shoot Mexicans in a second
 and voting for Republican and Democrat trash
 Build walls around the blacks in the inner city ghettos
 like they did to the Jews in Warsaw
 Put huge crosses on the tops of our schools
 on the top of the white house
 on the top of the supreme court
 and on top of the soldier's helmets
 Outlaw evolution and outlaw abortion
 and vote for Republican and Democrat trash.
 So Stan ripped up his ballot and threw it on the floor
 people looked up as he left the room
 some with an I feel that way too.

— Dennis Serdel

[Reprinted from GI Special 7C14: 3.16.09]

From Peace Speaks From The Mirror

*Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th
 Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam
 Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in
 Perry, Michigan*

Three Hots and a Cot

continued from page 20

appointments at the El Paso VA.
 Sometimes the medication helps
 – sometimes it doesn't help at all
 – but no matter what – I see and
 feel those innocent children.

To say that civilians are
 just a casualty of war is crazy!
 These people were only trying to
 survive – they were poor, women
 and children, old men and women
 – that were simply trying to stay

alive and we slaughtered them.

I was and remain enraged,
 sick to my stomach, sad that we
 killed innocent people, ashamed at
 having taken part in this slaughter,
 angry at having been forced to be
 a part of this butchering.



*PATRICK McNULTY IS A VIETNAM
 VETERAN AND SERVED IN THE NAVY.
 HIS UNIT RECEIVED THE BATTLE
 STAR FOR THEIR SERVICE. HE
 IS A STUDENT AT EASTERN NEW
 MEXICO UNIVERSITY. HE IS AN
 ACTIVE MEMBER OF VVAW AND HAS
 PARTICIPATED IN MARCHES FROM
 SAN FRANCISCO TO WASHINGTON
 DC. HE HAS WORKED WITH DRAFT
 DODGERS FROM DENVER, MICHIGAN,
 NEW YORK AREAS AND TRANSPORTED
 THEM TO TORONTO, CANADA.
 AFTER AMNESTY, HE PARTICIPATED
 IN HELPING THOSE MEN TO RETURN*

*HOME. TODAY, PATRICK IS WORKING
 WITH MANY IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
 VETS AND TRYING TO HELP THEM
 WITH THE TRANSITION TO A CIVILIAN
 LIFE. PATRICK HAS RECEIVED HIS
 VERIFICATION AS A PARTICIPANT IN
 THE VA AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY
 AND HAS RECEIVED MANY YEARS
 OF TREATMENT FOR PTSD. HE
 CONTINUES HIS BATTLE WITH THE VA
 TO RECEIVE BENEFITS FOR AGENT
 ORANGE RELATED ILLNESSES AS WELL
 AS CHRONIC PTSD.*

The Button

BILL SHUNAS

Chicago. Taking a bus. I had to change buses which meant crossing the street. As I walked up to the corner a cop car came from behind me, turned the corner in front of me and slammed on the brakes.

The cop in the passenger seat rolled down his window and said, "I see you're Vietnam Veterans Against the War." When they turned that corner they had about a second and a half to look at me, look at the VVAW button and react as they did.

I assured them that I was, and to be polite I enquired as to their knowledge of the organization. "Oh we know about VVAW," he

said with a knowing nod of his head. Then he said something about meeting in the future, and he rolled up the window, and they drove off. - Fight the power.

Chicago. After a chapter meeting Ron and I went down the street to this bar where we decided to shoot some pool. The bar had two pool tables, and they were situated in such a way that meant for certain shots you could be in the way of someone at the other table who was in this same spot. It so happened that a young man at the other table arrived at this spot when I did. I told him to go ahead and shoot. He looked at me for a moment, then looked down

at the button on my shirt, looked at me and said, "You've got an army behind you that you don't even know about." With that he turned around took his shot and continued with his game. - Feel the power.

DC. It was after some demonstration. Don't remember the details. I was wandering around the Mall, and I came upon two tourists. The man happened to look at the button. "Vietnam," he said.

"Yes," I said, and he spoke to me in French which I did not understand. With gestures I indicated my lack of understanding.

He stated, "No English." For a moment we stood there confused, and then he touched both hands to my chest and said, "Vietnam." Then he touched both hands to his own chest and said, "Algerie." And there was a tear in his eye.

We hugged and shook hands and wished each other well in our own languages and shrugged our shoulders at not having further understanding and said goodbye. - Power to the people.



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



A Member Remembers

JOHN MULLEN

Welcome Home, I hope you don't mind my sending this to you all. After all these years it just came to me and for a moment and eased my pain.

Being at Udorn in April 75 knowing Charlie was moving on in to Saigon each day was secondary to worrying if Pol Pot was wading across the Mekong to start the

domino theory at Udorn before Saigon fell.

Many of the front line brothers I was with had collections of underground Nam vet tapes of music from the late 60's. Canned Heat, Jefferson Airplane, etc. Between every song this DJ vet would make statements that made us feel we were doing what had

to be done because of vets that died In Country. Now there we were with a front row seat to a COME IN FREE ticket Charlie was getting in Saigon.

As a song would end, he would say, 22 more days and I can go home and picket and protest this F--king waste of human minds and lives our government calls War or

Lifers are like flies, they both eat sh-t and bother us.

Americans forget, How quickly Americans forget.

- Sen. Howard Baker

Thanks for letting me share that. I needed someone to hear it.



Poncho Rotation

JOSEPH GIANNINI

Dead Marines were wrapped in their own ponchos and quickly choppered away: Out of sight out of mind.

It's 3 a.m. I'm due in court at 10 a.m. to sum up for the defense in the most difficult case of my career. A Panamanian ex-con has been indicted for Murder One in the shooting of an undercover New York City Police Officer and the Attempted Murder of his partner. For the year leading up to the trial the shootings have been on the media's front burner. The coverage has been intensely prejudicial to my client and our line of defense, going as far as to mock me on the nightly news.

We are a month into the trial. The prosecution is claiming that my client attacked an officer working anti-crime and that during the ensuing struggle he disarmed and killed the officer with his own revolver. The surviving partner has already testified to the above. He has also testified that during a wild shootout, my client tried to kill him too. However, all the forensic evidence-- autopsy, ballistics and crime-scene investigation-- indicates that the officer was killed by a distant shot. A shot that deflected off a hard object, possibly a car bumper, and into the officer's back. Most damning to the prosecution, my private investigator has found an eyewitness who contradicts the surviving partner's version. Our witness has testified that she heard a shot, went to a window and saw a white male fire more shots toward several men who were in a scuffle up the block. This shooter could be the surviving partner or another police officer.

Before the trial began, I visited the District Attorney's office many times to examine evidence and get additional discovery. On several occasions I ran into the surviving police officer. Each time, he bowed his head and looked away from me. Strange reaction. I'd seen it before. But where? When?

The huge case file--testimony transcripts, discovery documents and copies of exhibits--is spread across our dining room table. I've read it all and cannot find a way to shape it into a story to tell the jury. I believe, based on the evidence and lack of evidence, that the police are covering up a scandal: The accidental killing of an off-duty police officer by his off-duty

partner or another, unknown off-duty officer during a shakedown. Suddenly I start to remember an incident from many years ago. A killing. A cover-up. It's coming back to me. The past is reaching up to the present, revealing the truth. I couldn't see it because I was blinded by my own guilt. I know now I must go back.

At 10 a.m. I stand and begin my summation. Two hours later I take the jury back In Country. To August 1967. Every Marine sent to Nam had to do a 13-month tour. Each had a rotation date. The day he would leave the field for home. Dead Marines, in most situations, were wrapped in their own ponchos and quickly choppered away. We called this poncho rotation. This practice left their friends without a chance to properly mourn them. I suspect that this quick removal of the dead Marines was calculated: Out of sight, out of mind.

I arrived In Country in early July 1967 and joined the First Battalion Third Marines, aka The Home Of The Brave. I took command of the 81-mortar platoon. Their platoon leader had just been killed in the DMZ, aka the Dead Marine Zone. A week later I was reassigned to a rifle platoon, Bravo One, B Company. When I picked up Bravo One I had the good luck to get an outstanding platoon sergeant. I knew as soon as I met Staff Sergeant Head that he was a survivor. Better stick close. Up to mid-August our platoon had suffered only four WIA's, three to booby-traps and one from friendly artillery.

The sun is starting to cast shadows as Bravo Company moves onto a small hill next to a deserted village. High ground has distinct military advantages. I get a radio call from the Company Commander, Captain Landes.

"Bravo One this is Bravo Six, over."

"Bravo Six this is Bravo One, over." "Bravo One come on up, out."

I join the Company Commander and the two other platoon leaders. Captain Landes says, "We're setting in. Three-man holes. I want each platoon to send out a four-man listening post. Code name: Snoopy. Follow me I'll show you your platoon sectors." We go off at a quick pace.

Upon returning to my platoon, I call up Staff Sergeant Head,

the Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant Falafeni, the Platoon Guide and my two squad leaders. "We're setting in. Sergeant King your squad has a listening post. Four men. Code name: Snoopy One. OK follow me." As we move, I indicate where to put each fighting hole and each of the two machine-gun teams. We dig in. Eat C-rats. Divide our night watches. Just as the sun is about to disappear behind the distant mountains to our west, Bravo Six radios down: "Stand to." I relay the order to Bravo One. Every Marine stops whatever he is doing, gets into his fighting hole and faces outboard. This is an important ritual that we perform every dusk and dawn. I order "Lights out." No smoking. No fires. No unnecessary noise. Out here, any kind of light can be seen from a great distance. Even whispers travel very far. The LP is sent out one hundred meters into the deserted village.

I've got the 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. watch. During every watch I walk the lines several times, to make sure at least one Marine is awake and alert in each fighting hole. I start my first round and as I approach the first machine gun team position someone whispers, "Be careful Lieutenant, it's steep and slippery here." I recognize the voice as Machine Gunner Joseph Listorti.

I remember the first time we met. I had just taken over the platoon and made my first amphibious landing with them. We advanced over a wide beach to a long line of very high sand dunes. We stayed in the dunes and dug in as night approached. Sometime during that dark night I walked the lines, for my first time, with Platoon Sergeant Head. During the walk we stopped at the first machine gun position and a Marine said to Head, "How's the new Lieutenant?"

Head replied, "I don't know, why don't you ask him yourself?"

Then from the same Marine, "Oh shit, I mean sorry Sir."

Head turned to me and said, "Sir this is machine gunner Joseph Listorti"

I walk by, check the remaining positions, and return to mine. The night is cloudy and moonlit. It's two a.m. and very quiet. I decide to check the LP again. "Snoopy One this is Bravo One. If clear click twice if not click once."

One click. I reach over and shake awake Staff Sergeant Head. "We have movement by the LP." He gets Sergeant Falafeni and they run off to make sure everyone is on alert. I look up and down the lines. Marines in fighting positions. I notice the machine gunner to my right has moved forward to get a better field of fire. The platoon knows to hold its fire. Suddenly there's a racket of small-arms fire from the village. The LP has made contact. I crouch lower as rounds start whizzing into our lines. Without permission Snoopy One is moving back. I shout "Hold your fire, the LP is coming in." The firing stops.

I hear "Corpsman, Corpsman" coming from the machine-gun team to my right. I run over. Staff Sergeant Head is already there. Snoopy One is coming through our lines. I bend down and kneel alongside the downed gunner. Blood is oozing from his left eye. I hear his soft moaning.

"He's dying." Sergeant Head says, then adds "Lieutenant, look at his helmet." He points to a small hole in front and says, "This wasn't an AK-47 round, this is a small-caliber round, an M-16."

The moaning is barely audible.

I look around for Snoopy One. They are standing nearby. I approach and ask, "Did you get any incoming?" Bowed heads. No eye contact. No response. In that instant I realize that their fear made them panic. Their panic caused them to run, firing wildly into our own lines.

Staff Sergeant Head calls me back to where the machine gunner has fallen and says, "He's dead. Do you know who it is?"

"Joseph Listorti."

Sergeant Head then says, "Lieutenant, Joe has already finished his tour and was rotating home on the next chopper." I didn't know. We wrap Joseph in his poncho. I hear the medevac chopper coming for him. It's quiet now. Joseph Listorti is on his way home. I'm thinking about his mother and father waiting for him. His suffering over. There's about to begin, unbearable and unending. I'll report his death as killed in action by enemy fire.

Under my command the platoon has suffered its first killed

continued on next page

When in Trouble, When in Doubt, Run in Circles, Scream and Shout!

HORACE COLEMAN

The day I was finishing this piece a news item about Arizona said the state was borrowing funds from the federal government to pay unemployment compensation to its citizens. As former NFL announcer and football player Don Meredith used to sing (badly) when the outcome of a game had been decided before it ended, "The par-ty's ooh-ver!" Reality is hitting us all in the face, asking for his. Decades of outsourcing, off shoring, union busting and "contracting" workers have brought us to our knees. Two unpaid for wars haven't helped.

So much money has been sucked to the top that fat cat individuals and institutions forgot that overall national health depends on national consumer spending—not just their druthers. The price of a loaf of bread approaching the price of a gallon of gasoline was a strong hint we're on the way to insolvency. You can't spend it unless you have it. Unless you go into debt. You can't even do that if you're laid off or have low income. Or the Chinese stop buying the government's bonds.

The Scottish historian Niall Ferguson, now doing university teaching here, wrote a book called

Colossus, The Rise and Fall of the American Empire. Ferguson believes in "liberal imperialism." "Liberal Imperialism," as I understand Ferguson, means US imperialism is good because the countries the US invades are better off for it because they become more prosperous and have better governments. His book is well documented, filled with charts, graphs, footnotes and a bibliography. All supporting his viewpoint, of course.

Meanwhile the citizens of Mouseville sit around trying to figure out how to bell real and imaginary cats of actual and feared viciousness, numbers and nearness. Without drafting anyone or recognizing the existence of maimed cat bellers. Many Americans seem to believe the old fast food ad slogan "Have it your way! Have it your way!!" Some think liberty and personal license are the same thing. The American dream has morphed into the American Hangover.

Ferguson's 302-page book ends with these words:

As Tony Blair put it succinctly in his address to Congress in July 2003, "All predominant power seems for a time invincible, but in

fact it is transient." The question Americans must ask themselves is just how transient they wish their predominance to be. Though the barbarians have already knocked at the gates—once spectacularly—imperial decline in this case seems more likely to come, as it came to Gibbon's Rome, from within.

In other words, quoting BB King, you have to be about "Paying the cost to be the boss." It's as easy and often that people fail the government as it is for the government to fail the people. After all, when push comes to shove, they're one and the same.

After World War II we went to war in Korea. After Vietnam we showed our strength by taking on Grenada and Panama. We had a few "adventures" before the Gulf wars and the AfPak war.

Ferguson sees three deficits in the American Empire: Economic, manpower and attention span. We're a debtor nation. We're people who would rather see it done than do it. We don't understand or venerate the actual past or learn the right lessons from it. To quote Ferguson, "Americans like security. But they like Social Security better than national security." It works best when

America runs it? We're only safe if America runs the world?

Colin Powell's doctrine, by Ferguson, "...was that American forces should never fight other than from a position of overwhelming strength, with limited goals that could be swiftly attained while commanding public support." That's a far cry from the ancient Catholic concept of a "just war" or what you may have learned in the school yard or the street.

A pragmatist might say solve your problems at the lowest level of effort needed to meet your long term needs—not your whims or bad habits. You might win the "war" on terror but you can't defeat fear.

PS: I've heard ignorance and greed are also pretty tough.



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.



Carol Trainer carrying VVAW flag at M20 demo in DC



Harold Trainer at M20 demo in DC

Poncho Rotation

continued from previous page

in action. A bad omen. Joseph Listorti had completed his tour. Killed by another Marine. I'll go crazy if I keep thinking about this. I won't be able to function. I'll get killed. Or, worse, cause other Marines to get killed. I'll block this out. I'll push Joseph's death and my guilt down into a

dark space and keep them there. Suddenly my left shoulder begins to twitch. It stops about a minute later. Then my right eyelid starts. It doesn't stop twitching until I'm on a plane back to the World.

Joseph's father and mother went to their graves not knowing the truth about his death. His three

sisters still believe he was killed by enemy fire. I never told anyone that a fellow Marine killed him. I covered it up. And that is just what happened here.

I turn from the jury and face the spectators. I raise my right arm and point to the surviving police officer and say, "There's the guilt."

End note: My client, Renaldo Rayside, was acquitted two days later.



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.

A Journey to a GI and Veterans Bill of Rights

AARON HUGHES

In January...
In the mountains...
In Albuquerque, New Mexico...
In the breaking dawn...
In a snow storm...
In the aftermath of a three day National Strategy Retreat, that brought together chapter leaders from all over the nation, Jason Hurd (Southeast Field Organizer) and I set out on a journey across the US.

Our first stop was to be Memphis, Tennessee 1,007 miles east on I-40. With over twelve hours to go we dived into a discussion of organizing and movement building. Talking about our jailed brother Marc Hall, the internal politics of IVAW, the need to establish and develop more leaders and get a campaign going, large politics and the history of organizing. On and on till silence, or a fit of singing to the radio.

The day dropped into night and Oklahoma passed away into Arkansas. We started to ring people in Memphis looking for a place to rest our heads. We were exhausted from the ride and the night was already old but we had been told we could find our IVAW brother Lelyn at a local Juke Joint.

Rolling in across the Mississippi, past old train cars, rusting bridges, and abandoned factories, into the home of Graceland, blues, and the Civil Rights Movement. It was 30 minutes past midnight but the night had just begun with Lelyn and a seedy old bar where everyone danced and put back forties.

Night turned to day...

We woke and were given a tour of the old delta blues city. The tour concluded at the Civil Rights Memorial Museum and the place of Martin Luther King's assassination. It haunted both Jason and I. It was like looking at what could have been. It was realizing that these movements do come through the little struggles, the little wins and little changes. It was a reminder that there are not just things to fight against but things to fight for.

It was all rushed...

We were determined to make it to Atlanta that night to see the Atlanta IVAW Chapter. Atlanta was 383 miles away through the landscape of the Civil Rights Movement. It was 383 miles of a haunting...

A haunting of what could have been

A haunting of our tortured history

A haunting of hope

A haunting of what could be

We listened to Martin Luther King's *Beyond Vietnam* speech.

The discussion returned to Marc Hall's situation and the military's violation of his rights, the use of Stop Loss and the restriction of his freedom of speech then on to a larger discussion of the military's continued violation of GIs and Veterans rights; recruitment fraud, the lack of medical care for veterans, the continuation of a failed foreign policy and the use of Depleted Uranium.

Jason turned to me and asked why don't we write a GI and Veteran Bill of Rights and at that moment, in the heart of the landscape of the Civil Rights Movement, with the haunting of what could have been, it was clear that if we wanted to end these endless occupations and prevent it from happening again we needed to start fighting for our rights as GIs and Veterans.

A Working Document for GI and Veteran Rights

For the last three months, the IVAW Field Organizing Team and IVAW members have been discussing a potential campaign to pass a new GI and Veteran Bill of Rights that protects the human rights of America's military community. This campaign would also seek to have service-members' rights made law and explicitly noted in the Veteran Administration Policy and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Legislative efforts have been articulated in the past as "bills of rights"—e.g. the Montgomery GI Bill—however they have amounted only to education reform or healthcare reform instead of an explicit statement of rights to include our right to refuse service in illegal or immoral war.

Iraq Veterans Against the War proclaims this declaration of a new GI and Veteran Bill of Rights as a common standard of achievement for all service members of the United States, to the end that every service member and every organ of the military keep this declaration constantly in

mind, and shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms, and by progressive measures, national and international, secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among military members and citizens of these United States.

GI and Veteran Bill of Rights

Whereas individuals who volunteer to join the US Military are US citizens and residents, who possess inalienable rights before, during and after their service,

Whereas, at times, the United States military has harmed the honor and reputation of the United States by violating the rights of its own service members, enemy combatants, and non-combatants,

Whereas treating a soldier with contempt for his or her human rights encourages him or her to violate the human rights of others,

Whereas service members who exercise their right of free speech and/or report violations of human rights are met with retaliation,

Whereas the US Constitution assigns the power to declare war to Congress,

Now, therefore, the government of the United States enacts into law the following GI and Veteran Bill of Rights.

Article 1.

All Service Members and Veterans are equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fellowship/camaraderie.

Article 2.

All Service Members and Veterans are entitled to the rights reserved in the Constitution of the United States and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and expected to uphold these rights.

Article 3.

All Service Members and Veterans are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind. Furthermore, all members of the US Armed Services are to be treated without discrimination and without distinction such as race,

color, sex, sexuality, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 4.

Service Members are entitled to and obligated to refuse to serve in combat if they are asked to participate in a war that is carried on without a Congressional Declaration of War.

Article 5.

All Service Members are entitled to a clearly defined mission with clear objectives and with a clearly defined relationship to the Constitution of the United States, which all service members have sworn to uphold.

Article 6.

All Service Members have the right to Conscientious Objection at any time if they so declare, based on moral, religious, ethical or political reasons. A soldier may declare Conscientious Objection at anytime with regard to any specific conflict or order with out retaliation.

Article 7.

All service members are entitled to and have a responsibility to refuse orders that will result in collateral damage, the death or wounding of civilians.

Article 8.

All Service Members are entitled to and have a responsibility to refuse orders to use weapons that have been declared inhumane by the UN - including cluster bombs, white phosphorus, nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons and land mines

Article 9.

No Service Member shall have to sacrifice for others people's profit. Therefore, all Department of Defense contracts shall be with not for profit organizations, including weapons manufacturers, and organizations that provide personnel to support the US military.

Article 10.

No Service Member or Veterans shall be exposed to hazardous, chemical or radioactive materials such as Depleted Uranium or

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Banners at Arlington West in the Park on the Bay next to the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier, San Diego



Aaron Hughes at Warrior Writers event

GI and Veteran Bill of Rights

continued from previous page

Agent Orange. All service members or veterans are entitled to a full disclosure of any possible exposure, treated with the most effective known methods and are paid reparations for all health damages.

Article 11.

All Service Members and Veterans, regardless of discharge, shall receive full medical benefits at any facility that they see fit. This includes psychological

counseling and testing to any hazardous, chemical or radioactive materials.

Article 12.

All Service Members and Veterans are entitled to education and a decent job when they return/leave the service regardless of time served and branch. If they do not find a job, they are entitled to receive unemployment compensation.

Article 13.

All prospective Service Members have the right not to be recruited until the age of legal consent. No advertisement of any kind shall be directed at youth under the age of 18. This is in accordance with the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the Child.

Article 14.

All Service Members are entitled to a legal contract that reflects these rights.

Article 15.

All Service Members are entitled to and required to receive a thorough education on the US Constitution, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Geneva Convention, GI and Veteran Bill of Rights, and the relationship between these treaties and their mission.

AARON HUGHES IS THE IVAW FIELD ORGANIZING TEAM LEADER.

History of the US War in Vietnam

BARRY ROMO, PETE ZASTROW & JOE MILLER

More than any US war since the Civil War, Vietnam divided America and made us reevaluate our society. By any standard, the American effort in Southeast Asia was a major conflict. Money, bombs and men were fed into a meat grinder whose purpose seemed to change at every Presidential press conference. Questions about the history and lessons of the war in Vietnam continue to be raised again and again in the face of current events. We feel that it is important to remember the lessons of the US War in Vietnam as we knew and lived it.

US involvement in Vietnam did not begin in the 1960's or even the 1940's, but in 1845. That's right -- 1845. In that year the people of Da Nang arrested a French missionary bishop for breaking local laws. The US commander of "Old Ironsides" (the USS. Constitution) landed US Navy and Marines in support of French efforts to reclaim their missionary. Mad Jack Percival, the ship's captain, fired into the city of Da Nang, killing 3 dozen Vietnamese, wounding more, and taking the local mandarins

hostage. He then demanded that the Catholic Bishop be freed in exchange for his hostages. The Vietnamese were unimpressed. They refused his demand and waited. "Mad Jack" got tired of waiting, released his hostages, and sailed away leaving the Bishop behind. One hundred and thirty years later, Americans would again become tired of their involvement and leave Vietnam. Unfortunately we would leave behind far more than 3 dozen dead.

US involvement in Vietnam during World War II saw the Vietnamese as our allies. A group of OSS agents (later to become the CIA) made contact with anti-Japanese guerrillas in Southeast Asia. The French who had controlled the area were the "Vichy" French who, with their Nazi leanings, supported the Japanese. Of the different Vietnamese nationalists, only the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh led the national network of underground organizations and guerrillas fighting.

Ho Chi Minh met with the US operative, Major Patti, and they agreed on joint anti-Japanese actions. The US dropped

supplies behind the lines to Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh helped Americans downed behind Japanese lines. The first American advisors helped train, equip and arm the Viet Minh. In 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed with Ho Chi Minh as the first President. American planes flew over Hanoi in celebration of the founding. The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence echoed that of the US: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness... This immortal statement is extracted from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. Understood in the broader sense this means: All people on earth are born equal. Every person has the right to live, to be happy, and free."

Ho Chi Minh asked the Americans to honor their commitment to independence, citing the Atlantic Charter and the U.N. Charter on self-determination. However, by the end of the war, the US government had begun to redirect its foreign policy from the wartime goal of the liberation of all occupied countries and colonies to the postwar anti-communist crusade, which became the Cold War. In France, where communists had led the resistance to the Nazi occupation, American policy supported General Charles de Gaulle and his anti-communist "Free French." De Gaulle aimed to restore the glory of France, which meant the return of all former French colonies. US relations with the Vietnamese turned sour. President Truman refused to answer letters or cables from Ho. Instead, the US began to ship military aid to the French forces in Indochina.

The French return to their former colony was not easy. First, they had to arm and use former Japanese POWs to establish a foothold; not a move fated to win much popular support. They were able to retake towns but not the countryside. In 1950, General Giap launched a general offensive against the French, which, though it was premature, resulted in 6,000 French killed or captured. In 1954, the French were decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Although the French government described Dien Bien

Phu as a "victory," it was more truly portrayed by commentator Bernard Fall as France's "greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm died at Quebec."

According to international agreement, Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into north and south, with free elections to take place nationwide in 1956. Even before the French were out, the US was moving in. Prior to Dien Bien Phu, the US set up MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) consisting of 350 US personnel operating in Saigon in support of the French. Between 1950 and 1954, the US contributed over \$3 billion to their French allies in the fight for Vietnam. By 1954, the US contributions were providing 80% of the cost of the war. MAAG began to train a "nationalistic" Vietnamese force of a quarter of a million men. This force was largely made up of Vietnamese who had fought for the French.

Former Emperor Bao Dai had appointed Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese Catholic who had lived in the US and Europe, Premier of South Vietnam. Though Vietnam was 95% Buddhist, the Catholic Diem was soon recognized as the future leader of Vietnam by the CIA and other US interests. In 1956 the US refused to go along with the promised nation-wide elections because, in the words of President Eisenhower, "Possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai."

US involvement continued and so did US money and men. American presence rose to 500 under Eisenhower and grew to 15,000 under Kennedy. But Diem continued to be in trouble: former Viet Minh cadres helped to support a number of groups to oppose Diem and the French successor in Vietnam -- the US. The similarity between the French and the US forces in Vietnam was, from the Vietnamese point of view, more than that both were foreign oppressors. Even our uniforms were similar, right down to the green berets. In fact, US troops were known as "Frenchmen with money."

Buddhist unrest grew in the cities. In the countryside the

continued on next page

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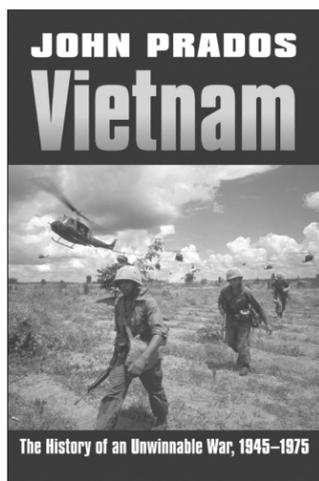
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Winner of the Henry Adams Prize of the Society for History in the Federal Government.

History of the US War in Vietnam

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National Liberation Front (the NLF, called the Viet Cong or VC by Diem and the US) were killing Diem's cronies and consolidating power. The US decided to back a coup of Vietnamese generals to topple Diem. Not only did the generals get rid of Diem and assassinate him; they also went on to overthrow one another on a regular basis.

The situation was desperate. More and more American troops were put in to replace Saigon troops who could not, or would not, get involved in the fighting. The Saigon government had no real base other than the aid it got from the US, and we got exactly what we paid for: pimps, prostitutes, cowards and gangsters, masquerading as a government and a military.

This was bad enough. But it was coupled with the incredible arrogance on the part of the US government and military leaders. They could not believe that Asians could stand up to the might and technology of the US. As the war progressed, we went from one stage to another without any real change in the situation. Strategic hamlets, Vietnamization, search and destroy, pacification: the French had tried all these programs, but somehow the US thought we could make them work. They did not.

The American people were not being told of the plans or the policies of the US government. To the contrary: Lyndon Johnson ran as a peace candidate in 1964, saying, "I won't send American boys to do the fighting for Asian troops." Americans were told that Vietnam was two countries (omitting some 2,000 years of history) and that the North was invading the South. And none of the information given out did anything to answer the questions of the 19-year-old American fighting the guerrillas in South Vietnam. While Saigon's leaders were talked about as the Vietnamese versions of Jefferson and Lincoln, we saw the drug pushing, the black marketeering and the torture cells.

Somehow in order to save Vietnam we had to destroy it. Civilian casualties from US actions ran from 100,000 in 1965 up to 300,000 in 1968, just from bombing and artillery. In addition, millions upon millions of gallons of herbicides were

sprayed over 6 million acres of land. We bombed hospitals to save orphans, we sprayed Agent Orange and destroyed the land in order to save crops, and we burned hamlets to save villages and turned Vietnam into a huge whorehouse in order to save Vietnam from Communism.

As GIs in Vietnam we saw the often-stark realities of Vietnam and could compare them to the "truth" the American people were being told. We saw the corrupt Saigon generals making money hand over fist while their armies would not fight. We saw the hate in the eyes of the local villagers who

"For a great many years as a soldier, I had the suspicion that war was a racket. Not until I retired did I fully realize it."

never welcomed us as "liberators" bringing us bouquets of flowers as we had seen in World War II movies. The only Vietnamese who seemed to want us there wanted greenbacks in return for drugs, booze or women, or all three. We also saw the enemy fight and had to admire both his bravery and tenacity in taking on US tanks, planes and helicopters with grenades and rifles. We supposedly valued human life while our enemy did not. Yet we paid the owners of the Michelin plantations \$600 for each rubber tree we damaged, while the family of a slain Vietnamese child got no more than \$120 in payment for a life.

We took and defended "strategic" hills, winning what the press called "victories." While the enemy body count (noted for the thin line between military and civilian dead) enhanced ranking officers' careers, it was the casualties among our friends that were felt first by us. And then we'd give up the hill and have to fight for it again later on. The war was not something to be won or lost by the grunt, but 365 days to be survived.

The US tried everything to win. We dropped more than three times the total tonnage of bombs dropped by both sides in World War II. We conducted "Operation

Phoenix" during which the CIA and the Saigon government killed up to 40,000 suspected members of the Viet Cong. We defoliated 10% of the land, much of it permanently. We bombed, bribed, shot, killed and burned for more than 10 years at a cost of \$170 billion (and a future cost which is continuing to rise). Despite all this, we still lost.

Nixon did not pull out because the US was winning but because the Vietnamese were. Some generals today are saying we lost the war but never lost a battle -- but what the hell did we "win" at Khe Sanh or in the Iron Triangle or in Laos or in Cambodia besides having some hole punched in some officer's promotion card?

The simple fact is that neither the American people nor the American GIs fighting in Vietnam thought that the goals -- real or imagined -- were worth the lives and the money being squandered. The war was lost on the battlefields of Vietnam and in the hearts and minds of the American people.

During the war, VVAW led tens of thousands of Vietnam vets in demonstrations against that war. No comparable group of Vietnam vets ever rose to challenge VVAW or our goals. When VVAW brought 1500 Vietnam vets to protest Nixon's renomination, the Republican Party could only come up with 6 vets to support the war -- and some of these did not support Nixon. Vietnam vets knew firsthand about the real war, and they opposed it.

When this was first written, the Reagan administration had begun again to put US service lives on the line to further foreign policy goals. The invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the abortive occupation of Beirut, Persian Gulf patrols -- all reflected a new US readiness to intervene overseas. The parallels with Vietnam were particularly striking in Central America where the US supported repressive regimes against popular insurgencies.

The first Bush administration followed suit with the invasion of

Panama, supposedly to capture a drug dealer (who had long been on the CIA's payroll). Thousands of Panamanians were killed and many more displaced in this "just cause." This "success" emboldened Bush to take us to war in the Persian Gulf in 1990-91, merely to protect our sources of oil and to reestablish the royal family in Kuwait. Hundreds of thousands died in this one-sided conflict, including nearly three hundred US troops (many the result of accidents and "friendly fire"). The Iraqi people continue to suffer under a horrible embargo that was established at the end of that war. Under Clinton came the use of US troops in Somalia and the continued advancement of a "war on drugs" against the people of Columbia. With the horrible events of 9-11 misused as justification for any kind of violent or repressive response, US military personnel are once again being used to fulfill political aims.

Vietnam was not just a mistake. Any US venture in another part of the globe will also be a mistake for the GIs who buy the government's lies. Vietnam was not a "noble cause," except for those who fought to bring our brothers home after they made the mistake of going. As for foreign aggression, hear the words of Medal of Honor winner and Marine commandant Smedley Butler, "War is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes...How many millionaires ever shoulder a rifle?"

"For a great many years as a soldier, I had the suspicion that war was a racket. Not until I retired did I fully realize it."

"I was," said Butler of his own role in Central American intervention, "nothing more than a gangster for Wall Street."



The above and more can be found in the following works:

George McTurnan Kahn & John W. Lewis, *The United States in Vietnam*, Dial Press, 1967;

Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, Viking 1982;

Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*, William Morrow & Co., 1990.

Howard Zinn: Veteran, Teacher, Activist

JOSEPH MILLER

In January 2010, VVAW lost a longtime friend and consistent supporter when Howard Zinn passed away. It is fully in line with his commitment to activism that he passed away while on a speaking tour promoting the causes of peace and social justice. For the past five years, Zinn had been an active partner in VVAW fundraising efforts. The national office asked him back in 2005 if he would sign onto a fundraising letter, and he did not hesitate. Even though, as a committed pacifist, he may have had some disagreements with VVAW positions on some issues, he always saw the larger meaning and importance of VVAW's legacy and continued activism, locally, nationally and internationally.

I first became aware of Howard Zinn in late 1966, after I was assigned to Helicopter Training Squadron 8 (HELTRARON-8) at Ellyson Field just outside of Pensacola, Florida, following two years of sea duty off the coast of Vietnam. By early 1965, I had developed major questions about the Vietnam war and about American

society, in general, and I wanted to get involved in the movement for change. With that in mind, I was reading everything I could get my hands on that might provide some critical perspectives. This search eventually brought me to Howard Zinn.

There was a great book and magazine shop in downtown Pensacola, and one of the first books I bought there was *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (1964). Like many other vets, I eventually saw clear connections between the war and the civil rights struggles at home, and Professor Zinn's work helped to illuminate these connections. By the time I read his 1967 work *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal*, while still in uniform and looking forward to my discharge in 1968, it was clear that joining the peace movement was the logical next step. I am sure that Zinn's work had a similar effect on other veterans. When my family and I returned to Chicago, it was only a matter of weeks before my wife and I joined our first peace march. By 1970, I had connected with VVAW and joined the Chicago

chapter. Thus, the scholar and activist Howard Zinn had brought me into activism.

As to Howard Zinn, the veteran and teacher, it was only much later that I became more aware of Zinn as a veteran of World War II, as is my father. By this time, I was also an academic, teaching politics at a state university, and it was clear that to properly teach about American politics, one must also teach American political history. Therefore, over the past twenty years, my students have been required to read Zinn's *People's History of the United States* in its successive editions. One of the central points to come out of their reading is the continuing thread of GI and veteran activism found in this work by a veteran of World War II. Students are always surprised to learn this hidden history of military dissent that Zinn takes back to the period of the Revolutionary War. For these students, then, it is not so surprising to learn of VVAW during Vietnam and GI opposition to the first Gulf War. From there, it is easy to expose them to the politi-

cal importance of contemporary activism by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Zinn's work gives voice to many hidden aspects of US political history, but we must especially recognize the honor and legitimacy that his work gives to GI and veteran resistance. As IVAW's Geoff Millard has stated it:

"To me the lesson of Howard's life is greater than 'A' people's history but our history. We must write our history in the deeds that we chose every day... We must also record what we do. We must challenge the militarism of our society and never let the right re-write our war as they have with Vietnam." (from IVAW web site)

Howard Zinn's work and activism will be missed, but it shall continue in the work and activism of all of us in VVAW and in the new generation of activists in IVAW.



JOE MILLER IS ONE THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS OF VVAW.



Banners at Arlington West in the Park on the Bay next to the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier, San Diego

Old Juarez During the War Years

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But we had one last dinner at the Navy Rose. The band played all his favorites tunes, and Larry got miserably drunk. He struggled with the thought of what would happen to the love of his life after he had shipped out. She seemed to be bearing up remarkably well. He toyed further with the desertion plan. There had been four other disappearances from our language class during the year. And no one

seemed to care.

The war went on, which I had hoped it wouldn't. My orders for Vietnam finally showed up. And three months later I was delivering some POW's for interrogation in Saigon. Walking across the American Embassy compound I ran into Larry. He had landed in a wonderfully soft job working for Ellsworth Bunker, the US Ambassador during the last war

years. Larry even got to wear civilian clothes. And you will be unsurprised to learn that he was once again in love. I didn't get to meet the woman because I had to get back to my unit, but his description rounded up the usual superlatives. He looked better, too. Thin and tanned. I didn't ask him about the whatshername, the blooming rose of Juarez, the previous love of his life.

But the current news of the killing fields now on the Mexican

border brought her back into my thinking. She'll be along in years by this time. If she's still alive I can only hope that she has made enough money to go back to her poor village in the mountains and take care of her sister who needed the operation. And I hope, at least, that she is no longer in Juarez.



JEFF DANZIGER IS A VIETNAM VET AND SYNDICATED POLITICAL CARTOONIST AND AUTHOR.

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

Old Juarez During the War Years

JEFF DANZIGER

When I was in the Army, studying Vietnamese in the late sixties, I was stationed near El Paso, Texas for about a year. On weekends I visited the city of Juarez, just over the Mexican border. I hadn't thought about Juarez much until it showed up in the news recently as a drug gang slaughterhouse where nearly five hundred killings have been recorded in just this year alone.

More than fifty gangs are in protracted battle with each other and the Mexican police. The Mexican Army has been brought in for effect. The level and creativity of violence is higher, if it can be believed, than the worst cities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Calling this a war is not just journalistic exaggeration.

It's very sad. In 1968, the El Paso-Juarez metroplex was hot and dusty, but it was peaceful. Juarez was especially attractive if you were on enlisted pay, which was little more than a hundred a month. The army's Vietnamese Language School was at Biggs Field, next to Ft. Bliss, and in acknowledgment of the intellectual nature of the training language, students were given the full weekends off. In Juarez we could get a full steak dinner for \$1.50 and all the Sol beer we could drink. We could also take Ferrocarril Nacional south to Chihuahua City, where the dinner

price dropped to an even buck.

The border was lightly officiated. You could walk across and wave at the guards both ways. Most amazing was the world's only (according to them) international trolley. The trolley cars were ancient and powered by overhead wires that sparked dramatically. This scared the Mexican women, who preferred to trudge across the International Bridge on foot, coming to clean and cook for Texans. Beneath the bridge the Rio Grande oozed along.

Juarez welcomed Americans with a sign that wished us all Bienvenidos, and it was a welcoming place, especially if you were bringing any dollars. Men in police hats would offer to guard your car for ten cents an hour. They weren't really policemen, but it wasn't worth arguing about. They would also give you dog-eared maps of the city and little coupons for discounts for meals and other things.

I never partook of the other things, but several of my fellow soldiers did. One friend, Larry Hirschhorn, was a frequenter of a brothel known as the Navy Rose. Mysterious choice of name since the ocean was many hundreds of miles away. At the Navy Rose we had Mexican food and bottles of Sol, and then I would leave to go back to the base. Larry stayed there

and enjoyed the full Montezuma, so to speak. Larry wasn't a married man and I was. I kept up with things vicariously.

Then disaster struck. Larry fell hopelessly in love with one of the girls at the Navy Rose. I can't remember her name but she was definitely beautiful. Larry was so smitten that he thought the only solution was to buy her out of the clutches of the management and send her back to his mother in Minneapolis or somewhere. He worried that she was so beautiful she would find him insufficiently guapo. And actually he wasn't all that guapo. His appetite for dissipation up until he fell in love contributed to poor posture and an unattractive girth. For a time he sought to lose some weight running with me in the evenings when the day had cooled. To speed up the slimming effects of running he obtained a diving wet suit. He reasoned that the increased perspiration would melt the pounds away. It didn't have the effect he wanted. Later I found a box of sugar donuts from the PX under his bed.

She was beautiful indeed. Lovely thick onyx hair, and eyes so black and deep you couldn't see the pupils. She told Larry the story of her life so far. She was working to support her family, in a poor village in the mountains

to the south. Her younger sister needed an operation, and so on. By this time Larry was fully nuts. The relationship, if you could call it that, was robbing his sleep, making him run in a wet suit and interrupting his study of the Vietnamese language. His new plan, and there had been others, was to desert the Army, go to Mexico, take the girl to the poor mountain village and hide out there until the end of the war, or forever, whichever came first. He was thinking of what he would name his children.

He did not desert and go to the mountain village, but he did stay in Juarez one night without leave. He had gotten in a fight and was jailed by the policia for nearly a week in the Juarez lock-up. I went with an MP to bail him out. The Juarez jail was rather a basic structure with an unpleasant clientele. Not a good place to wake up from a hangover. For one thing there was no roof. But the police were easy-going and, once the bail had been forked over, there were no problems. Mexico was suffering ruinous inflation then. The dollar was king.

The language school, forty-seven weeks long, came to an end, and we separated for other training.

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Loose Lips Sink Ships

