



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Volume 41, Number 2

Fall 2011

Reflections on Operation Recovery

MAGGIE MARTIN

October 7th marked 10 years of the war in Afghanistan. It was this same day last year that a group of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans launched Operation Recovery, a campaign for service members' right to heal from Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) have been excited for the chance to organize and fight for their brothers and sisters to get the medical and mental health care they deserve.

Operation Recovery's anti-war angle is becoming more and more apparent. Strong empirical evidence has been collected showing that trauma is affecting at least

a third to a half of our fighting forces. Recent studies are also linking multiple deployments, PTSD, and suicide. We've been collecting anecdotal evidence through popular research of service members about the rates of trauma and the effect on units and family life. We know that if we can work to force a standdown of every service member with trauma and every unit that is under strength we can force de-escalation in Afghanistan.

Along with collecting information to prove the need for service members right to heal we have been finding ways to be the kind of healing community that we believe is so important. We've educated ourselves through

anti-oppression training, active listening exercises, and talking about the shared values of our community: respect, love, solidarity, creativity, hard work, and accountability - just to name a few. These experiences have been the most valuable to me in many ways. I've been through a transformative experience in IVAW as I have opened my heart and mind to new ideas and new ways of being. Every time I experience myself being transformed I know that this road we are traveling is the road to liberation. Collective liberation.

This Veterans day, IVAW and Operation Recovery will highlight the service of women. There are some things that we know about

women in the military: women are in combat, 1 in 3 women in the military are sexually assaulted and sexual assault is an even greater predictor of having PTSD than combat exposure. These are the reasons we are claiming Veterans Day for all veterans including women. As we recognize women's contributions we stand with them to demand the Right to Heal. Operation Recovery is calling for national action to force III Corps Commander, General Campbell, to improve conditions for women soldiers at Fort Hood.

Moving forward we know that we need one thing to confront

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Operation Dewey Canyon III: 40 Years Later

BARRY ROMO

*A Limited Incursion Into The Country of Congress
It's the Memories, Not the Merit
A Medal for Men's Lives*

A thousand veterans standing in line. Stepping forward one by one, we hurl medals at the Capitol. It's the final day of Dewey Canyon III, the first time for a demonstration by veterans against the war they fought in. Veterans defied court orders to leave their campsite on the Mall in Washington; newspaper headlines blared, "Vets Overrule Court; Refuse to Leave!"

It was late April, 1971, and in Southeast Asia the war still raged. In Washington, we lobbied Congress, got arrested when we held a sit-in on the steps of the Supreme Court, and challenged

Nixon to bring as many Vietnam vets as we had brought to speak for his often cited "silent majority." On this final day we were taking a longer step as we shuffled forward, hurling curses along with the medals won in Vietnam, demanding an end to the war. Memories filled our minds as we moved slowly along—most of us quiet, lost in our visions...

...

Moving along the edge of the rice paddy, we circled the rising hill. We had taken seven casualties the day before from the local VC; today we were looking for them. We found rice caches, but the villages were empty—not even the old folks remained. Our company was spread out, moving in single



file between the openness of the rice paddies and the beginning of the jungle. We moved quietly, not talking but looking, listening and waiting for something to happen.

After several hours, it happened. The VC opened up on us from a hill. We hit back, not just with our rifles, machine-guns and grenade launchers, but with heavy gunship and artillery support. The VC kept on fighting, kept on shooting and we kept hitting back at them. Our fire wasn't concentrated; we were spread out around the hill. And then friendly fire started hitting our company and my platoon—fire coming over the hill, missing the VC and

hitting us!

The gunships were spraying the area as well, not just with M-60's but also 50's and rockets. I grabbed my RTO and ran to the squad that was hit—we went through enemy and friendly fire, popping smoke to stop the gunships. The whole squad was hit bad. Artillery had blown men as far as 50 feet; my platoon sergeant was dead, his body ripped apart. There were no smoke grenades left to mark the area for medevac choppers to land and take the wounded to a hospital. I ran into the paddy and had the choppers guide in on me.

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From the National Office

JOE MILLER

Welcome to the Fall 2011 issue of *The Veteran*.

As the years pass, we in the veterans' movement continue to experience the pain or excitement of significant anniversaries. Notable anniversaries for 2011 include: 40 years since VVAW's Dewey Canyon III, 20 years since the first Gulf War and 10 years since the beginning of our war in Afghanistan.

As a way of reminding us all of the origins of VVAW's continuing opposition to the war in Afghanistan, we are also reprinting our October 2001 statement against the use of military force.

It is also significant that this issue marks 40 years since *The Veteran* began publication (see page 34).

In our Spring issue we reported some on the uprisings in Madison, Wisconsin. As we go to press, the Occupy Wall Street protests have spread across the country. "Something's happening here..." And, it is perfectly clear that the American people, the 99%, are on the move. We agree with Andrew Young's assessment of the Occupy protests: "There's a difference between an emotional outcry and a movement. This is an emotional outcry. The difference is organization and articulation."

We believe that organizations, such as VVAW and IVAW, can help provide a veterans and GI perspective to these struggles, lending our skills and resources to help transition the "outcry" to a lasting movement for change.

We have already seen veteran participation in a range of these events, and we need to continue our presence and our support in any way possible.

We must highlight the role the ongoing US wars have played in the ongoing financial crisis. Once again we see this as a rich man's war(s) and the poor man's (and woman's) fight.

We must demand an end to these wars and demand that the government provide full benefits, including the best in medical treatment, for returning vets. We also demand that the treatment of current vets not come at the expense of veterans from past wars. The true cost of war involves taking care of all veterans, for the duration, no matter the cost.

We also need to fight against those in both parties caught up in the "deficit reduction" madness. Cutting Medicare, Social Security and VA benefits will do nothing except further punish those of us who have paid our dues, worked our whole lives and fought their wars.

Long term, VVAW continues

to provide quality Military Counseling at no charge. We continue to provide IVAW's Field Organizing Program with crucial financial support. And, as we have done for nearly forty years, VVAW continues to be directly involved in the struggle for victims of Agent Orange, here and in Vietnam.

We encourage all VVAW members and supporters to do what you can where you can - Get Involved! Speak at schools. Be active participants in anti-war and Occupy demos. Work with local IVAW chapters and help pass on the lessons of VVAW to the next generation. We still have lots of work to do --- there is no discharge from the struggle for peace and social justice!



JOE MILLER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR WHO LIVES IN URBANA, ILLINOIS.

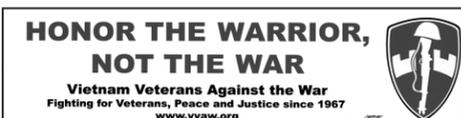
Editorial Collective

- Charlie Branson
- Jeff Machota
- Joe Miller
- Ellie Shunas



Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Horace Coleman, Bill Ehrhart, Ann Hirschman, Larry Ball, Fred W. McDarah, George Butler, Michael Abramson, Ken Dalton, Alynne Romo, Marty Webster, Tom Manthe, Ben Chitty, IVAW and others for contributing photos.

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Below is a list of VVAW coordinators and national staff. If you need a speaker for an event, class visit, or interview, please contact the National Office at (773) 569-3520 or email vvaw@vvaw.org and we will put you in touch with the nearest VVAW member.

VVAW National Coordinators:

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Joe Miller
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Reflections on Operation Recovery

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the military power that continues to waste precious life and keeps our service men and women from healing from the wounds of war. People Power. We are inspired and grateful that as we come up on the one-year mark of our campaign, that we are in a country ready for nonviolent action. Moving into this next year of our campaign we will be able to utilize the information and relational resources we have been cultivating, we will be able to tell the story of Operation Recovery and be amplified through our network of partners. But we aren't there yet, we still

have many allies to reach out to, relationships and trust to build, and collaboration to create a common vision. Movement-building takes time and it will continue to be a work in progress as we shift and develop as organizers.

Looking back at 10 years of war it's hard to believe we are already here with years flying by. It's hard to take it, to know that we can fight for so long and still feel like we have no control. But then I remember this year of Operation Recovery, of training, traveling, phone calls, emails, facebook, face-to-face, anything we can

get to be working together, to be making things better. We give a lot to this work because we believe that changes in individuals yield changes in society and we see those changes taking place.

As the military eliminates Don't Ask Don't Tell, lowers some of the barriers that kept women sacrificing without recognition, and implements new programs to reduce sexual assault and suicide, we know that we are a part of that change and we will continue to be here pushing for more. I'll leave with a quote that we've shared amongst the campaign. This quote inspires us as we seek transformation in ourselves and in the community around us.

"Once social change begins,

it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future and the future is ours." -Cesar Chavez



MAGGIE MARTIN SERVED AS A SERGEANT IN THE US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS. SHE SERVED TWO TOURS IN IRAQ. MAGGIE IS A FIELD ORGANIZER WITH IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR AND DOES WORK WITH WARRIOR WRITERS. SHE IS A GRADUATE STUDENT AT MARYGROVE COLLEGE IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN AND HER BLOGS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN HUFFINGTON POST.

Ten Years After...and Counting

JOE MILLER

This issue of *The Veteran* comes out as we mark the tenth anniversary of the start of US military intervention in Afghanistan. Demonstrations marking that date took place across the nation in opposition to these continuing military operations, recognizing that ten years has only brought death to nearly two thousand US troops, hundreds of coalition forces, and some tens of thousands of Afghani civilians. VVAW members have joined with IVAW and others in calling for an end to these efforts and an immediate removal of all US and coalition forces. The statement below, first promulgated in 2001, in general, still reflects VVAW's basic position on this war and the continuing occupation. Our members, singly and in groups, around the country have joined forces with those who want

to bring our brothers and sisters home. The quicker we bring them home, the more of them we'll be able to bring home safely.

*The Veteran, 2001
(Volume 31, Number 1)*

**From VVAW's
National Steering Committee
10/27/01**

On October 7, military action began against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In the VVAW statement on the September 11 terrorist attacks, we argued against the use of "massive military power" as a response. While those who committed and supported the awful acts of terrorism in New York and Washington, DC, must be brought to justice, VVAW does not accept that US military intervention in

Afghanistan will be the answer.

We must carve out space for dissent in this country, dissent that is now under threat with the passage of a sweeping anti-terrorism bill by the US Congress. It is time for all of us to stand up for justice and reason now, to really be "winter soldiers" in these times when our views are being marginalized and may be unpopular.

We call upon people to continue participation in demonstrations and rallies across the country. These are necessary to avoid the feeling of isolation in this dangerous time. These are important methods of coming together as citizens.

We also suggest the wider use of teach-ins and town meetings to connect with broader audiences, to help each other to learn about the reasons behind the violence of

September 11 and to move toward the recognition of the US as one country in an international community, a country that must learn to base its domestic and foreign policies on true economic and social justice.

Those who receive this paper should contact the individuals listed on page two to find out what is going on in your community and how you might help in this necessary effort. VVAW is assisting in efforts to forge a national progressive coalition in response to 9-11 and its aftermath.



JOE MILLER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR WHO LIVES IN URBANA, ILLINOIS.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Debts. Deficits. The nation defaulting. The political talk this past summer brought out the weirdos on these subjects. The rhetoric on the Republican side was either ill thought out, opportunistic, or just plain ignorant. How can you, all at the same time, (1) balance the budget, (2) not raise taxes and (3) not hurt people who rely on Social Security and Medicare? And say all this with a straight face? And Obama and the Democrats went along with this charade which let the Republicans and their Tea Party set the terms of the debate.

Watching all this reminded me of Joseph Goebbels, propaganda honcho for Hitler and the Nazis. I'm sure Goebbels didn't invent the concept of the Big Lie, but he knew how to use it. Say something often enough and loud enough and it becomes accepted as a given (if not the truth).

The Big Lie about this summer's debate was not that one side or the other is going about it wrong. The lie was the debate itself which assumed that eliminating the debt and (coming close to) balancing the budget is the cure for what ails this doddering country. That was said over and over again by Tea Partiers and was accepted by all others as the terms of the debate. And the liberal media went along dutifully, leaving the whole mess unquestioned.

It's not nice to have as big of a debt as the US has, but fixing that should be seventh or eighth on the list of things to do. Rich people are not stupid. (Okay, maybe sometimes.) They aren't going to use their Bush tax cuts

to help produce things that people aren't going to buy. Money needs to circulate among the people who will spend. These people are the poor, the working and the middle class. The economy needs to be stimulated - one way or the other, either through a growth industry such as we had with the railroads in the 19th century or auto in the 20th, or it can be stimulated by government spending. The stimulus could be in the form of the often talked about money used for the needed improvements of infrastructure. There's a word for stopping government spending during recessionary times. The word is "stupid."

Fascism was a political/economic theory that was around before World War II. Then it took the form of Hitler, Goebbels, and the German Nazis, who were so abhorrent that nobody called themselves fascist any more. That doesn't mean the idea died. It becomes evident now and then. It can take the form of Assad in Syria or any other dictator who kills off a couple of thousand labor leaders, human rights advocates and other reformers and socialists, while transferring the wealth to the ruling class and eliminating any safety nets Ronald Reagan wished for.

You don't always need to pile up the bodies. Fascism can be more genteel - like the Tea Party. Financially backed by right-wing wealth, they attack support programs for minorities and the poor. They attack unions. They support the eroding of civil liberties. They do these things while unabashedly supporting

the wealthy. They speak against big government when their whole purpose is to become that government and put the rest of us in our place.

I do think that some Tea Party supporters are fine people. They're just afraid and looking for simple answers. Their good instincts have been sidetracked by what they've seen from the government. It's not that the problem is "government" or "big government." The problem is who runs the government. More precisely, who government runs for. The government is sold and bought by the wealthy whose interests are contrary to most of the rest of us including the rank and file of the Tea Party.

Is there an answer? Maybe not, but you can always try. Why not cut back on this world leader thing. It costs lots of money that could be used for economic stimulus and restoring some of the services that have been disappearing over the last couple of decades. Fighting two wars and several smaller actions is no longer affordable. Pursuing peace may not be sexy and won't create a job for everyone, but freeing up military expenditures for more productive use is a good first step.

And why not do something about corporations which use their overseas subsidiaries to avoid US taxes? Doing so will not hurt job creation. It's not the job-creating mid-size and small businesses that have a branch in Luxembourg where they choose to pay less taxes. The big corporations spend more money on lobbyists to buy off Congress to keep their tax havens

than they do in taxes paid.

•••

How about a shout out to the late George Aiken, former US senator. During the time the Vietnam War was going hot and heavy with no light at the end of the tunnel, he was credited with suggesting the idea that we should declare victory and bring the troops home. He actually didn't use those words, but he was close enough to be given ownership of that concept.

I thought of Senator Aiken when the US Navy Seals found and killed Osama bin Laden. Back in Vietnam time there wasn't really a political basis for declaring victory, but in 2011 with bin Laden dead, we could have declared victory in Afghanistan and started the final withdrawal of troops. Bin Laden's death provided justification. There's hardly any Al Qaeda left there, and the symbolic reason for fighting the war was dead. Alas. Obama missed the chance.

Then a drone strike in Pakistan killed Al-Rahmin, Al Qaeda's number two man, and CIA director Petraeus made noises about the success we're having in eliminating Al Qaeda top leadership. If we kill off one or two top Al Qaeda leaders can we declare victory and leave Afghanistan? Hell, Al-Rahman, like bin Laden, wasn't even in Afghanistan. So we must have already won in Afghanistan.

It's time.



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



Occupy Wall Street protest 10/5/11. New VVAW national coordinator Brian Mattarese stage far left.

Notes From the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I know, Tom, we can't go home again. And when home is an armored cav squadron in I Corps, you might want to skip that idea and go to Plan B. This past August, that's what I did.

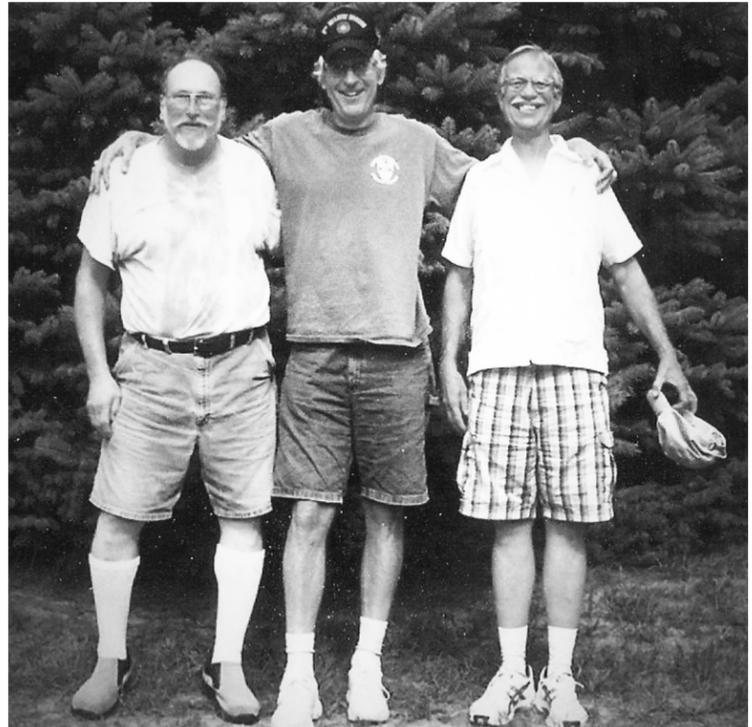
My two best Nam buddies were Al Bokor and Rusty Hammond. Al lives in a small town in Michigan, and Rusty lives in California. By one of those flukes of nature, Rusty has a sister who lives in Al's hometown. When he and I spoke by phone several months ago, I noted that that was a nice coincidence, so that when he goes to see his sister, he gets to see Al. His response was, "No, Wiz, when I go to see Al I get to see my sister." No disrespect to Rusty's sister, but vets will understand that prioritization.

I may have failed to note that I had not seen these guys for over forty years. The following is an only slightly embellished account of our August reunion. Vietnam vets will find nothing in it which is the least bit surprising, which raises the obvious question, "Why bother?" Please bear with me.

Borrowing Al's phrase from 1968, we liberated several bravos over the course of seven or eight hours. (Is that just cav jargon?) Again, nothing surprising fol-

lowed. "You stupid son-of-a-bitch, that dumb-ass sergeant's name wasn't Melendez, it was O'Fallon. How could you confuse those guys?" Or, "Come on, that didn't happen in Phu Bai. We didn't get there till three months later. It was while we were still at Dong Ha." You get the picture. But most of it did flow, as in "Remember when Six sent our platoon the wrong way out of Fire Support Base Apple? I can't believe nobody got wasted on that one." And there were the more positive memories. "Chico was a great guy. I looked him up about twenty years ago, and we had a great time. I hope he's still doing OK." And (of course) "Remember when we lost the commo lieutenant and his jeep driver when they hit a mine? I'll never forget Taps in the field the next morning. Really heavy, man."

OK, you get the points. Our lovely wives Sue and Angie, and Rusty's lady Alla, put up with all of this, even when things got – by civilian standards – a little weird. But the really cool part about the whole thing was this. I had not laid eyes on these guys since LBJ was president. And I swear to Jesus, every single moment of the reunion was like we had seen each other a week ago. There was



none of that "So how you been?" "Fine. How about you?" "OK." "Anything new?" "Not really." If it had been that way, I would have been extremely disappointed. And I would have blamed myself for letting that happen. So here is the point of this column.

This whole story is only slightly aimed at Nam vets. It is primarily aimed at our IVAW brothers and sisters. The message: do not let forty years go by before you do this. I used to keep in somewhat regular touch with my best buddy from commo AIT. We ex-

changed letters and occasionally spoke by phone for several years, and each communication ended with, "We have to get together sometime." Then one day I got a call from his widow. I hope that these stories may have made this column worth the reading.



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.

Mail Call



Achieving Justice for Vietnamese and US Agent Orange Victims

MARTY WEBSTER

Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011, H.R. 2634 Introduced in Congress

Fifty years after the US first sprayed Agent Orange in Vietnam, it continues to kill and maim Vietnamese and Americans. Legislation has just been introduced into the House that, for the first time, addresses the ongoing health problems of Vietnamese, children of US veterans, and Vietnamese Americans. The bill, H.R. 2634, Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011, was introduced on July 25 by Ranking Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Bob Filner, and was referred to the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, Foreign Affairs, and Energy and Commerce Committees. The bill is summarized below. The full text can be found at: <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Search for H.R. 2634.

This bill recognizes the common interest of Vietnamese and US victims of Agent Orange in addressing their common pain, once and for all! It provides comprehensive assistance for Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange and clean-up of the toxic hot spots in Vietnam where dioxin remains in the soil. It addresses the health care needs of the second and third generation of Agent Orange victims in the US, the children and grandchildren of veterans, who are suffering from birth defects and illnesses as a result of their fathers' exposure to Agent Orange. Vietnamese Americans who served, alongside US soldiers in Vietnam and their children and grandchildren are similarly affected by Agent Orange and the bill will provide health services to them.

Now, real help for these victims of Agent Orange is within our reach, but it will require focused work on the part of those of us who support it to motivate Congress to pass the bill. Our FIRST task is to obtain as many co-sponsors in the House of Representatives as possible — Democratic, Republican and Independent.

There are a number of things we can do as individuals and as members of VVAW:

- Organize educational activities. VAORRC will be developing a packet containing

pamphlets, articles and videos which you can use to give presentations to your chapter and other organizations.

- Urge your representatives to co-sponsor the legislation to help the victims.

- Arrange meetings with your representative and with his or her veteran's and foreign-policy aides. This can be within the district, or in DC.

- Prior to meetings with the reps you should carefully plan the meeting, and develop clear talking points. Determine if they are members of the committees that will be considering the legislation and research their voting records on similar legislation. Do you have any friends in common?

- At the meetings, tell them why you believe this legislation is important to their veteran and other constituents, and why it is an important foreign policy initiative. Give them a copy of H.R. 2634.

- Use your personal experience with Agent Orange to emphasize the importance of taking care of the effects of war upon veterans and their families. Remind them that, while US veterans can get VA benefits for some Agent Orange related illnesses, their children and grandchildren get no help for AO related birth defects.

- Use your experience in traveling to Vietnam or meeting Vietnamese victims or watching a film or reading an article to explain why US veterans believe that our country has a responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance and environmental cleanup for Vietnamese people harmed by Agent Orange.

- Explain why Vietnamese Americans, who fought on the US side but do not receive veterans benefits and their family members, deserve medical assistance for their Agent Orange related health conditions.

- Explain that the bill, addressing the human needs of US veterans, Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans and their children and grandchildren suffering from dioxin-related health conditions, addresses a common interest, and heals the wounds of war.

- Then ask your representative to commit to adding their name as a co-sponsor of the bill.

- If they agree to co-sponsor,

thank them. If they say maybe, tell them you'll call or visit them again. If they say no, ask them why and thank them for their time. If they ask for more information, be sure to send it to them promptly, and then follow up with additional meetings or contacts.

We will provide you upon request with as many Agent Orange constituent cards as you need to be signed by as many people as possible. Please collect the signed cards and return them to VAORRC. We will sort them by congressional district and once we have significant numbers of cards in a district we will work with supporters in the district to present the cards to their representative in person.

To become involved or for further information please contact Marty Webster at 773-569-3520 or email mw.vvaw@gmail.com.

Summary of H.R. 2634 The Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011

A. In Vietnam:

1. Provide resources for services for the disabled in areas where Agent Orange victims are concentrated. Provide medical services and nursing services for those harmed by Agent Orange. Develop community support organizations, including health care and educational and chronic care services and medical equipment to care for Vietnamese people harmed, including additional services as they are identified.

2. Fund the development of community support organizations, including health care assessment centers, educational, vocational, and physical rehabilitation centers, custodial care and daycare services and medical equipment.

3. Provide assistance in the repair and rebuilding of standard homes for Agent Orange exposed families.

4. Provide micro grants and loans to enable Agent Orange affected victims to feed their families and escape from extreme poverty.

5. Provide the above resources by funding Vietnamese non-governmental organizations including the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin to engage in these activities.

6. Provide funding for remediation for areas in Vietnam that continue to contain high levels of dioxin.

B. In Vietnam and the US:

1. Provide support for research and active involvement of schools of public health and medicine for the study of the health consequences of the Vietnam War on all people affected by Agent Orange.

C. In the United States:

1. Extend the reopened National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study to a mortality and morbidity study to track all health outcomes in Vietnam veterans.

2. Establish multiple regional hospital, therapy, and research centers to provide specialists in environmental illnesses, state-of-the art diagnostic equipment, medicine, rehabilitative medicine, etc. to focus on the medical and emotional needs of the ill progeny of Vietnam veterans with childhood cancers, birth defects, and developmental disabilities. These centers are to be linked to existing medical and university-based medical centers. Transportation and housing support shall be provided for these families to travel to the centers for diagnostic evaluations and treatment.

D. For Vietnamese Americans:

1. Provide funds to public health and Vietnamese American organizations to conduct a broad health assessment of Vietnamese-Americans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange and their children, to determine the effects to their health from exposure to Agent Orange.

2. Develop centers in areas where Vietnamese Americans are concentrated to provide assessment, counseling, and treatment for Agent Orange related health conditions.



MARTY WEBSTER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND A CORE MEMBER OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF & RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN (VAORRC).

Helping Veterans Obtain VA Benefits Saves Local Healthcare Budget Dollars

RAY PARRISH

Many veterans use non-VA healthcare facilities because VA regulations place bureaucratic hurdles in front of the veterans who are least able to overcome them and the people that these veterans go to for help either don't know how or simply refuse to serve them because of their own prejudice.

There's an ever-growing population of veterans, from ALL eras, with severe, untreated mental disabilities, especially PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). So severe, in fact, that the most out-of-control veterans commit some kind of misconduct while still in uniform and they end up with an "other than Honorable" military discharge. The VA has rules that allow them to grant benefits to these vets, but veterans are told the opposite by everyone they go to for help, until they come to our office. The VA denies the claims in the beginning and many veterans don't know that they need to appeal and ask for a "character

of service determination." They can then win full benefits with an appeal if it includes a properly worded psychological evaluation explaining that the veteran was insane at the time of the misconduct. It doesn't have to be a PTSD diagnosis and it doesn't have to have caused the misconduct. However, if either is the case, this is an opportunity to make those claims.

Since disciplinary charges for misconduct pre-empt the medical disability retirement process, many vets end up with these "bad" discharges even after being recommended for military medical retirement for PTSD or another mental disability. The veteran may simply have given up on the military's inadequate, inappropriate or nonexistent treatment and gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave). Misconduct involving drugs, alcohol or violence are also common. In addition, many veterans with PTSD are discharged for a

"personality disorder" which the VA says is non-service connected. Once again a properly worded psychological evaluation can correct the diagnosis and the veteran can then get full VA benefits. It should be noted that many of these veterans have chronic medical conditions or illnesses that the VA will not treat until a favorable "character of service" determination is made.

We have "VA Claims Agents" accredited by the VA to represent veterans and their families in VA disability claims. They have the patience to deal with this population of veterans, the experience to write successful appeals and experience working with healthcare professionals in this specialized area. No other veterans group has a therapist on staff. This therapist, Hans Buwalda, does individual, couple, and group counseling for veterans and their loved ones. She also writes these psychological evaluations and trains volunteer mental health professionals,

mainly from The Soldiers Project, which has 40,000 volunteers nationwide.

Our objective is to get these disabled veterans the treatment and housing that they so desperately need. For this to happen we need to make them eligible for benefits from the VA. Because the VA recognizes its limitations, they are funding non-VA, community-based service providers for healthcare, housing, job training and, most importantly, veteran-run peer-counseling. The actual number of such veterans and the cost savings to state, county and city budgets is a simple research task. These results may indicate that it would be cost effective for state and local healthcare providers to employ people in their facilities who can help these veterans win their claims for federal benefits.



RAY PARRISH IS THE BENEFITS DIRECTOR AT VVAW'S MILITARY AND VETERANS COUNSELING SERVICE.

Crazy, But Not Dishonorable

RAY PARRISH

Let's get right to the bottom line. According to 38 USCS, section 5303(b): "if it is established to the satisfaction of the Secretary that, at the time of the commission of an offense leading to a person's court-martial, discharge, or resignation, that person was insane, such person shall not be precluded from benefits under laws administered by the Secretary based upon the period of service from which such person was separated."

Wow! Veterans can't be denied VA benefits even if they left the military with "bad" discharges, down to and including DD's (Dishonorable Discharges), if they can present a "credible" psychological evaluation that shows that they were "insane" at the time of the misconduct! They don't have to show that the misconduct was "caused" by the mental disorder and it can be any diagnosis (PTSD, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc.). You don't need to get the military to "upgrade" the discharge or wait for Congressional or Presidential clemency.

A "credible" evaluation is one that bases its conclusions on the veteran's military records and explains how they show the

symptoms of "insanity," using the VA's definition of insanity printed below. The evaluation can also use medical records (military or civilian) and previous evaluations, and can make reference to notarized statements of friends and family to verify facts and the veteran's behavior. Free evaluations and treatment are offered by volunteer mental health professionals at The Soldiers Project (877-576-5343). To find someone who's ready to do the evaluation, call the VVAW therapist, Hans Buwalda at 773-370-4789. File a claim with the VA, be prepared to appeal denials, and don't miss any deadlines.

Insanity definition for VA claims

38 CFR & 3.354

Determination of insanity

(a) *Definition of insanity.* An insane person is one who, while not mentally defective or constitutionally psychopathic, except when a psychosis has been engrafted upon such basic condition, exhibits, due to disease, a more or less prolonged deviation from his normal method of behavior; or who interferes with the peace of society; or who has

so departed (become antisocial) from the accepted standards of the community to which by birth and education he belongs as to lack the adaptability to make further adjustment to the social customs of the community in which he resides.

(b) *Insanity causing discharge.* When a rating agency is concerned with determining whether a veteran was insane at the time he committed an offense leading to his court-martial, discharge or resignation [38 U.S.C. 5303(b)], it will base its decision on all the evidence procurable relating to the period involved, and apply the definition in paragraph (a) of

this section.

The public and the military have become more aware of the "invisible wounds of war," thanks in large part to decades of work by VVAW members on this issue. We can hope that more veterans will seek treatment for mental health problems as we win the battle to de-stigmatize all mental disorders, especially PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). So spread the word far and wide about this.



RAY PARRISH IS THE BENEFITS DIRECTOR AT VVAW'S MILITARY AND VETERANS COUNSELING SERVICE.



Dewey Canyon III.

The "Debt Crisis": Veterans and Potential Benefit Cuts

JEN TAYABJI

While the US "debt crisis" has been all over the headlines for the past six months, one crucial aspect – the effect that some of the proposed cuts would have on veterans – has been glossed over by most media outlets and politicians alike.

On August 2, 2011, President Obama signed into law a dangerous and one-sided compromise bill that reduced the federal deficit, avoided immediate default, and allowed the President to raise the debt ceiling. This last-minute compromise was developed behind closed doors, providing no transparency to the American public.

This Budget Control Act of 2011 provides two phases of spending cuts, with no guaranteed revenue increases:

- \$1 trillion in cuts over 10 years, with more than half coming from non-defense discretionary spending programs;

- The remainder of cuts, at least \$1.5 trillion, will be left for the bipartisan bicameral Super Committee to determine and propose to Congress by November 23, 2011.

Possible Cuts Regarding the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)

One of the many possible cuts that was considered over the summer during negotiations and are still being considered by the Super Committee is altering the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) calculation. The Social Security Administration determines the COLA every year to keep Social Security benefit payouts in line with the increase in cost of living. The COLA for veterans' pension benefits are equal to what the Social Security Administration sets for the COLA each year and the COLA for veterans' disability compensation benefits are equal to or less than that COLA. What this means is that any discussions to cut or alter the COLA calculations for Social Security is just as relevant to veterans and their benefits!

Since many Vietnam-era veterans are now eligible for Social Security, or will be in the next few years, veterans will be adversely affected by the cuts being considered by the Super Committee. Already, there have been no Cost of Living Adjustments for two years. Currently, the COLA is based on one of the Consumer Price Indices (CPI). What has been proposed is changing which CPI is used to calculate the COLA. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that switching to a chained-CPI would save \$208

billion over ten years by reducing Social Security, disability and other benefits, and by increasing revenues. More than half of this amount – \$112 billion – would come from Social Security alone; an additional \$24 billion would come from VA benefits and retirement pay (Source: Strengthen Social Security Coalition).

The proposed chained-CPI is argued to be a more accurate way of measuring inflation because it calculates both a consumer's choice as well as changes in price. However, both the current CPI and the proposed chained-CPI are not accurate assessments of the cost of living for aging Americans, people with disabilities, and veterans, who have a greater need and higher cost for health care access and coverage. The chained-CPI would significantly cut the benefits of all current and future Social Security beneficiaries – including retired and disabled veterans – as well as VA disability compensation and pension benefits.

Representative Donna Edwards explained it best, in a letter sent to the President and co-signed by 69 other members of the US House: "The evidence is clear. Social Security has a \$2.7 trillion surplus in 2011 that is projected to grow to \$3.7 trillion by 2022, and is therefore

not a contributing factor to our national debt. Make no mistake, the chained CPI is a benefit cut for current and future beneficiaries. While we strongly support efforts to reduce our federal debt and curb deficit spending, we do not believe balancing our nation's budget should be done on the backs of seniors, veterans, the disabled, or children. Applying the chained CPI to current government benefit programs would cause deep cuts to current beneficiaries."

For more information on Social Security and potential cuts to benefits, resources, and ways to take action, please visit the Strengthen Social Security Coalition's website at: www.strengthensocialsecurity.org.



JEN TAYABJI IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER WITH CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS (CCHCC) AND CO-ORGANIZER OF CCHCC'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM. SHE IS ALSO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ILLINOIS DISCIPLES FOUNDATION. SHE CAN BE EMAILED AT JEN@HEALTHCARECONSUMERS.ORG.

Cheney's New Book Slags Colin Powell



DANZIGER NYTS/CWS Sept 2 2011 (4876)

Going to the VA Clinic

GREGORY ROSS

I got laid off and lost my health care. I went to my local VA clinic. A VA cop asked me for my VA ID card. I told him that I was coming to sign up. All through this short conversation he seemed edgy, almost hyper-vigilant. He asked if I had my DD214. When I pulled it out of my shirt pocket and said, "Do you need to see it?" He visibly relaxed, smiled and said, "Second floor, sir." As I have been going up to the clinic more, what I had guessed about his demeanor has proven true. I have seen at least one guy go off on the VA cop because he forgot his VA ID card. Seems foolish to get in the face of an armed man, but, then I never did get the military macho ethic.

On the second floor I got in the first line I saw. A short time later I was handing my DD214 to the man behind the counter and telling him I would like to get an appointment for an intake. He turned to the computer and said, "How soon would you like to come in, sir." All this "Sir" stuff was making me nervous, I had not been an officer. "As soon as possible," I said. He turned back to the computer, clicked away; then said, "How about 3pm today." It was 2:50 pm. We smiled at each other. At about 3:05pm a nurse called my name and after a perfunctory intake of vital signs, weight, and a few ways of asking me if I was depressed and/or suicidal, I was given an appointment for a half hour physical with a VA doctor

and I went home.

Three weeks later another friendly nurse took my vitals and assessed my possible level of depression, then took me to see "Dr. V. Minh" [of course it is a made up name but, not a made up description], who was about 5 feet tall, maybe 95 pounds, maybe 50 years old. He sat at his computer and fired questions at me, mostly about how much I drank and if I did drugs. When I told him I drink about a 6 pack of beer a year, he said, "Oh, a 6 pack a day?" I corrected him but, he ignored me. "How often do you do drugs?" he asked. I replied, emphasizing every word, "A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN I DID DRUGS, WHICH I NO LONGER DO, I DID THEM EVERY DAY." He nodded his head and entered something into the computer. Then he listened to my heart and asked if anything hurt. I have an Achilles tendon that may need surgery. I had a tumor removed from my Spinal Cord that necessitated at least one more MRI to rule out it's regrowth. I have a low testosterone count and have to use a gel daily or I get depressed and lethargic. If this man was going to be my "Medical Gatekeeper" we had to be on better terms.

When I noticed a pack of acupuncture needles and a point location "doll," I said, "You do acupuncture?" For the first time he looked at me. I told him I had just lost a job with the County

Hospital working in the Chemical Dependency Clinic and the HIV/AIDS Clinic doing acupuncture. The look he gave me said, "Delusional," then he entered something in the computer. I asked, "Are you from Viet Nam?" He flinched and kept me in his view. It was then that I realized that neither he nor the nurse closed the door to their offices, they both had just pulled a curtain across the door. He said, "Yes." I asked, "Did you study Acupuncture in Viet Nam?" He shook his head. I asked, "Here?" He said, "No, in Beijing." That could only mean one thing, he was from North Viet Nam. We looked at each other for a while then he said the half hour was up and that I should go get blood drawn and gave me a slip to get a follow-up appointment. We were only 20 minutes into the alleged half-hour appointment.

When next I came in I was again seen by a very nice nurse for vitals; again with just a curtain draw, no closed door; again including the queries about depression; then to "Dr. V. Minh's" office, again no closed door there either. He was seated at his computer. He did not look up but just asked my name, then began to go over my blood draw. I had to know, so I just said it, "Last time I was here we talked about acupuncture and you told me you studied in Beijing?" He cut his eyes at me, squinted a little, then indicated he remembered. I said, "I was

wondering then..." I hesitated a moment then decided to just go for it. "am I being treated by an ex-VC doctor?" He laughed and said, "Your mind works well. No, I was from Sai Gon, came to America and became an MD then came to California and decided to learn acupuncture. I paid a lot of money and went to Beijing as part of the Acupuncture for Physicians school." He laughed again and said, "Very good, you made the connections that if I studied in Beijing, I must be from North Viet Nam." We both had a good laugh even though the implication was that I wasn't so drug or alcohol addled that I couldn't think straight. He then wrote out a referral for an Orthopedic work-up and a visit with the Urologist. We went the whole half hour this time and I left with us shaking hands and laughing. Irony, thy name is Veterans Affairs Health Care System.



GREGORY ROSS IS A NAVY VET, IN THE GUN LINE OFF THE COAST OF VIET NAM WITH THE 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. HE'S A GRADUATE OF A VA DRUG, ALCOHOL AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY [SINCE 1989], LAID OFF [2011]. PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE".



The actual Austin automobile Thich Quang Duc rode to Saigon in before immolating himself in protest of Ngo Dinh Diem's suppression of Buddhists in 1963, at The Holy Lady Pagoda, in Vietnam.

Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin

MARTY WEBSTER

On August 8th and 9th, an international gathering of Agent Orange victims was held in Vietnam. Delegations of Agent Orange survivors from Vietnam, the United States, Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Australia, Canada and New Zealand joined with victims of other weapons of mass destruction from Japan, Iraq, Iran, India, Brazil and other countries. The conference was organized by the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, the sole representative of Vietnam's Agent Orange victims, with more than 300,000 members and chapters throughout Vietnam.

Veterans and 2nd and 3rd generation victims from across the world adopted an appeal, actively supported by VVAW, addressed to the peoples of the world to take concerted action to achieve justice for Agent Orange victims and end, once and for all, the use of weapons in violation of international law.

Appeal of the Second International Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, August 9th, 2011

The Second International Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, held in Hanoi from August 8th to 9th, 2011 included participants from around the world: Agent Orange victims, victims of other toxic chemicals, scientists, lawyers and social activists. The conference is a significant and important historic event, marking the 50th anniversary of the first spraying of the toxic chemical Agent Orange (1961-1971) by the US forces in Vietnam and Indochina.

The delegates to the Conference agree that during the Vietnam War, from 1961 to 1971, US forces through Operation Ranch Hand sprayed nearly 80 million liters of herbicides over South Vietnam, of which 61% was Agent Orange containing at least 366kg of dioxin, the most toxic substance known to science.

Since the First International Conference of Victims of Agent Orange in 2006, there has been greater public understanding and awareness of the dangers of Agent Orange/Dioxin to humans and to the environment. More diseases

have been officially recognized as being due to exposure to Agent Orange. Along with the Vietnamese people, many others around the world have become victims of this toxic weapon of mass destruction. Soldiers in the US, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand were exposed during the time they fought in Vietnam, and now their children and grandchildren are suffering as well. People in the US, Canada, South Korea, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand and other areas were exposed because they lived near or worked in areas where the US forces stored, buried, manufactured, tested or experimented with Agent Orange as part of their war in Vietnam.

Because of dioxin-related damage to their endocrine, immune and reproductive systems, victims of Agent Orange suffer from multiple health conditions, some of which are quickly lethal, and others which doom people to a life of horrific misery. Due to these diseases, many have been denied the most basic of human rights – especially the right to life, and the pursuit of happiness. Because of their inability to work and bearing the costs of medical treatment, most victims of Agent Orange everywhere are very poor.

However, because Agent Orange was intentionally directed against the Vietnamese people, they are subject to the most onerous conditions. 4.8 million Vietnamese people, directly sprayed repeatedly over extended periods of time, were subject to multiple sources of exposure. The proportion of old people, women, and children, who are especially susceptible to dioxin, is particularly high in Vietnam. In Vietnam, an enormous number of children continue to be born with Agent Orange-related birth defects. Now, a fourth generation of Agent Orange victims is being born. Because of this danger, in effect, many women have been denied the human right to bear children. Agent Orange not only harmed human beings and devastated the environment of Vietnam during the war, but also continued its devastation after the war. Dioxin dumped in the soil continues to damage the environment and sicken the people in and around several "hot spots." Causing deforestation of nearly 3 million hectares of land, during the war, especially in coastal areas,

Agent Orange has damaged not only the environment in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia but also the regional environment. It has and continues to have severe consequences for people in many areas of the world.

The use of Agent Orange in the war in Vietnam is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Its consequences are passed from generation to generation. It challenges us to end, once and for all, the use of chemical weapons and any weapons of mass destruction anywhere today.

Humanity's concern about the affects of chemical warfare, the threat of accidents at chemical manufacturing plants and the looming environmental disaster due to biochemical engineering is increasing. The agony of those exposed to Agent Orange is central to this consciousness and international solidarity with Agent Orange victims' struggle for justice is growing.

CALL TO ACTION

Therefore, the Delegates to the Conference hereby call for the following:

1) *Solidarity*: All victims of Agent Orange, whatever their nationality or circumstances of exposure, should unite more closely and earnestly to act for our common interests. Further, to demonstrate our solidarity with victims of other weapons of mass destruction such as the atomic bomb and depleted uranium, all the victims and their supporters should work together in unity and coordinate actions. Only together, can we be effective, powerful and successful in achieving justice!

2) *Organize*: We ask all of humanity, all governments, organizations and individuals, whatever their social or political position, to take immediate action to support all victims of Agent Orange, with particular emphasis on those in Vietnam. In every country, and in every region, we should set up organizations and develop specific programs for mobilizing material resources in whatever form and for making our voices heard in all available forums in support of the struggle of the Vietnamese Agent Orange victims for justice.

3) *Study and Remediate*: Scientists, public health and environmental experts, especially from the United States, should

focus on studying the specific health and environmental dangers of Agent Orange/Dioxin and possibilities for remediation. This is very urgent in order to help victims whose time is running out, and in order to avoid similar disasters for future generations.

4) *UN Ban on Weapons and War Crimes*: The world community in general, the United Nations and each government in particular should rapidly promulgate new measures to more effectively prevent all acts in violation of international laws prohibiting war crimes and crimes against humanity.

5) *US Government and Chemical Manufacturers To Accept Responsibility*: The US government and chemical manufacturers of Agent Orange, particularly Monsanto and Dow Chemical, should accept their responsibility and engage in greater and fuller efforts to work with the Vietnamese people and government to clean up the existing "hot spots", and to provide comprehensive and meaningful assistance to the victims of Agent Orange and their families in Vietnam in a more practical and effective manner. Because little of the monies appropriated by the US Congress have actually reached the victims, funds intended for the victims should be given to Vietnamese NGOs like VAVA so that they actually go to those who need assistance most. The need for hospitals, clinics and respite homes for the victims and their parents, is overwhelming – many of the victims require 24-hour care and their elderly parents who are doing the caring also need help.

6) *Disclose Locations of Agent Orange Sites*: The US government and all governments that have allowed the use of Agent Orange for any purpose during the Vietnam war years, should publicly disclose all the locations where Agent Orange was used, buried or dumped.

7) *Partner with VAVA*: The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin is the legal and moral representative of Vietnam's Agent Orange victims and acts as a non-governmental organization representing the interests of these victims throughout Vietnam. To hear their voices and to help

continued on next page

The American Dream Movement

JEN TAYABJI

"I have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream." - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963 March on Washington

Following the protests in Madison, Wisconsin in early 2011 due to the governor's attempt to take away collective bargaining rights from public workers, and then the "debt crisis" this summer, progressive individuals and organizations began organizing a new movement in our country. Rebuild The Dream (<http://www.rebuildthedream.com>) and MoveOn.org – along with organizations like United for a Fair Economy, the Strengthen Social Security Coalition, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Peace Action, and Institute for Policy Research – have united together to further a goal for comprehensive economic and social change through ten simple principles, in what they have developed into the Contract for the American Dream. The Contract includes protecting many current social programs, but it also goes far beyond that, to include these ten principles:

1. Invest in US infrastructure.
2. Create 21st-century energy jobs.
3. Invest in public education.
4. Offer Medicare for all.
5. Make work pay.

6. Secure Social Security.
7. Return to fairer tax rates.
8. End the wars and invest at home.
9. Tax Wall Street speculation.
10. Strengthen democracy.

The American Dream Movement, based on these Contract principles, is a progressive, grassroots effort to fight for the American Dream that Martin Luther King, Jr., talked of, the one many of us grew up believing in. This movement can help re-align the country with what the majority of Americans want, not just what those in a position of power benefit from.

This movement is especially beneficial for veterans in the US as it fights to protect social programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid – which many veterans use and on which many veterans' benefits programs are modeled. It calls for an end to the US's current wars, bringing the troops home, and reinvesting that money into our country. The majority of Americans want to end the war in Afghanistan and even more want to end the war in Iraq. We as taxpayers are spending more than \$169 billion dollars on those wars alone this year. It costs \$1 million dollars to keep one soldier in Afghanistan for a year, but that money is not going to those soldiers (some even qualify for food

**REBUILD
THE DREAM**

stamps). We have troops returning home after serving our country to find that they cannot find a job or that they may be redeployed. Many are waiting to access services through the VA. Many others are being denied benefits they were promised or are entitled to.

It is time to do right by our veterans and by the working class in our country. It is time to return our country to a point where we know our children and grandchildren will have better opportunities than we have.

The preamble to the Contract describes this notion in better words than I could ever write:

"We, the American people, promise to defend and advance a simple ideal: liberty and justice... for all. Americans who are willing to work hard and play by the rules should be able to find a decent job, get a good home in a strong community, retire with dignity and give their kids a better life. Every one of us – rich, poor or

in-between, regardless of skin color or birthplace, no matter their sexual orientation or gender – has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That is our covenant, our compact, our contract with one another. It is a promise we can fulfill – but only by working together."

For more information, to view the Contract in its entirety, and to sign the Contract for the American Dream, please visit <http://contract.rebuildthedream.com/>.



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Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin

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Vietnamese victims effectively and specifically, people of good will and compassion should partner with VAVA and give programmatic and material help, contacting VAVA through its website www.vava.org.vn

Now, fifty years since the first use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, the delegates of the conference declare again that the needs of the victims are urgent, requiring immediate action! Half a century is too long to wait for justice!

We pledge to work together to make sure that justice delayed will no longer be justice denied!



MARTY WEBSTER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND A CORE MEMBER OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF & RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN (VAORRC).



Dewey Canyon III, the California contingent.

Coming Home to VVAW

JOE MILLER

Following my discharge from the Navy in February 1968, after seven years of service, my family and I moved back to the Chicago area. I found an overnight job that would help me to support my wife and daughter. I enrolled as a full-time student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Balancing classes with a full-time job and trying to keep my family together, I looked to join whatever anti-war work I could find time for.

My wife and I participated in the April 27th march from Grant Park to Daley Plaza, the so-called "dry-run" for Chicago cops in preparation for the Democratic Convention later that summer. That first peace march introduced me to anti-war veterans from World War Two and Korean generations. I did not yet highlight my own veteran status. I had the Vietnam Service ribbon from participation in Tonkin Gulf actions during 1964 to 1966, but did not "feel" like a veteran at this time. [See: www.vvaw.org/commentary/?id=4]

No, it was still too soon. I was reveling in my civilian status, and few outside my family even realized I had been in the military. I could not say that I was "proud" of my service. That spring I was just another student who also happened to be working, attending classes, and joining in any campus anti-war activity that popped up.

When LBJ announced he was not running for reelection, I was happy. When Martin Luther King, Jr., was murdered, I was saddened, but also found some grim satisfaction in the burning structures along Milwaukee Avenue on my way to work that night. Then, in early June, Bobby Kennedy was gunned

down. I called my dad from work that night at about 2:00am to let him know, and all he could say was, "Oh, shit!" We were both hoping to vote for Kennedy that year. Then followed the fiasco of the Democratic Convention, which everyone knew would be rigged. *Daily News* and *Sun-Times* reporters and photographers were coming back to our office with cameras busted and bodies bloodied. Everything that was "known" was coming apart, first in the lies about Vietnam, then in the fear and repression at home. What a year!

By 1969, a group of Vietnam vets had pulled together a small Chicago chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), led by Bart Savage. It was time. I had to join and make my military service count for something in the struggle to end the war and bring everyone home. For the next three years, while still living in the Chicago area, I tried to do as much as possible with local VVAW comrades. Though we understood VVAW as a "national" organization, we were not looking for any national direction. We just did what we could to express our opposition to this continuing war. We participated in "Armed Farces Day" events around Great Lakes, as well as the usual spring and fall anti-war marches in Chicago.

After VVAW got a little more prominence from the Winter Soldier hearings and Dewey Canyon III, we leafleted at O'Hare Airport in late 1971 to try to bring attention to the demand that our troops should be coming home on those planes. Again, I could only be one of the participants in these local events, given my work, school and family responsibilities,

but, I did what I could as a proud member of VVAW.

In summer 1972, not long after the birth of our son, my family and I moved downstate to Champaign-Urbana, where I enrolled in a Masters program in Asian studies. My wife and I were both working while I was also attending classes. Campus anti-war activity was still going on, but by then, it was rather mild compared to what had been happening in Chicago. I never really connected with any anti-war vets at the university, though I continued to proudly wear my VVAW button. It seemed that all the anti-war activity among vets was happening far away from where I had to be at that time. There was simply no way I could even consider joining the "Last Patrol," given my situation. So, I felt rather disconnected.

Maintaining a family on two limited incomes, while dealing with the pressures of graduate work, left little time for any other activities. I did attend local anti-war events as they occurred, but again, as an anonymous participant, until the war actually came to an end. So, from mid-1972 to late 1979, other than finishing the Asian studies program and then completing my doctorate in political science, anything else would have to wait. This was also the case with the few other Vietnam vets who were in the same program.

In 1979, my family and I traveled to Melbourne, Australia, where I had been hired on a temporary appointment as a visiting lecturer in political science at the University of Melbourne. I spent four years in Australia, mainly teaching, but also involved in political activism. This included forums with Australian Vietnam vets to talk about the war and radio interviews concerning US policies against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as well as Central America solidarity work on Nicaragua, El Salvador and Grenada.

By the time I returned to the States in the 1980s, I was ready to reconnect in what was now Reagan's America. By 1986, I was trying to "come home" to VVAW again for the big "Welcome Home" parade in Chicago, but I could not get there in time to march with their contingent. Very quickly, however,

I made the connection, and my son and I attended the festivities for the 20th Anniversary in 1987. That's where I first met Barry Romo and other folks who had been keeping VVAW together all these years. This anniversary celebration was my real "coming home."

Since that time I have continued work with VVAW on a whole range of issues, including the closing of US bases in the Philippines, Central America solidarity, Agent Orange and PTSD efforts, and counter-recruitment and anti-militarism. As a result of my organizing work in Champaign against the first Gulf War over 1990-1991, I was brought into the national office as a staff member. Four years later, given continued organizing in the community and the work I had done on staff, including work on *The Veteran* (then still put together on Barry's dining room table), I was selected to join the national coordinators.

To work with Barry, Bill Davis, Pete Zastrow, John Lindquist, Dave Cline, Bill Branson and many others over these past twenty-five years, to keep VVAW alive, especially in the down times, has been the greatest privilege. We kept going in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s, kept building --- with no grants, little membership dues, with maxed-out credit cards --- with almost superhuman individual efforts by members and supporters.

We must never forget the fact that VVAW would not have been here to organize against the Bush-Cheney wars in Afghanistan and Iraq if it were not for the skill, commitment and sacrifice of folks like Barry Romo and fallen comrades like Dave Cline and Bill Davis.

When VVAW is organizing for Agent Orange compensation for the Vietnamese or against the continuing wars, now under another administration, we are continuing the work begun by the first organizers back in 1967. Different wars, different issues, same struggles.



JOE MILLER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR WHO LIVES IN URBANA, ILLINOIS.



Joe Miller, Memorial Day 2000, Chicago.

VVAW is Still Involved in the Fight for Veterans, Peace and Justice

MARTY WEBSTER

The battlefields of the Vietnam war are silent, but the consequences of that war and the wars that still rage on are being manifested everyday in the lives of those who fight them. We carry on the fight to make sure Veterans young and old are treated properly and taken care of when they get home, by employing two Military Counselors – Ray Parrish and Hans Buwalda.

Our counseling project continues to be in high demand. Each case covers a wide range of laws, records and services that must be coordinated. The range of vets currently being helped, goes from Korean vets to recent Iraq and Afghanistan vets. Ray is currently helping an 85-year-old Korean war vet get a discharge upgrade. Sam came back from Korea to Jim Crow and was given a court martial for insisting he needed to stay in the hospital. The skills represented in VVAW's Military Counseling Program are helping to right this decades old injustice.

Wesley, a 75-year-old Vietnam veteran, is finally on the short list to live in a veterans only subsidized supportive housing unit because of the help received from Ray and Hans. He came home

from Vietnam on leave to bury his father and ended up going AWOL to care for his family, resulting in an undesirable discharge. He was able to live a normal life until viewing Iraq war footage in 2003 triggered his PTSD, resulting in the loss of his job. Homeless until a year ago, he came to VVAW, when Ray began helping him with the seemingly endless list of hurdles needed to get his benefits.

With a backlog of cases as long as 16 months, Vietnam vets are getting adjudicated last because of so many new vets needing help. The board of appeals reverses many cases because grossly inexperienced VA staff are not following the VA's own rules. Decades of experience allows Ray to quickly spot these errors and help veterans win their appeals and to use new administrative rulings in veterans favor.

VVAW also continues to support the next generation of veterans fighting to carry on the struggle for veterans, peace and justice by funding Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and their Field Organizing Program. Recently, I was invited to attend and participate in IVAW's national convention and in particular the

Field Organizing Program. The convention was held in Portland, Oregon. What a contrast to the inaugural meeting, several years ago, where only a handful of people were present to kick off this worthy project! There were over 60 veterans present, many of them new to IVAW who had stepped forward to participate in the Field Organizing Program.

Upon my entering the room, it was announced that without the support of VVAW there would not be any Field Organizing Program. I was once again reminded how important it is for us to continue our mission to stand behind these young brothers and sisters who have been placed in harms way for a lie.

Recently I attended a meeting in New York City with a delegation from Vietnam to discuss our pending Agent Orange legislation, which is now before congress. I was invited to say a few words and I asked one of the NVA officers who was present to come and stand with me. I told the audience that neither one of us really "cared" what each other had done during the war but that we were united as brothers to help rid this nightmare that overshadows both

of our countries. It turned out to be a highly successful evening. I will be returning soon to New York to participate in both IVAW and Agent Orange related activities.

Another service VVAW brings to veterans and their supporters is the publication of our newspaper *The Veteran*. It seems everywhere I go I am reminded of how much people appreciate and enjoy *The Veteran*. This forum that we offer to veterans and their allies is still going strong after 40 years. Featuring reports for veterans of all eras, as well as commentary, poetry and cartoons, *The Veteran* helps get the voice of VVAW out to a nation-wide audience.

I could spend all day telling you more stories of how important VVAW is to its members and allies all across the country. I am in continual communication with many of our veterans and sometimes it's important for them just to know that even though our ranks may be thinning and some of us are getting frail, that VVAW is still here, doing the work that needs to be done.



MARTY WEBSTER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.



IVAW's 2011 Convention, held August 4 - 7 at Portland State University. Sixty members came out from all corners of the country to share in training, decision-making, and camaraderie. IVAW was joined by over forty allies and invited speakers.

An Excellent Adventure

BILL EHRHART

The weapon that got Ken Takenaga and me was an RPG, a rocket-propelled grenade. You've probably seen RPGs in news footage of Afghan mujahedeen or Taliban fighters. The launcher is a long thin tube the gunner rests on his shoulder like a bazooka. The projectile sticks out of the front of the tube, a bulbous cone-shaped piece of nastiness. We didn't call them RPGs back then. We called them B-40s. But a rose by any other name still has thorns, and whatever you call it, one B-40 can screw up your whole day. It certainly screwed up ours.

Ken got the worst of it, a huge gash in his scalp and a shattered right arm. He was evacuated immediately, to Da Nang then to Hawaii. I got some small shrapnel wounds a doctor cleaned out and bandaged, slept for a few hours, then went back to the war, stone-deaf but otherwise reasonably functional. This was Hue City during the Tet Offensive. If you could walk, see, and shoot, you stayed. There were guys a lot worse off than me.

It took me 32 years to find Kenny again. I didn't even know his real first name (Kazunori) or which country he lived in. Japanese-born, he was still a Japanese citizen in 1968. He'd come to the US in the midst of the Vietnam War. As a permanent alien resident he was subject to the draft, got drafted, and chose to join the Marines instead, thinking he was joining the Navy. When he got to Parris Island, he asked the drill instructors, "Where are the ships?" But that's another story.

I finally tracked him down in 2000 (yet another story), and since then we've renewed our friendship as if no time at all had passed. These days, he shuttles between Japan and New York, so we get together several times a year. Ken has spent his entire adult life in the travel and tourism industry,

so when he suggested a trip back to Vietnam, he didn't have to ask twice.

This was not my first trip back to postwar Vietnam. I'd been back in 1985 and again in 1990. But this trip was special for two reasons. I'd be able to take my wife Anne with me this time, to share with her a place she had only, but endlessly, heard about during our thirty years of marriage. And I'd be traveling with my buddy, my comrade, who'd literally been where I'd been and knew what I knew and needed no explanations.

Our journey began, however, not in Vietnam, but in Japan. Ken spent the first fifteen years of his life in the city of Yatsushiro, Kyushu, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents. Having seen where I grew up in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, Ken wanted to show us where he'd come from. We stood on the walls of the ruined feudal castle where Ken had climbed and played as a child. We saw the local jail where Ken's grandfather had once been locked up for "overspending" on election day (long before Ken was born). Though the house Ken grew up in has been replaced by a newer structure, just across the street is Kangyo-ji, the Buddhist temple where his grandparents' graves are, and where his will be some day.

We spent eight days in Japan, walking across the graceful five-arch Kintai Bridge at Iwakuni (near where I had been stationed post-Vietnam in 1969), touring magnificent Kumamoto Castle, luxuriating in a private onsen (hot springs spa) at Tsuetate, making rice paper art at Shirakawa Spring, enjoying a Shinto wedding we happened upon at Aso Shrine, being decked out in traditional kimonos by a dressmaker and her two teenaged daughters (the process takes nearly an hour), dolphin-watching in Hayasaki



Ken & Bill - today.

Strait, walking amidst the awesome aftermath of the 1990 volcanic eruption of Fugendake.

Among the coolest things Ken and I did together was a talk about the Vietnam War and its aftermath to the congregants of Toko-ji Zen Temple in Amakusa. Five years ago, at the request of Morinobu Okabe, 31st priest of the temple, Ken and I had translated and adapted a poem by the late Shinmin Sakamura, which Okabe-san makes available free for visiting English speakers. A good 50 people showed up for the talk, listening attentively for an hour, and then we all had a multi-course feast washed down with beer, sake, and shochu.

Then it was on to Vietnam. After a night in Saigon, where the street scene can only be described as "motor-scooter madness", we flew to central Vietnam, the area between Hoi An and the 17th Parallel, where Ken and I had been stationed. We drove over the Hai Van Pass, a spectacular ride that had been charged with danger the first time we'd taken it in 1967. We climbed Marble Mountain, where throughout the war the Viet Cong had maintained a field hospital right under the noses of the Americans at Da Nang. We drove over the bridge that had once connected the rest of Hieu Nhon District to the small fishing village of Phuoc Trac, displaced now by a string of luxury beach resorts.

In Hue City, the old Imperial capital of the Nguyen Dynasty, we visited the Citadel, made famous by the Tet Offensive of 1968, and the Holy Lady Pagoda, where we saw the actual Austin automobile Thich Quang Duc rode to Saigon

in before immolating himself in protest of Ngo Dinh Diem's suppression of Buddhists in 1963. We drove up to the old DMZ and descended into the tunnels of Vinh Moc, where an entire village of 70 families had lived underground for six years to escape U.S. bombardment.

But the most amazing experience was finding the very building Ken and I had been in when we were wounded. During the war, it had been some bigwig's mansion, the mayor or provincial governor, a two-and-a-half story house surrounded by a yard and a wall. The bigwig had skipped town when the shooting started, so we Marines had moved in and were using it as a battalion command post. We'd spent several days trying to dislodge some North Vietnamese from the houses across the street, and were just marking time that morning, waiting for flame tanks to come and burn the block down. Ken and I were posted in a second-story bedroom. I was making a cup of C-ration coffee and Ken was cleaning his rifle when a North Vietnamese soldier put an RPG through the window.

It took some work to find the building, a lot has changed in 43 years, but we found it. Completely refurbished and looking brand-spanking-new, the house is now the business offices for the four-star, six-story Duy Tan Hotel. The yard is now a tiled driveway and parking area for the hotel with a motor-scooter rental operation and an outdoor coffee shop. Only the configuration of the windows, and the location of the house itself,

continued on next page



Ken & Bill - during the Vietnam War.

An Excellent Adventure

continued from previous page

allowed me to be certain we had the right place.

Indeed, aside from the ubiquitous cemeteries for the war dead and the occasional monument or statue, one has to look hard to find any evidence of the American War (as the Vietnamese call it). The population, doubled since 1975, is young, dynamic, and ambitious. There is new construction everywhere. Roads, bridges, in the cities, in the countryside, 20-story office buildings, single-family homes. Grass-thatched roofs have been replaced by ceramic tile. Most farmers plow their paddy fields with motorized if primitive tractors. Roads are paved, cars are commonplace, and motor-scooters and cellphones abound. The beaches up and down the entire coast of Vietnam are lined with resort hotels. VietBank and PetroVietnam are juxtaposed with Hyundai and Sheraton. The gap-toothed bridge over the River of Perfumes that the Viet Cong blew up during Tet has been rebuilt, and is lit nightly with an array of colored floodlights that makes the lighting on Philadelphia's Ben Franklin Bridge look anemic.

Anne, Ken and I, together

with photographer Sachiko Akama, who traveled with us, visited a fish farm and an aquarium on Hon Mieu, the Cham-built Hindu temples of Po Nagar (the oldest dating back to the 8th century), the summer palace of Emperor Tu Duc, and the tomb of emperor Khai Dinh. We went swimming in the turquoise waters of Nha Thang Bay, took a sunset cruise on the Song Cai, and ate a barbeque of fresh prawns, squid, beef, pork, tomatoes, and cucumber on Hon Mun.

One evening in Hue, we went for a boat ride on the River of Perfumes, accompanied by eight singers and musicians in traditional dress performing traditional folk music. One can hardly imagine, let alone describe, the beauty, the profound tranquility, of such an experience, especially for two ex-Marines who had nearly died next to that river so many years ago.

Later that night, Ken and I stood on a hotel balcony overlooking Hue. We could see the university that had been used as a refugee center, the roof of the building we'd been in, now dwarfed by the hotel built around it, the roofs of what had been the MACV compound. But the

streets were crowded with noisy, jostling, energetic people. The river flowed with colorful tour boats. The bridge glowed yellow, then green, then blue. We did not speak. There was nothing to say. This is what we had come to see. A country. Not a war.



Bill and Ann.



BILL EHRHART TEACHES AT THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL IN SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA. HIS LATEST BOOK IS THE BODIES BENEATH THE TABLE (ADA STRA PRESS, 2010).



Bill and Ken at Toko-ji Zen Temple in Amakusa, Japan.

Vietnam Revisited

LARRY BALL

In February 2011 along with my wife Kristin, we flew into Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Chaos in the streets is the way I describe what we saw as we taxied to our hotel. The hotel and staff were very much to our liking. The staff were both warm and informative, the room was comfortable, clean and had a balcony looking down on two streets coming together. More horns and vehicles, mostly the two-wheeled type, than I could imagine moving on such narrow streets. People walking elbow to elbow and no sign of traffic control. On the scooters we saw as many as four riding, passengers riding side-saddle style, and many passengers carrying cumquat trees. The time was nearing the Tet holidays and the cumquat is similar to our Christmas tree tradition. With so much to see and language being a challenge, we hired a young guide. Cong

was twenty-three years of age and he spoke perfect English. One of our first stops was the Mausoleum where Ho Chi Minh is viewed by visitors. Rules for viewing Ho Chi Minh's body are strictly enforced. Guards in white military uniforms are posted at intervals of five paces. I was having a difficult time at this point as my entire body seemed to become shrouded by all the lectures and experiences that were such a part of my life forty years earlier. Having read much about this man that is held in such honor by his fellow country men, I knew much of what we were told about Ho Chi Minh was not true. I managed to get through without falling down and got outside where I located a rock wall that I found most inviting. Young Cong stood beside me and he asked, "were you in the American war?" I told him I would answer his question at the end of our two days that we

had agreed to pay for his services. He told me his grandfather was killed near Da Nang and that his father was a boy at the time. I was stationed near Da Nang and his grandfather would be my age. I asked Cong how that caused him to think about Americans. He answered, "in my family we say, close the door to the past, open the door to the future." Young Cong's words touched me so deeply, tears came into my eyes. Cong put his arm around me and from that moment on I began to feel better and for two days Cong made sure I was OK and I safely got across the streets.



Kristin and Cong in Vietnam.



LARRY BALL WAS A MEMBER OF
THE USMC AND IS A MEMBER OF
VVAW.

Temple Poem

Amakusa, Japan

The sun comes up each morning in silence;
the moon disappears, but nobody sees.

Flowers dance by the roadside unnoticed;
birds twitter sweetly, but nobody hears.

People don't stop to consider what matters.
People work hard all their lives to achieve

a dream of success that will make them happy:
position or power, fortune or fame—

until they are old and they realize too late
that the beauty of living has passed them by

while the river travels alone to the ocean,
the wind sings alone in the tops of the trees.

*From the original Japanese by Shinmin Sakamura Translated by
Kazunori Takenaga
Adapted by W. D. Ehrhart*

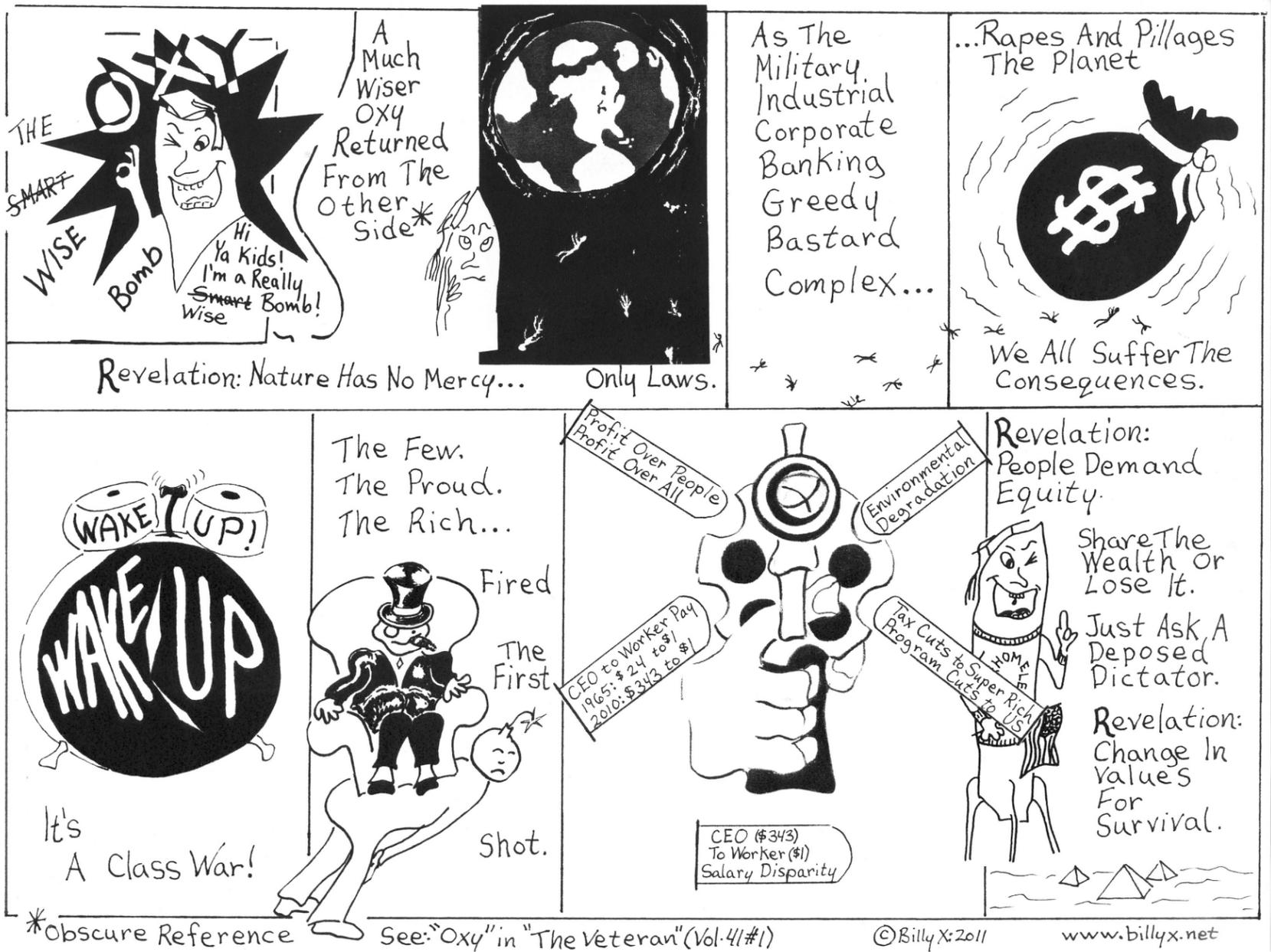
*[This poem was translated and adapted into English at the request of
Morinobu Okabe, 31st priest of the Zen Buddhist Temple of Tokoji.]*

Bête Noire (the Black Beast)

3rd Platoon, L Troop, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment,
17 August 1968.

Sitting atop a landmine, unheeding,
caring more about the staccato poppings
of machine guns, assault rifles, and
the occasional wham-bam-haven't-we-met-before concussion
of the lonely grenade,
shrapnel seeking human contact,
bullets craving fleshly embrace.
Choir off key,
someone tone deaf.
RPG coming in with a sigh
and damn
the landmine adds its voice to the chorus.
Fifteen feet up,
not comprehending beauty of cobalt sky
nor cotton-puff clouds,
my body cartwheels,
looking down into the belly of the black one,
gravity does what gravity must, and
I meet the beast,
maw open wide in greeting.

*—Paul Hellweg served with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment
at Xuan Loc in 1968. He is a member of both Veterans for Peace
and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and he is devoting his
life to speaking out against war.*



*Obscure Reference

See: "Oxy" in "The Veteran" (Vol. 4/1#1)

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www.billyx.net

Hello America

HAROLD TRAINER

Hello, America, how are you? Well, I hope. And while you're doing well and doing the things you like to do, please look back over the last ten years. Can you see that our government has put us in two wars at a cost of \$4,000,000,000,000 and the lives of more than 6,200 of our military? There also have been more than 40,000 wounded. Please notice that these wars have also killed more than a hundred thousand Arabs and Muslims and that the money required to conduct this carnage was all borrowed and has helped increase our national debt from around 8 trillion dollars to more than 14 trillion dollars. Your kids and grand kids, of course, will pay it back. Most Americans will not share in the sacrifice as there is no draft or tax increase.

During these years our government gave tax cuts to many Americans, including some of you, and certainly to the very wealthy. Our elected officials

mismanaged our economy beyond normal risk and we had to bail out the banks and investment companies and the insurance and automobile companies with borrowed money. All of this while average Americans faced unemployment, lower wages, foreclosure, and many, many other financial challenges. And the wars continue.

And now our government, Republicans and Democrats alike, wants us to reduce this huge debt, including the war debt, and are asking average Americans and even some of our most vulnerable citizens, seniors and disabled to pay for the wars, the mismanagement of our economy, and the tax cuts. This is to be done by cutting spending on some of our most important programs like education, health care, infrastructure, and even social programs for the elderly and needy. Congress is proposing to divide the older and younger generations health care coverage

into different programs leaving a more generous health care system for older people while younger people have to live with a much more expensive system. This includes some of our brave young military men and women who have fought these wars. This divide and conquer tactic can only result in generational bickering and less quality health care for everyone. Unbelievably, there is also discussion on increasing military health care costs in order to help pay for the wars, continue weapons development, support war and defense contractors and pay down the national debt.

All of this will be done to reduce the national debt incurred by unnecessary wars, huge tax cuts, economic mismanagement, and plain old greed. Of course, the wars are still being waged at a cost of around 250 billion dollars a year and Obama has "compromised" with Republicans to extend tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans while Congress works night and

day to make average Americans and the most vulnerable pay for these excesses. He has put Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and military health care on the table for cuts.

Please folks, while you do the things you like to do also take action and let your elected representatives know your views regarding the government's unacceptable management of our nation's affairs during the last ten years of war. Also, make it a point to ask about our government's plans and policies for the future; your future, your kids' futures, and your grandkids' futures.



HAROLD TRAINER IS A RETIRED US AIR FORCE OFFICER AND VIETNAM VETERAN. HE LIVES IN PROSPECT KENTUCKY WITH HIS WIFE CAROL RAWERT TRAINER, ALSO A USAF VETERAN.

Chronology: Operation Dewey Canyon III

Operation Dewey Canyon I took place during January and February 1969. During a five-day period in February, elements of the Third Marine Division invaded Laos. Operation Dewey Canyon II was the name given to the first seven days of the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in February 1971. The name of the operation was subsequently changed. Operation Dewey Canyon III took place in Washington, DC, April 19 through April 23, 1971. It was called "a limited incursion into the country of Congress."

SUNDAY

APRIL 18, 1971

Anti-war Vietnam veterans from nearly every state begin filtering into West Potomac Park. By nightfall, only 900 have registered and the veteran leaders are worried that they will not have the requisite numbers for the desired impact.

MONDAY

APRIL 19, 1971

About 1,100 veterans move across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to Arlington Cemetery, some in wheelchairs, some on crutches. Mothers who lost their sons in Vietnam (Gold Star Mothers) head the procession.

A brief ceremony for the war dead on both sides is conducted by Reverend Jackson Day on the small plot of grass outside the Cemetery beneath the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the grave of John F. Kennedy. (Reverend Day had resigned his military chaplain-

ship a few days before.)

After the ceremony, a small delegation of mothers and veterans is barred from entering the Cemetery and lays two memorial wreaths at the entrance. The march re-forms and makes its way to the Capitol.

The march reaches the Capitol steps. Congressman Paul McCloskey, who joined the march en route, and Representatives Bella Abzug, Donald Edwards, and Ogden Reid address the crowd. Jan Crumb, member of the executive committee of VVAW, formally presents sixteen demands to Congress.

The veterans march to the Mall and establish a campsite on a small grassy quadrangle between Third and Fourth streets. Some veterans go directly into the halls of Congress to lobby against the war.

Washington District Court of Appeals lifts an injunction barring veterans from camping on the Mall. The injunction had been requested by the Justice Department.

TUESDAY

APRIL 20, 1971

About 200 veterans attend hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on proposals to end the war.

Veterans lobby all day in Congress.

A contingent of 200 veterans, feeling that the affront of the day before cannot be overlooked, marches from the Mall back to Arlington Cemetery. They march

single file across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge. The Superintendent tries to stop the veterans at the gates but then backs down.

In the afternoon, a guerilla theater performance is given on the steps of the Capitol.

Senators Claiborne Pell and Philip Hart hold a fund-raising party for the veterans. During the party, it is announced that Chief Justice Warren Burger has reversed the decision of the Court of Appeals—allegedly, the speediest process of an appeal to the Supreme Court on record. The injunction is once again in effect and the veterans are given until 4:30 the following afternoon to break camp.

WEDNESDAY

APRIL 21, 1971

A contingent of fifty veterans marches to the Pentagon to turn themselves in as war criminals. They are not arrested.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day. Guerilla theater is performed in front of the Justice Department. At 4:30 PM, the appointed hour of eviction from the camp, an alarm clock rings over the microphone on the speaker's platform. No police are in sight. The area is packed with curious onlookers. The Supreme Court is meeting in special session.

At 5:30 PM, Ramsey Clark announces that the Supreme Court has offered the veterans an option: Stay on the Mall, don't sleep, and the government won't arrest you; or sleep on the Mall and the government will arrest you. The

veterans retire into their various delegations and vote, in effect, on whether to sleep or not to sleep. By a close vote a majority choose to sleep. All agree to abide by that decision.

Washington Park Police state they have no intention of inspecting the campsite during the night. The cast of the musical *Hair* entertains the troops.

Senator Edward Kennedy makes a midnight visit to the Mall. He remains for one hour, talking and singing with the veterans.

The veterans sleep on the Mall without interruption.

THURSDAY

APRIL 22, 1971

A large group of veterans march to the steps of the Supreme Court to ask the Court why it has not ruled on the constitutionality of the war. They sing *God Bless America*. One hundred and ten are arrested for disturbing the peace and are led off the steps with their hands clasped behind their heads.

John Kerry testifies before a special session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for two hours.

Lobbying on Capitol Hill continues all day.

A District Court judge angrily dissolves his injunction order, rebuking Justice Department lawyers for requesting the court order and then not enforcing it.

Veterans stage a candlelight march around the White House. A huge American flag is carried

continued on next page



Photo by Fred W. McDarrah.



Photo by Fred W. McDarrah.

Chronology: Operation Dewey Canyon III

continued from previous page

upside down as a signal of distress. The march ends back at the camp when the flag carriers mount the stage.

FRIDAY APRIL 23, 1971

Veterans cast down their medals and ribbons on the steps of the Capitol.

Congressman Jonathan Bingham holds hearings with former intelligence and public information officers over distortion of news and information concerning the war.

Senators George McGovern and Philip Hart hold hearings on atrocities committed by US sol-

diers in Vietnam.

Veterans begin breaking camp. A tree, donated by the veterans, is planted as a symbolic plea for the preservation of all life and the environment.

The quadrangle on the Mall is vacant.

Not one act of violence has been committed.

They came in peace.

The war in Indochina continues.



REPRINTED FROM VVAW'S 25TH
ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET PRODUCED IN
1992.

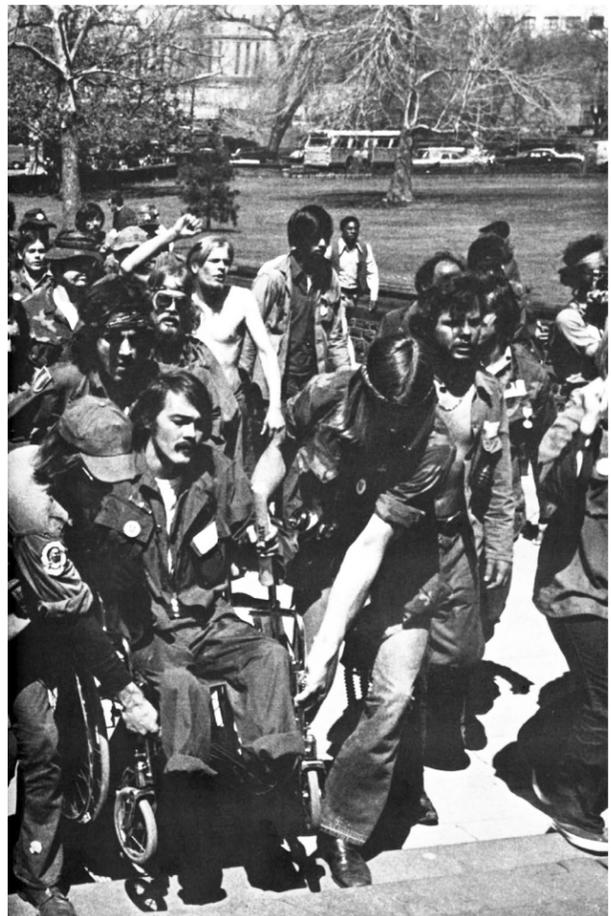


Photo by George Butler.



Photo by Fred W. McDarrah.

Operation Dewey Canyon III

continued from page 1

They landed quickly and got all the wounded out, even the body of my dead sergeant. While I was walking slowly back to the rest of the company, my CO said he was putting me in for a medal. I couldn't sleep that night. A medal for men's lives. The medic gave me some tranqs to sleep.

...

Standing in line, I remembered that day, again moving slowly in single file. The day in Nam several years earlier was more real than the present.

As vets threw their medals away, we made statements—

"These are for my brothers;" "If we have to fight again it will be to take these steps." All I could manage was, "These ain't shit"—nothing dramatic. The American Legion, when asked, commented on the demo saying, "We find it sad when any veteran throws medals away won in meritorious service."

What the Legion spokesman didn't understand was that it wasn't the "merit" that made the medals of value—instead, it was the memories of friends bound up with those medals.



REPRINTED FROM VVAW'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET PRODUCED IN 1992.

Home From the War To the War at Home

DAVE KETTENHOFEN

My first recollection of VVAW is Operation Dewey Canyon III in April of 1971. At the time I was stationed in Vietnam nearing the end of my tour. News of the incursion into Washington, D.C., came by way of my hometown newspaper mailed to me by my parents.

When my buddies and I read the headlines we were ecstatic. Holy shit, the vets were marching on Washington—the end had to be near! It was absolutely unbelievable! Everyone wanted to get back to "the world" and get involved in the protests.

We were so proud of the way you guys threw your medals back in the face of the government. Even though we opposed the war, we felt that it had to be hard for you since those medals were one of the few acknowledgments you received for doing the government's dirty work. I knew then that someday I wanted to be a part of VVAW.



DAVE KETTENHOFEN WAS IN VIETNAM 1970-1971. REPRINTED FROM VVAW'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET PRODUCED IN 1992.



Barry Romo speaking at Dewey Canyon III 20th Anniversary, 1991.

As Vets Threw Their Medals on the Capitol Steps:

—"I'm still on active duty, and I say get the hell out."

—"Here's my merit badges for murder... from the country I betrayed by enlisting in the Army."

—"I'd like to say just one thing for the people of Vietnam. I'm sorry. I hope that someday I can return to Vietnam and help rebuild that country we tore apart."

—"I earned a Good Conduct medal in Vietnam. In the words of another son of Massachusetts, Henry Thoreau, my only regret is my good conduct."



Dewey Canyon IV, May 1982. Photo by Tom Manthe.



Dewey Canyon IV, May 1982. Photo by Tom Manthe.



Bill Davis speaking at Dewey Canyon IV, May 1982. Photo by Tom Manthe.



Dewey Canyon IV, May 1982. Photo by Tom Manthe.

WEATHER
 Cloudy, breezy, cool today, high 63. Cloudy, low 42. Tonight cloudy Friday, high 62.
 Today at:
 7 a.m. 49
 8 a.m. 52
 9 a.m. 56

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VETS OVERRULE SUPREME COURT

U.S. seeks new site for war protesters



1971's version of Willie and Joe ...

The Justice Department, actively trying to find a suitable alternate site, will decide this afternoon whether to attempt to evict the Vietnam Veterans Against the War from the Mall, a high Justice official said.

The veterans last night overruled the Supreme Court 480-to-4, and stayed at their camp in defiance of the high court's order to leave.

Meanwhile, the National Cathedral offered the veterans use of their athletic fields. Hubbard James, Cathedral spokesman, said the demonstrators "approached us yesterday and asked if they could bivouac there and we said yes. For a while last night we were expecting them."

Another Justice source speculated that the all-volunteer army probably will not be evicted from the Mall. He said he thought the department's intent in seeking the order against the Mall camp was to avoid a precedent that would allow other groups to camp on Interior Department property.

About 15 congressmen also offered the veterans use of their offices for sleeping.

The Park Police said they would take no action against the veterans—who voted to defy Justice Burger's order—until they confer with Interior and Justice Department officials.

JUST TOURISTS

Park Police Capt. Archie L. Finagin said this morning, "To my knowledge as of this moment there are 250 persons talking and chatting and drinking coffee just like any other group of visitors."

Representatives from the veterans met in the office of the Justice Department's Richard Kleindienst for two hours yesterday and were told no action would be taken if they did not build fires; erect tents other than medical aid stations; dig up the ground; cook or sleep on the Mall.

After a voice vote was inconclusive, the veterans voted by states 480 to 400 to sleep the night in the park. Of those voting 29 of the 32 District delegates; 44 of the 45 Maryland soldiers and none of the 49 Virginia vets voted for the sleep-in.

The 400 who voted against sleeping favored staying awake all night as specified by Mr. Kleindienst. A third alternative, to go to sleeping area provided at Bolling Air Force Base and near Kennedy Stadium, received no support.

Pennsylvania swung the vote when its entire delegation of 94 elected to camp-in. Later, in a

(Continued on Page 3)



—News Photo by Charles Arnold

... poncho up against rain on the Mall.



Photo by Michael Abramson.



Fighting the Culture and Ideological Wars: Evolve, Resolve or Dissolve Ahead of Schedule

HORACE COLEMAN

The Republican would-be presidential candidates are Mitt Romney, who wants to break unions and Rick "Good Hair" Perry, who doesn't believe in big government or global warming. There's also Michelle Bachman, an upscale ditzy Sarah Palin, and ignored Ron Paul and John Huntsman. The religious way-right think theocracy works so well in countries with large Muslim populations we should have one.

In the mean time, the plant has replaced the plantation and most white collar workers ignore or oppose unions while enjoying the benefits unions fought for.

A Progressive Summit was held in August in Orange County, California, one of the most right-wing Republican counties in the nation. The Summit's opening speaker was Christine Chavez, Caesar Chavez's granddaughter. Jim Hightower, author, radio commentator, public speaker and newsletter editor/writer, was the closing speaker. Twelve workshops were held and more than 40 organizations tabled.

Chavez said some causes may not be popular with your core constituency but are vital. She cited birth control for Latinas and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual people's needs. Some issues are never solved but persistently need attention and work.

Hightower talked about waging successful political campaigns, prominent causes that weren't won but generated

attention and support, and coalition building. There's a need to align on issues you have in common with those who you disagree with on other points. When people don't, or won't, come to your meetings, go to theirs and build bridges! He mentioned a sign he'd seen in Madison, Wisconsin during the political unrest there: If you screw us we multiply. He emphasized the need for new thinking and ideas by saying "Any one who says you can't herd cats never heard of can openers!"

The institutions and interests crying "Class warfare!!" about issues and circumstances they don't like are winning the war they're waging.

As a collector of odd information, I'm always rediscovering some startling data. "Tentacles of Rage; the Republican Propaganda Mill, a Brief History" is the title of an essay by Lewis H. Lapham in the August 2004 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. Lapham names conservative foundations, think tanks and mass media distributors. Ranked by economic clout and ability to push their ideas and gain political power when Lapham wrote his piece they were:

Foundations: Bradley, Smith Richardson, Earhart, John M. Olin, Koch Family, Castle Rock, Philip M. McKenna.

Think Tanks: Heritage Foundation, American Enterprise Institute, Hoover Institution, Cato Institute, Hudson Institute, Manhattan Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, Reason

Foundation, National Center for Policy Analysis, Competitive Enterprise Institute, Free Congress Foundation, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis.

Mass Media Distribution: TV—700 Club (Pat Robertson); Fox News Channel; Scarborough Country (MSNBC); Oliver North's War Stories. Radio—The Rush Limbaugh Show; The Cal Thomas Commentary, Radio America. Publishing: Eagle Publishing, Inc. Newspapers: *The Washington Times*; *The Wall Street Journal*. Websites: Townhall.com; AnnCoulter.com.

Universities and foundations/groups supporting conservative scholars and students: George Mason University, Harvard University, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, University of Chicago, Yale University, Washington University, Stanford University, Institute for Humane Studies, National Association of Scholars.

Those lists are *old*. Right-wing influence has grown. There's more money and outlets, new rankings and players, slicker delivery and promotion of big and small lies told louder, in new ways, more often. The goal is the same: Cripple the Democratic party, hamstring liberal/progressive movements and ideas. Promote theocracy, destroy unions, kill

what's left of the new deal. Make more money, get more power, control the nation's agenda while reshaping its mind.

But we had better weapons, air superiority over the other side in Nam and still couldn't get the outcome we wanted. After all the US lives lost, wounds suffered and dollars spent, the outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan are still uncertain.

Hard and dark times don't last forever. Frustrated, impoverished and desperate people will go for anything...for a while.

Keep on keepin' on!! Ingenuity, creativity and endurance will take us a long way.

Latin phrases to keep in mind: Caveat emptor (Let the buyer beware); Caveat lector (Let the reader beware. Add watcher.). Mock Latin: Illegitimi non carborundum (Don't let the bastards get you down). Nothing's perfect If al Qaeda and the Taliban were really smart they'd be contributing money to the most radical Republican candidates.



HORACE COLEMAN WAS AN AIR FORCE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER/ INTERCEPT DIRECTOR IN VIETNAM (1967-68).



Brian Willson at the Progressive Summit.



Jim Hightower at the Progressive Summit.

A Personal Veterans Day

PAUL DONAHUE

Being a conscientious reader of our local daily newspaper I have noticed through the years the appearance in the Memoriam column the name of someone I once knew. It always appears on a patriotic holiday, but I could never keep track, so that if Memorial Day or the Fourth of July passed by and I didn't find his name I'd be puzzled. Then last year I finally figured it out. PFC George Gunn was killed in action in Kontum, Vietnam on Veterans Day, 1967. He was eighteen years old.

George was a couple of years behind me in high school, but I remember him because he was a good friend of my younger brother. It is his mother who places the notices in the Memoriam column, sometimes a poem, other times a letter, and sometimes with a thumbnail picture of him wearing his helmet—it looks too big for his head. It is George's story and his mother's devotion to his memory that now defines the meaning of Veterans Day for me.

The holiday itself was originally named Armistice Day in 1919 to commemorate the end of World War I, which saw 116,516 American military lives lost to combat (940,000 Americans overall). President Wilson said, "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory ..." It is celebrated on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, when the armistice was signed to mark

"the war to end all wars." Then in 1954, after World War II, where 405,399 Americans died, and the Korean War (54,246 deaths), President Eisenhower signed a bill striking the word, Armistice, and inserting the word, Veterans, in its place. In 1968 the Uniform Holiday Bill moved all federal holidays to a Monday in the hopes of encouraging more travel, recreation, and cultural activities. This led to much confusion when it was implemented three years later, as many citizens and states refused to accept the change owing to the historic significance of the original date. So, in 1975, at the end of the Vietnam War, where 58,177 American soldiers died, President Ford signed legislation setting observance of Veterans Day again to November 11th, regardless of what day of the week that date falls on. All of this presidential bill signing mattered little to George's mom. The tragedy of George's death ascribed to her, and to exactly fifty other American mothers on that very same day in 1967, by an ironic coincidence, their own personal Veteran's Day.

My brother and George were best friends; they were two of a kind—teenage adventurers. They both grew up in the Mont Pleasant section of Schenectady, NY, an old fashioned ethnic neighborhood. They would contrive to take walks, long walks, perhaps to Mariaville Lake (almost 15 miles directly west) or Thatcher Park (about 20 miles south). Thatcher Park is famous for its overlook, with

a view of the entire region, even at the starting point of the hike. I won't describe the short-cut home from the park, but you can guess that since they were walking, yes, over the cliff. My favorite tale is of an evening shoreline bonfire at Great Sacandaga Lake (due north about 30 miles) with some other friends when a voice from the overlooking ledge questioned their intentions, and then, with a degree of benevolence, allowed them to continue their evening. It was none other than Johnny Carson, or so the story goes. Why would George want to enlist in the Army and leave this carefree life behind? My brother asked him. "You don't understand," was George's reply, "It's what I want to do." George qualified for the 173rd Airborne Brigade and volunteered to fight in Vietnam.

For more than forty years George's mom has been posting a Memoriam in the *Daily Gazette* on the anniversary of George's death, Veterans Day. After all these years the tone of her missives speaks to a boy, because that is how he left her. She still lives in the same house in Mont Pleasant and she keeps in contact with his buddies and his girlfriend. They help her along and help to keep the memory of George within her, a memory that is fresh and near the surface. The years have left little distance between then and now, time has not allowed the memories to diminish. And, if she is feeling a little blue, she has his scrapbook to quickly cheer her up.

I find it difficult to imagine

the burden of sorrow that must weigh on her. She, and all the other mothers, fathers, and families who have lost loved ones, are just as much a casualty of war as the soldiers who fall. I think that we should view Veterans Day through the lens that these families do, and celebrate with solemn pride. It was President Eisenhower who designated the date as Veteran's Day, he also famously said, "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, as only one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity." I would add sorrow, as only a mother like George's mom can know.

Here is an excerpt from a poem written by Major Michael Davis O'Donnell in Dak To, Vietnam, in January of 1970, three months before his helicopter went missing in Cambodia: "If you are able, save for them a place inside of you and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go... And in that time when men decide and feel safe to call the war insane, take one moment to embrace those gentle heroes you left behind."



PAUL DONAHUE WAS A DRAFTEE. AFTER DISCHARGE AND FINISHING HIS EDUCATION, HE WORKED 38 YEARS FOR GE AT THEIR GLOBAL RESEARCH CENTER. HE IS RETIRED NOW AND CAN AFFORD TO REFLECT, AND HAS DETERMINED THAT TWO YEARS IN THE ARMY AND 38 YEARS WITH GE ARE EQUAL.

Exit Signs on the Imperial Highway

Corruption City
Ineptitude Place
Willful Ignorance Ahead!!!
Indifference Park
Decadent Woods
Hedonist Heights
Headstrongville
Belief Before Reality Beach

The only thing to do is to
not let the pollution touch you
or pounce on the last ounce
of your spirit of endurance.
That or have good insurance.

—Horace Coleman

Statement from IVAW Executive Director

JOSE VASQUEZ

A lot has happened in IVAW since the last issue of *The Veteran*. Our VVAW supported Field Organizing Team is busy conducting sustained active duty outreach at Fort Hood and developing leaders from around the country. We've reached hundreds of service members and their families on base and the movement to support our troops' right to heal is growing! A special thanks to VVAW for your sustained and substantial support of the Field Organizing Program, and to everyone who has contributed to this important effort. You can follow the campaign at ivaw.org/operation-recovery.

We also held our 7th annual

National Convention in Portland, OR in conjunction with Veterans for Peace. This year's convention was a big success that included workshops on leadership development, connecting with Iraqi organizations, media mobilizing, and a fantastic panel of allies imparting lessons from other movements. Plans for the 2012 convention are underway and will likely take place on the East Coast. Stay tuned for updates at ivawconvention.org.

A new crop of eager board members was elected this summer and we had our first quarterly meeting on October 1-2 in NYC. Our current board is Garrett Rep-

penhagen, Joyce Wagner, Bryan Reinholdt, Jennifer Blain, Wendy Barranco, Brock McIntosh, Scott Kimball and Jorge Gonzalez. Marty Webster, a VVAW National Coordinator, attended the meeting and participated in a planning session for mentoring between IVAW board members and our advisory committee members.

At the time of this writing, we are gearing up for our jointly planned War Voices (warvoices.org) event in DC to mark the 10th anniversary of the Afghanistan invasion. And as thousands descend on Freedom Plaza to call for Human Needs, Not Corporate Greed (october2011.org) we are doing

our part to highlight the voices of Afghan civilians, veterans and military families, as well as make the connections to the domestic crisis.

This Veterans' Day we are focusing on women service members and vets. Look for upcoming events and opportunities to support our sisters in uniform and in our community at ivaw.org.

In solidarity,

Jose N. Vasquez
Executive Director
Iraq Veterans Against the War

Digging into the Operation Recovery Campaign

NICOLE BALTRUSHES

Killeen, TX- It's hot. The days are long and filled to the brim. The gears are turning. The people are moving. We are building. The strategy is evolving. We are all learning. We are all growing. We are changing each other as we transform ourselves.

As a member of Civilian Soldier Alliance, I came to this base town to support service members' right to heal. I wanted to meet service members where they're at, and Ft. Hood is one of the best places to do it. Ft. Hood in Killeen, Texas is the largest US military installation in the country, with over 75,000 active duty service members, half of whom are deployed at any given time. I arrived in the middle of July. The 1st Cavalry, 1st Brigade had started deploying to Iraq and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment was beginning to return from a year-long deployment.

I joined up with the Operation

Recovery Campaign Deployment Team, a group of veteran and civilian organizers, working out of the Under the Hood GI Coffee House just off base. This campaign aims to stop the deployment of traumatized troops and support service members right to heal from Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

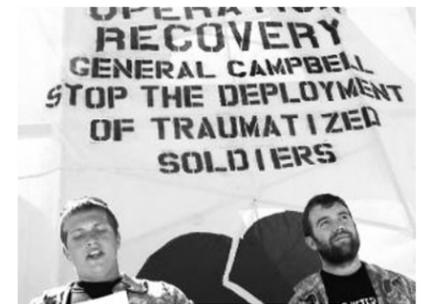
Between 20% to 50% of all service members deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan have suffered PTSD. In 2007, the VA reported MST rates of 22% among female veterans registered with the VA. Suicide rates among active-duty troops, are twice as high as that of the civilian population, and veterans with PTSD are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide. There is clearly an epidemic of mental health issues within the military and still the Department of Defense is not following its own

regulations about these issues. Someone has to force them to implement these changes.

"If soldiers don't feel empowered to hold their commands accountable to regulations regarding these issues, no one will," said Malachi Muncy, an Operation Recovery Organizer and Veteran of the Texas Army National Guard. Malachi deployed to Iraq twice and has been working with other IVAW resident organizers to build power in the ranks of active duty soldiers at Fort Hood to stand up for their right to heal.

In order to build this campaign, the Operation Recovery Deployment Team does outreach to active duty soldiers five days a week. Passing out flyers about the Operation Recovery Campaign and Under the Hood Cafe we would ask questions. We want to listen more than to talk. We ask about their experiences with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Military Sexual Trauma, and Traumatic Brain Injury. We ask about access to health care. We ask about their concerns, their questions. We ask what they think needs to change.

The weekly GI Rights training and free Barbeque that is hosted at Under the Hood Cafe on Thursdays is another opportunity to transform the space and ourselves. This past week the event brought us all together as a community of organizers as we prepared the food, cleaned, made signs and final outreach blitz



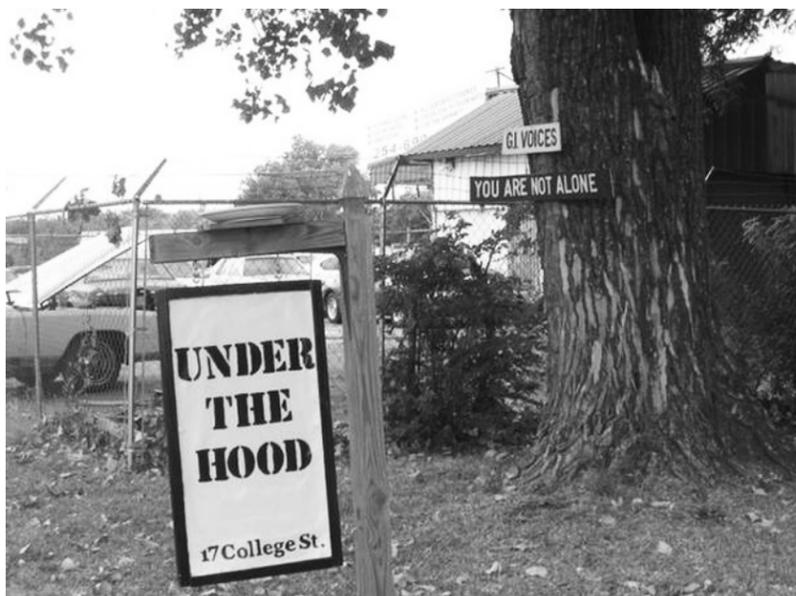
to get people out. The evening transformed from screen-printing workshop to conversations about the rights and options of AWOL soldiers, to a musical performance by myself, to a porch jam session, and then back to screen printing.

Organizing in Killeen, we are lucky to get the chance to build community and have these conversations with active duty soldiers. As Lori Hurlebaus, CivSol resident organizer explained, "We get to talk to the people in the best position to imagine solutions because they have the most intimate experience with the problems."

Together we can build a community of support and resistance in the belly of the beast.



NICOLE BALTRUSHES IS A CIVILIAN SOLDIER ALLIANCE MEMBER FROM CHICAGO WHO HAS BEEN WORKING IN HER OWN COMMUNITY TO BREAK DOWN THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN OUR WARS AND EVERYDAY LIFE. NICOLE VISITED UNDER THE HOOD CAFÉ AS A GUEST ORGANIZER IN JULY, 2011.



Operation Recovery Updates

AARON HUGHES

"It's a little crazy what we are doing here ..."

One month in - June 26, 2011. We are sitting on the porch at 11pm and a thunderstorm has just broken through the desert's heat. "It's a little crazy what we are doing here ..." Sergio reflects and then breaks into his loud boisterous laugh that is drowned out by the sounds of the first beating raindrops in over a month.

It is crazy ... It's crazy how desert thunderstorms can seem so harsh, even brutal, when they are also necessary for survival. The earth is so dry that the water beads and is repelled at first. The yellow brush, wilting and depressed, takes the rain like a harsh beating of truth. These plants and this place are waiting for death even as life beats down all around.

It's crazy that for now, there are just five of us here. These five are like these desert rainstorms: Sergio is like the thunder, loud and powerful. Scott is like the rustling trees shaking up the past and bringing it into the future. Malachi is like the winds howling

with energy. Kyle is like the clouds blowing and turning moving this direction and that. Myself, I feel like the uneasiness of the low flying birds that know what is coming.

We five walk through heat blinding days talking, breaking the silence, introducing ourselves to strangers, to service members, and at first it is like harsh rains, but like desert brush, they want more. Want more of this power that is their voice. Want to hear their voices louder and clearer even when it starts to shake like the trees in the rain.

We visit these brothers and sisters at their homes and listen. We listen to the Military Police Sergeant talk about her soldier that is only 21 years old and after one deployment just can't function any longer. He needs help and treatment, and their commander makes his every attempt to get help harder. We listen to the Medic Sergeant talk about the number of suicides and attempted suicides that no one is talking about. We listen to the soldier on extra duty talk about being shot on his third

deployment, needing to take pain relievers, running out of pills, taking his wife's pills to get through the day, and then getting court martialed for taking the wrong medication. We listen to the soldiers talk about their non-commissioned officers that are shaken and struggling with anxiety and memories but are gearing up to deploy again. We listen to the Army bugler talk about the number of funerals he performs Taps at every week.

It's crazy to really just listen ... listen everyday to the isolation while trying to connect dots and bring people together. We are trying to build new community here where military culture has sucked the surrounding culture dry. We are trying to penetrate this place just as the rains penetrate the dry earth. We all know what is just below the surface Howard Zinn said it best in *A People's History of the United States*, "The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories revolt is always an inch below the surface." It's as crazy as desert

rain and the changing tides of history.

The past month has been focused on outreach. Every weekday we are doing outreach from 11 - 2PM and follow-ups and house visits from 5 - 8PM. The rest of the time we are cleaning the coffee shop, planning our outreach and follow ups, keeping up with our national responsibilities, and just making sure we are maintaining. We have connected with approximately 200 service members and done approximately 20 house visits. Each day it gets harder but we get smarter and better at connecting with the service members here.

It's a little crazy to dive into the desert rains embracing the water as it soaks through your clothes and through your skin all the way to your heart, where love sits just below the surface.



AARON HUGHES IS THE FIELD ORGANIZING TEAM LEADER FOR IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

War is Trauma

ALICE EMBREE

For more than a decade, two declared wars have raged in Iraq and Afghanistan with no end in sight. Thousands of service members return home suffering from trauma. These servicemen and women face redeployment despite diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Military Sexual Trauma (MST).

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and their civilian allies have embarked on a campaign that has a simple message: the right to heal. IVAW's Operation Recovery advocates that service members who experience PTSD, TBI, MST, and combat stress have the right to exit the traumatic situation and receive immediate support and compensation. IVAW organizers talk to soldiers about their right to receive care and advice from medical professionals, advice that should trump a commander's orders.

In Killeen, the GI coffee-house Under the Hood, is the forward operating base for Operation Recovery. Aaron Hughes, an IVAW organizer, and other IVAW members have spent many weeks in the brutal summer heat of Killeen, Texas, talking to soldiers at Fort Hood, the largest Army base in the world.

Here they find plenty of soldiers who have returned from deployment and have been diagnosed with trauma but are being readied for deployment, again untreated. There are also many soldiers who have never been appropriately diagnosed. At Fort Hood these situations often translate into the worst possible result -- suicide.

In January 2011, the Army reported twice the number of suicides than in 2009. That is a rate of 47 deaths per 100,000, compared with a 20 per 100,000 rate among civilians and a 22 per 100,000 rate Army-wide. "We are at a loss to explain the high

numbers," acting commander Major General William Grimsley told *USA Today*.

Aaron Hughes and other IVAW organizers have an easier time explaining Fort Hood's record-breaking stat. The Army is first and foremost committed to keeping troops available for wars that are far from over. They direct inadequate resources to the diagnosis and treatment of traumatized soldiers. Service members often struggle in isolation with the invisible wounds of trauma -- wounds that fester in secrecy, wounds that affect spouses and children, families and friends.

Service members return to a country where the wars are invisible to a majority of their fellow citizens -- where media attention is lavished on the stupidity of movie stars and the cacophony of what passes for political debate. War coverage just doesn't attract advertisers like "Dancing With the Stars."

In the midst of this, IVAW has a powerful message: You are not alone. You have the right to heal.

One lifeline that can work for soldiers in trauma is to tell their story to peers who have walked in their boots.

Since it opened in February 2009, Under the Hood Café and Outreach Center has offered a space for active duty soldiers, military families, veterans, and concerned citizens to socialize, organize, and heal.



ALICE EMBREE IS A LONG-TIME AUSTIN ACTIVIST, ORGANIZER, AND MEMBER OF THE TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION. A FORMER STAFF MEMBER OF THE RAG IN AUSTIN AND RAT IN NEW YORK, AND A VETERAN OF SDS AND THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT, SHE IS NOW ACTIVE WITH CODEPINK AUSTIN AND UNDER THE HOOD CAFÉ.

Stop Ignoring Veteran's Issues

DAVID AMERSON

The 2012 Presidential Election cycle is in full swing and if the Republican debates are any indication, the political discourse over the next 12 months should prove to be a low point in American history. The field of nominees, ranging from a neo-McCarthyist, evangelical, adopted mother of 20; to a jocular, dim-witted Texas governor (sound familiar?), are currently participating in a race to see who can make the largest mockery of our electoral system by focusing on the issue that is, according to their base, most plaguing our nation: a black man is president.

Amidst all the faux-patriotism and hyperbole that is part and parcel of our election cycle, another long-time American tradition is back in vogue: ignoring veteran's issues. In the first four debates not a word was mentioned about veteran's benefits, homelessness, unemployment or health. In fact, many of the candidates doubled down on war-

hawking by insinuating that our troops, most of whom have already experienced multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, may soon be able to add campaign medals from Iran, Pakistan and Palestine to their dress uniforms.

Republicans have an abysmal record when it comes to veteran's issues, yet they have a monopoly in the American consciousness

Few people know any veteran's, and even fewer can explain the contours of the problems facing the veteran community. When veteran-activists speak out for veteran's benefits or against the war, the public becomes confused and even angered. Americans need to believe that we are doing right by our service-members. They want to believe that our foreign

ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new memorial statue, or railing against the next great foreign menace to America. This is simpler, and more politically effective, than designing comprehensive veteran's benefits legislation. There is no political necessity to support veterans like there is to support war.

What if, as veterans, we directed our efforts toward this problem? What if we confront these anti-veteran lawmakers and hold them accountable, taking the "support our troops" arrow out of their quiver? What if we demand that these issues be discussed, especially as the nation decides who will be the next Commander-in-Chief? What if we made it politically necessary to support veterans in order to get re/elected?

If groups such as VVAW and IVAW focused on local, grass roots actions directed at these lawmakers, then those groups could dramatically influence the discourse of local politics. For instance, say a US Representative voted against mortgage relief for veterans, military families and gold-star mothers (H.R. 836). Veterans from this Congressman's home district could sit outside his district office with signs saying "Rep. ___ votes against Vets!" or "Rep. ___ puts veterans out of their homes!"

With appropriate press management this could, at the very least, ensure that these legislators are put on notice for the inconsistency between "supporting our troops" and not providing basic benefits to our veterans. This could also cause other community members to re-examine their own conception of "support our troops," both in their hearts and in the voting booth.

In this important political time, we have the unique opportunity to alter the discourse about war and veterans, and we can do it in a local, inexpensive, and effective way. We should not let the opportunity pass.



DAVID AMERSON IS A THIRD YEAR LAW STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE OF LAW, STUDYING LABOR LAW AND POVERTY LAW. HE IS A FIVE-YEAR VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS (2000-2005) AND HE CURRENTLY RESIDES IN CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS.

... another long-time American tradition is back in vogue: ignoring veteran's issues.

as the "support our troops" party. Why is this?

One central reason is that the American public insists on only thinking about "the troops" in the abstract, as something to be admired from afar. The great bulk of American families do not have any immediate family members in the military. This is disproportionately true, of course, in well-to do families.

wars are just. They want to be told a neat, tidy story about the merits of military service, and will often vote for those that can weave them such tales. There is simply too little political will in parts of the American public to confront these issues.

It is easier for politicians to beef up their "pro-troop" bona fides by going on a PR tour to the green zone in Iraq, or attending a



Dave Amerson at Central Illinois IVAW's Speak Out Against the Afghanistan War on the University of Illinois campus.

Operation Recovery Organizing Drive

AARON HUGHES

This past week it rained in Killeen, Texas breaking the historic drought and burning heat that has plagued this military town. With the breaking of the drought comes the conclusion to the Operation Recovery summer long organizing drive.

The organizing drive was an experiment based on the strategies of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee on how to build power in the belly of the beast. In 1961 for SNCC the "belly" was Mississippi and the "beast" was racism. For IVAW the "belly" is Ft. Hood and the "beast" is militarism.

In a book titled *SNCC*, Howard Zinn wrote, "How do you measure commitment? Is it the willingness to take a day out of life and sacrifice for history, to plunge for one morning or one afternoon into the unknown, to engage in one solitary act of defiance against all the arrayed power of established society? ... Is commitment more than that - the willingness to wrench yourself out of your environment and begin anew, almost alone, in a social jungle which the most powerful forces in the nation have dared to penetrate? Then the number is

reduced to 16: those 16 college youngsters who, in the fall of 1961, decided to drop everything - school and family and approved ambition - and move into the deep south to become the first guerrilla fighters of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee."

Fifty years ago with just sixteen organizers SNCC dove into the south not only to change the course of history, but also to also radically transform themselves. Fifty years later we are still in battle against the "giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism" that Martin Luther King Jr. spoke so powerfully about in his 1967 *Beyond Vietnam* speech. Heeding the lessons of Dr. King and the door to door organizing strategies of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, IVAW choose to dive into the belly of the beast of the US Army, Ft. Hood, to become the guerrilla fighters of our movement for a better world.

For the fourteen organizers who wrenched themselves out of their daily lives at different points throughout this past summer the experiment proved successful. The organizing drive did not meet all of its objectives but it did

identify new emerging active duty leaders and build a community of dignity and respect counter to the culture of militarism, materialism, racism and patriarchy of the US military.

The Ft. Hood organizing drive original objective was to collect 500 to 600 contacts, conduct 50 to 60 successful house visits, collect 15 to 20 testimonies, and identify one to two emerging active duty leaders that will get involved with the next phase of the campaign. The organizing drive did not achieve all its goals for contacts, house visits and testimonies. However, through the organizing drive and daily outreach four emerging active duty leaders have been identified and they are getting involved with building the next phase of the campaign.

The Organizing drive also functioned as a training institute for resident and guest organizers. The experience of doing intentional and consolidated daily outreach and follow-ups is new to IVAW. These experiences are now being applied to local chapters and the organizing drive initiated a culture shift to organizing that is not common to the anti-war

movement.

At the end of July members of the organizing drive hit the road for Operation Recovery's Right to Heal tour in order to share what was learned over the first two months of the organizing drive and get more chapters and supporters involved with the campaign. The tour stopped in Dallas, Albuquerque, Colorado Springs (Ft. Carson), San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Joint Base Lewis McCord (Ft. Lewis). Now there are organizing efforts at Ft. Carson, San Francisco and Joint Base Lewis McCord.

The campaign is picking up momentum, building to scale, and preparing to fight on our terms, overpower our local target General Campbell, win, and take our fight to the national level next year. The lessons we have learned this past summer during the organizing drive will be applied to building something larger and more powerful next year.



AARON HUGHES IS THE FIELD ORGANIZING TEAM LEADER FOR IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

I am a soldier

I am a soldier,
One of America's own.
Child of the father's before me
Whose sacrifice I owe a debt
Which can never be repaid.

I stand ready to honor that debt
When called upon. I will take arms
Against those who would seek to
Cage liberty and set fire to peace.
My life for these I do pledge.

All that I ask...
Do not deceive me. Do not send
Me to distant places to stand
In harm's way for falsehoods and
Riches earned by the letting
Of my blood.

Do not dishonor my sacrifice
For the gains of your purse.
Let not my life be your reward.
I am a soldier,
One of America's own.
Father to those to come after me.

—Rich Raitano.
Medic 4th Bn 3rd Inf. Rgt. (Old Guard)
RVN 1967-68



The Road More Traveled

We all had our reasons
for joining the cause,
patriotism
idealism
romanticism,
and all too frequently, duress.
But motivation no longer mattered
as the road became
pockmarked with land mines.
Most of us
were just along for the ride, and
it came as quite the surprise
when we finally figured out
we weren't the ones
in the driver's seat.

—Paul Hellweg served with the 11th
Armored Cavalry Regiment at Xuan
Loc in 1968. He is a member of both
Veterans for Peace and Vietnam
Veterans Against the War, and he
is devoting his life to speaking out
against war.

Where Soldiers Come From

THOMAS BRINSON (REVIEWER)

Where Soldiers Come From
Heather Courtney
(wheresoldierscomefrom.com
2011)

I recently led a Q&A session in Manhattan after a showing of the moving and perceptive documentary film, *Where Soldiers Come From*. Set in her small hometown of Hancock on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the film by Heather Courtney is a poignant coming of age tale about three young friends, Dom, Cole and Bodi, who are transformed from teenage high school buddies into hardened veterans of the Afghanistan War. The film focuses not only upon the three young soldiers, but most adeptly shows the incredible cost and stress of war upon families within small-town communities.

Coming from an economically deprived area, enticed by the Army's \$20,000 signing bonus and the promise of GI Bill benefits for college, the three lifelong high school buddies along with several other friends join an Engineer Battalion in the Michigan National Guard. They are stationed at Camp Salerno, where their task is to clear IEDs from mountainous roads near the Pakistan border. The film deftly intermingles interviews of the three young soldiers and their family members with scenes por-

traying their day-to-day life and struggles, both in Afghanistan and back in Hancock. Nevertheless, this is not a political film -- Ms. Courtney's camera simply lets the subjects show their stories.

One of the three soldiers, Dom, is an accomplished urban (aka graffiti) artist. During the first part of the film he is shown designing and creating with his friends, just before they depart for Afghanistan, a mural symbolizing their deployment. The setting where they do this is an abandoned copper factory. One of the most poignant scenes Ms. Courtney records is the visit of his girlfriend, Ashley, by herself to the mural while he is deployed.

Though there are considerable differences, I was struck by how similar were the experiences of these young veterans with us much older veterans of the Vietnam generation of soldiers. We both soon became disillusioned with our war effort, using caustic foxhole humor to survive and maintain some sense of balance among ourselves. One major difference, however, is the homecoming experience. Whereas my generation of soldiers mostly went to war alone and came home by ourselves, the current generation of war fighters are deployed as a unit and come home together. The whole town of Hancock turns out for a Welcome Home parade

and celebration at the National Guard Amory. Too soon, however, the sheen of the hero's welcome diminishes, and the reality of readjustment difficulties begins to manifest.

Of the three, Dom's readjustment seems to be most successful, perhaps due to his urban art serving as a productive means of dealing with his experience. The film ends showing him completing another large graffiti mural on the back of a building at his college, adroitly assisted by his Asian art instructor. Nevertheless, he is also shown as being extremely irritable, and short-tempered, which negatively impacts his relationship with Ashley, especially when drinking. Like veterans of any combat, he most likely shall never fully forget, nor get over his experience of combat.

Cole, on the other hand, experiences difficulties with the VA bureaucracy that lost his paperwork. He is now responsible for paying back a \$3,800 charge for college tuition, since the VA did not pay the college. Additionally, he suffers from an unknown stomach ailment, possibly ulcers. Bodi has been diagnosed with the signature wound of the Afghanistan war, TBI, from the numerous concussions he experienced from IED explosions. He is especially sardonic and bitter,

expressing how much he hates his experience of American war fighting in Afghanistan. Chances are good that one or both of them may re-enlist and be deployed again despite current disdain for their experience in Afghanistan.

This is a must-see film for anyone who is concerned about our nation's current penchant for endless war. A decade after 9/11 the likelihood of peace seems increasingly unlikely, since the vast majority of citizens are not directly impacted by expanding wars the US wages throughout the world. Ms. Courtney's poignant and sensitive film exemplarily depicts how war impacts the mostly forgotten underclass of American society. I suppose that this is the way it has always been throughout history -- underprivileged persons share the burden of fighting and are most affected by wars elites of every civilization have waged primarily for their gain and profit.

The film is presently being shown in selected theatres throughout the country and will be premiered on PBS stations P.O.V. television program on November 10th -- check local listings for specific dates and times.



THOMAS BRINSON HAS BEEN AN ARDENT PEACE ACTIVIST SINCE HE FLEW BACK FROM VIETNAM. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.



On September 15, 2011 friends gathered at the Jersey City Vietnam Veteran's Memorial to remember Dave Gline on the 4th anniversary of his death. The VVAW members attending included June Setlovsky, Ann Hirschman and Brian Matarrese. June was the designer of the original memorial stone (with, as she says, "a lot of input from Dave"). The group was small due to weather and horrible traffic but this did not dim our memories of Dave's life and activism.

Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory

JERRY LEMBCKE (REVIEWER)

Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory
Scott Laderman
(Duke University Press, 2009)

"Vietnam is more than a war" has become a popular expression with American historians and anthropologists eager to authenticate their sensitivity to the integrity and complexity of Vietnamese culture. As it turns out, however, the phrase is a marketing slogan ginned-up by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) for the consumption of American travelers who might otherwise be squeamish about dropping dollars where they or their fathers had dropped bombs.

Such are the nuggets turned up by author Scott Laderman in his search for the ways that institutions mediate the making of peoples' memories of the past. Treating travel guides as an institution that does that, arbitrating the truth of travel experience even before it has begun. He goes on to tell us that English language guide books produced by VNAT exclude the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City from mention while the Vietnamese editions include it. It's a difference, he suggests, that occludes American memory about the war for Vietnamese national unity that continues to be validated for them as the most important theme in their history.

Laderman's primary interest is in American social memory. His use of guide books such as *Lonely Planet* and Fodor's *Exploring Vietnam* as primary documents

is a clever approach to that topic, one yielding a first-rate example of what good public history looks like. Laderman's background in American Studies gives him a solid grasp of cultural studies and his writing an interdisciplinary flare and stylistic shading that will invite readers from many academic fields and levels, the book-buying public, and thoughtful travelers.

The social construction of memory is Laderman's object of study and his narrative is woven with threads from the history of the American war in Vietnam and the history of tour books about Vietnam. For the first, he creates a case study of Hue, the city where the National Liberation Front and army of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (aka, the Viet Cong and North Vietnam) waged a fight against the client US government in Saigon and US troops in 1968. Known as the Tet Offensive, the fight for Hue destroyed much of the city and cost all sides many dead and wounded. But the controversies over who did what to whom, argues Laderman, are elided by the English-language tour books that rewrite the story as a massacre perpetrated by communists on Vietnamese civilians. There is "no credible evidentiary basis for this version of events" (p. 89), he says. Meanwhile, the same books leave out the devastating effect of US bombing on the city and the fact that assassination teams mounted by the Saigon government roamed the city killing members of the opposition in the closing days of the fight.

Laderman's reviews of the ways the war and the period of doi moi are represented are well developed but I learned the most from his history of Vietnam tour books. Laderman begins that study with the French colonial period when guidebooks portrayed colonialism as an intervention by benevolent foreigners that brought modernity and peace to a region torn by conflict. Moving to the post-World War II years when the United States began to express its own interests in Vietnam, he cites Olson's *Orient Guide* (1962) as an example that treated unfavorably both the French attempt to reoccupy Indochina, and the struggle of the Vietnamese for independence, while touting Ngo Dinh Diem as the President of the Saigon government as having been "elected by an overwhelming majority" (p. 31). Laderman's debunking of that version of the Diem regime is detailed and well documented.

The double entendre in *Tours of Vietnam* won't be missed by American veterans of the war who did their military tours of duty there. They and other readers will be fascinated with Laderman's finding that travel books not only valorized the Diem government but even promoted (South) Vietnam as a tourist destination for the first US military personnel dispatched there in the early 1960s. Eugene Fodor, namesake of the travel-book series, was a veteran of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner to the CIA, and a hardcore cold warrior who allowed CIA operatives to work

as travel writers for the series. Drawing sexualized imagery, Fodor's marketing of Vietnamese women as assets to lure travelers anticipated the formation of sex tourism that followed the American war. Laderman tells us about the Pentagon's own travel literature (1963) promoting the beaches at Danang and Nha Trang as places where deployed servicemen could enjoy fishing and water skiing. Ironically, the phrase "Fun, Travel, Adventure" spun by GIs to mock their recruitment, and later appropriated for the title of an anti-war variety show, was not so far-fetched.

Laderman's use of newly published tour guides and his interviews done in Vietnam with travelers using the guides takes the relevance of his work right into 21st Century America. "Vietnam is more than a war" may or may not be a slogan ahead of its time, we can't tell that from *Tours of Vietnam*. What we can tell from the author's excavation of travel guides is that the Vietnam war is embedded in America. From his study, considered with the unending references by press and policy makers to the relevance of that war for the unfolding military ventures abroad, we could well ask if America is yet more than the war it fought in Vietnam nearly a half-century ago.



JERRY LEMBCKE IS AN ASSOC. PROF. IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY/ ANTHROPOLOGY AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE IN WORCESTER, MA.



VVAW at the Occupy Pittsburgh protest October 15.

Left to right: Larry Grundy, Cindy Grundy, Alynne Romo, Nick Thompson

Dead is Dead: The Medic at Rest

MARC LEVY

Recently the town where I live paid tribute to a soldier killed in Afghanistan. Local news reports stated he and a friend were attacked by a suicide bomber as they stood by a building. The KIA, recently married, was blown to bits. At the wake the casket was closed.

My partner Carla is a friend of the widow. My friend Jim, an infantry Nam vet, lives four blocks from the church hosting the memorial service. The KIA, a stocky and good-looking young man, was well known for his high spirits and generous nature. He was also the first combat death the town had taken in quite some time. Jim felt this explained the communal outpouring of sympathies, the parade that would follow the service, the abundant array of donated flowers, and, as we walked the tree lined streets, the wide yellow ribbons tied round every sycamore as far as one could see.

At the church, I was stunned by the sight of a dozen members of Rolling Thunder, the veterans and non-veterans biker club well known for its yearly motorcades in Washington, DC on Memorial Day. Commanding each level of the long granite stairs, arms folded across their chests, their faces were implacable. All mourners were compelled to pass this gauntlet before entering the nave.

Many vets have encountered attention seeking poseurs who spout tales of uncommon valor, sport rows of unearned combat ribbons. More often than not a few well-put questions put the impostor to shame. I wondered which of these ardent patriots, their leather jackets adorned with military style pins and MIA/POW patches, had set or escaped an ambush, survived a rocket or mortar or ground attack? How many had seen the wounded, dead and dying up close and personal? Who among them had vivid war nightmares, heightened startle reflex, or suffered combats multi-curse of homicidal rage, depression, anxiety? 'C'mon,' I thought, 'Which of you are the real deal, the genuine article, have the papers and scars and medals to prove it? Step up and show me. C'mon, show me what you got.' But I did not speak so they did not hear me.

The lapel of his black suit adorned with a Combat Infantry Badge and Purple Heart, I

wondered what Jim felt; and Carla, who knew my combat specters, what were her thoughts as we trudged into the packed church, found an empty pew and sat down? As the last mourners trickled in, the memorial service began.

Three elder male priests in white vestments took turns proclaiming god's eternal glory, the virtues of duty and honor, the way to Paradise, where the dearly departed soldier would meet us at our appointed time. Periodically, all were prompted to stand and bow their heads in prayer.

An hour passed without mention of a single drop of blood or bit of bone; my mind drifted. What if the plaintive voice of the young KIA overtook the old men. Instead of pieties, what if he sang, Whitman-like, of war's cruel wisdom? What if some poor soul stood and wept loud and long? What if a suicide bomber, undetected by Rolling Thunder, set off a hundred pounds of plastique explosive laced with nails, glass shards and piercing metal pellets? What if the bright sudden bang sent a shock wave of heat and flying body parts, wreaking havoc amongst the faithful? To my right, a black female military officer silently wept. She knows, I thought. She knows what went down. I regret not embracing her.

Earlier that day, Jim said a one-star general had been flown in and would speak at the service. A robust yet humble man, his dress uniform bearing medals for valor, this senior officer, at times spoke lovingly of the KIA, as if he'd known him, or many dead men. He avoided cliches; the better, I thought, to honor the dead soldier.

When the general had finished speaking, the widow, her voice inaudible, spoke for barely a minute. The dead man's sister, struggling to be cheerful, related humorous events from their childhood. An active duty soldier who knew the deceased, choked back tears as he named the qualities which made the dead man unique. Finally, guiding the mourners out of the church, a priest chanted as he swung a censer of burning incense whose smoke trailed behind him like a veil.

* * *

Twenty-five ago I sat in the main

auditorium of New York's 92nd Street Y. The splendidly wood-paneled hall with its comfortable plush chairs was filled to capacity by a crowd of well-heeled Upper East and West Siders. Gucci and Prada vied with flowing coats of mink and sable and the rustle of imported fabrics. The occasion? A poetry reading to honor Veterans Day. At the time the country was not at war, greed was fashionable, life was good, and tonight's gathering would praise in noble rhymes soldiers' who'd fought on distant shores for America's liberty and freedom.

"The first reader," said the moderator, "Is Jon Stallworthy."

I looked about. Not many in the room seemed to recognize the name. The gentry quieted their small talk, further settled into their seats, nestled their hands onto their laps. Stallworthy, a trim and handsome man with sharp features and a stern expression, stepped to the stage, stood at the podium, then gently admonished the audience. Today, he said, was not a day for casual celebration or glib sentiments. Rather, Armistice Day, as it was first known, commemorated the millions who died in the Great War, which had ended on the eleventh hour of the eleventh month of 1918. And death in the mud-filled trenches, the rat-infested bunkers, in bomb-cratered no-mans-land, was not pleasant. Stallworthy thought it fitting to read from the poetry of Wilfred Owen, killed in action one week before war's end.

"I will begin with 'Dulce Et Decorum Est,' " he said.

"Do you know this poem?" I whispered to friend seated next to me.

"No," he replied.

"In a moment, everyone here will squirm in their seats."

He looked at me strangely. "How do you know that?"

"Trust me," I said.

Stallworthy was no stranger to Owen, having written his biography and edited the definitive collection of his poems. Unlike many well-intentioned academics, he knew how to read war poetry; how to inhabit each incendiary word, each startling stanza with sometimes sad and sometimes frightful but always energetic audacity. He calmly opened a well worn volume and began to read aloud:

*Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!
An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just
in time;
But someone still was yelling
out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in
fire or lime...*

The more Stallworthy evoked the dire attack, his voice and body seeming to ache with feeling, the more the audience shifted about, as if the spirit of the suffocating man, an emblem of agony, crawled and writhed before them.

*If you could hear, at every jolt,
the blood*

*Come gargling from the froth-
corrupted lungs,*

*Obscene as cancer, bitter as the
cud*

*Of vile, incurable sores on
innocent tongues...*

Several poems later, Stallworthy smartly closed the book, bowed his head to modest applause, then departed. Immediately, an audible surge of discomfort swept over the auditorium. Who was this impudent fellow to harm the holiday with talk of terror? What gave him the right to cast a pall on cheerful bustling New York, New York? The moderator, visibly shaken, introduced the next reader, who recited several popular war poems intent on duty, honor, country. He was well received.

* * *

I had hoped to attend the military funeral that followed the church service. I could imagine the sight and scent of the fresh dug grave. The zen-like lockstep of uniformed pall bearers shouldering the flag-draped casket, respectfully lowering it to place. The officer in charge three times calling out, "Fire!" At each command the brisk volleys shot in unison by seven riflemen. Stepping forward, the coronet player would sound the doleful lowing of Taps. Practiced hands would smartly tuck and fold the trim flag into a perfect triangle which the chaplain would present to the widow.

"On behalf of a grateful nation," he would say, "This flag is presented as a token of our appreciation for the honorable and faithful service rendered by your

continued on next page

Angel

DON DZAGULONES

Washington DC in 1968 was a flashpoint in the social and political upheaval afflicting America, much of which I had witnessed firsthand as an Army Pfc. assigned to the 528 MI Co at Ft. Meade, MD, which was also the home of the 7th Cav and the mysterious NSA.

By October of '68 mine had been a brilliant and distinguished military career of eleven months. I had been Platoon Guide and Outstanding Trainee in both Basic Training and AIT. And I had been offered NCO Academy, OCS, WO Flight, and even an appointment to West Point Prep. I refused all. I was a draftee and I had no desire to extend my obligation. FTA!

I had been at the 528 for about 6 months after completing AIT there. I had successfully morphed from a civilian shitbird to a skilled Interrogator/Analyst,

fluent in Polish and trained to repel hordes of Eastern Bloc invaders. I was beginning to think that I had symbolically dodged the bullet – no RVN for me!

Military logic, however, dictated that I refine and employ my training with intensive OJT in I Corps, Republic of Vietnam

But that's not why I write.

On a bleak Saturday evening, I left Ft. Meade to begin my leave prior to RVN. All my possessions were loaded into my '60 Chevy and I was headed for Detroit. I hadn't gotten far before my car began to shudder violently. I coasted into the first available driveway, which took me to a dimly lit service station. To my horror, I found the cause of the shudder to be a broken, dragging drive shaft. Where does one find a drive shaft at 2100hrs on a Saturday evening in Odenton, MD? The station

attendant was iconic. His face was either dirty or unshaven, or both. His ball cap and coveralls were grease encrusted as were his permanently stained hands. And though he was preparing to close, he offered me the use of a hoist and tools after I had explained my predicament. My ineptitude must have been painful to watch because he took over after he made some phone calls.

Before long, a pickup truck pulled in, delivering, of all things, a drive shaft. One of my benefactors calls had been to a friend in the same business who also dealt in used parts. His inventory included a compatible GM part. In a matter of minutes the job was complete and my car was road worthy. My benefactors refused payment despite my sincere and repeated offers of cash. Determined to pay in some way, I found a liquor

store, an easily accomplished feat in an Army camp town. I bought the finest bottle of whiskey I knew and I made it back to the station before my savior left. And though grateful for my offer, he had to decline because he was a recovering alcoholic. Humbled and dumbfounded I left for Detroit.

Forty Three years later, I reflect on a life of remarkable events and remarkable people, but the humble mechanic occupies a special place. I hope somehow his kindness and generosity to a scared and desperate young soldier was repaid.

My wife believes in angels.



DON DZAGULONES, 1ST MIT, 11TH LIB, IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW FROM MICHIGAN.



Dead is Dead: The Medic at Rest

continued from previous page

loved one."

During this time some would weep and some would not but all would know one true thing: a good man, an honorable man, a medic killed in action, had been laid to rest. But that was something I did not see.

Our plans changed. We could not attend. In the church parking lot Carla and I bid farewell to Jim and caught a ride home with Dale and Rob, who'd sat behind

us in church. I asked Rob, a graduate student his thoughts on the service.

"To be honest," he said, "I found it uninteresting. To die in a strange land, what must that be like? How does one face it? I spent my time meditating. And I prayed for the family and the soul of..."

"Oh bullshit," said Dale, a high strung college senior. One hand on the steering wheel, the other clutching his cell phone, he

scowled, "The whole thing was bullshit. Like what Pat Tillman's brother said after the politicians spoke at the funeral. You know, 'Thanks for your thoughts but Pat's not with God. He's fuckin' dead.'"

Dale pounded the horn and clenched his jaw shut. In the silence which followed, his anguished voice made clear what the service lacked. Though his words were morose and crude, jetting from his mouth vile and bitter, this was how Dale expressed grief. That's what was missing at the memorial

service, where liturgies and such, however well-intentioned, cannot hide a lost war's indecent losses. Or dignify false glory.



MARC LEVY SERVED WITH D 1/7 CAV AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA IN 1970. SEE HIS WAR AND TRAVEL SKETCHES AT STORIES. EMAIL: SILVERSPARTAN@GMAIL.COM. THE MEDIC AT REST, PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED AT COUNTERPUNCH.ORG ON 18 FEB 2011.

What If I Had Assassinated Him Like Obama Did bin Laden?

I didn't—40 years ago.
I had the opportunity no one else had.
I might today were the situation bodily déjà vu'd.
He was the highest ranking officer in the US military.

His jacket thick with Navy stars and stripes,
gold and braid, tuniced over a roly-poly paunch
stuffed with Southern fried chicken and right-wing politics
—a veritable Prussian fashionista who hadn't smelled cordite

or shit over a barrel of diesel fuel since World War II.
I was his orderly, meeting his limousine every morning
in the Pentagon's dark drive-through basement,
a devil's lair of well-meaning murderers.

(The five-sided building lies across the Potomac
from Lincoln's back—it's location an unconscious irony:
a sniper's shot north is Arlington National Cemetery,
another holy shrine to America's torrid love affair with war.)
I would escort him—this Admiral Golden Braid
—into the building and out,
carrying his black attaché case filled—perhaps—
with secret plans for killing more.
I did not own or carry a weapon—not then, not now

—no gun, no knife, no club. No mortar. No tank.
No vest wired to high explosives and rusty bolts of industry.
I have no idea if he was armed, beyond the two given at birth.
His chauffeur was:

Handguns holstered at each ankle,
one in the hollow of his back,
a fourth on his hip,
a fifth strapped chest high.

After my six month's "admiral time"—
but before the Defense Intelligence Agency investigated me
and kicked me out of the Pentagon as a security threat—
some 6,000 more Americans awaited, still to die,

in the American war in Vietnam,
and another half-a-million Vietnamese,
all caught on the American roulette of
death-by-war-as-foreign-policy.

What if one day in 1970, on a quiet Pentagon elevator
—just him and me — (we never spoke)—
I had placed behind his ear a cheap, short muzzled .38
and pulled the trigger? Wishing him an eternal good-night

—softly, tenderly, gently—blessing him with a death
totally opposite death in combat.
Would I have saved all those lives?
It never, then, occurred to me to kill him,

even though my combat was fresh
and raw and wildly, raggedly breathing fire.
Oh, Oh, Oh! What a chance I had.
Alas, it never occurred to my Sunday-school-teaching self

to ask whether my executing him would have saved those lives.
Now they are but wasted offering and haunting ancestors:
purified blood, sacred meat, officiously odious offal, unfortunate
road-kill
on the blacktop highway of a diseased American culture.

—Tim Bagwell served in the Marine Corps from July 1968 to May 1971.
He was in combat with 3rd Marine Division out of Camp Vandergrift.
His first operation was Dewey Canyon in the A Shau Valley and his
last was Dewey Canyon III in Washington, D.C., where he returned
his combat medals to the US government while he was still on active
duty. He was discharged as a conscientious objector in May 1970. He
has been writing anti-war poetry since 2008—mostly to ease PTSD.
He lives, with his third wife, in Bloomington, Indiana.

In Libya



DANZIGER NYTS/CWS June 20 2011 (4810)

We the People—A New Movement

MICHAEL AND CYNTHIA ORANGE

*There's something happening here.
What it is ain't exactly clear...*
—From "For What It's Worth,"
Steven Stills and Buffalo
Springfield, 1967

We participated in the "Stop the Machine! Create a New World" gathering in Washington DC to launch the occupation of Freedom Plaza. What we saw in DC and have been seeing in broadcasts from some of the other "occupations" throughout the country convince us that we are witnessing the birth of a new movement.

For months, we felt compelled to make the trip from our home in St. Paul primarily because the focus of the gathering in Washington DC was to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the US war and occupation of Afghanistan. It was also to "connect the dots" that link our imperial wars as the root causes of our country's debilitating domestic problems.

In addition to the war economy focus, the DC Occupation embraced a broader range of interests that garner wider support and are more in harmony with the Occupy Wall Street purpose. In fact, a large majority of the American people consistently support ending the wars, creating a more equitable tax system, ending corporate welfare,

protecting the social safety net and worker rights, transitioning to a clean energy economy, and reversing environmental degradation. Of absolute necessity is getting the money out of politics.

We were very impressed with the event organization. This is in contrast to some of the corporate media spin that argue that these protests are led by a bunch of angry losers or old hippies who don't have a clue. In DC, there were tents for the media, legal aid, first aid, free donated food, electronic tie-ins, and a long line of porta-potties.

The small grassy side of the totally paved plaza became a crowded campground for the hundreds who spent the night there. As the crowd grew to nearly a thousand, the buzz of hundreds of conversations from people of all ages, races, and occupations created their own energy. There was music, dancing, laughter, deep discussion, and a forest of creative signs, most of them hand lettered.

The women from Code Pink created a cardboard village with labels such as "Foreclosed Dream House." It served as a playground for kids during the day and shelter for the overnighters to "rest" after the Park Police banned sleeping

and the use of tents on the plaza.

A display of worn combat boots carried tags that listed their now-dead owners.

The backdrop for the main stage was a twenty-foot-wide, parchment-colored banner, titled "We the People," which proclaimed the text and calligraphy of the Preamble to the Constitution. In the middle of the plaza was a companion banner titled, "We the Corporations," with a parody of the Preamble complete with a host of corporate logos.

To begin the formal program, the Raging Grannies from Madison sang original songs that we had first heard when we attended the massive pro-labor rallies there last spring.

During the evening program, we heard from an Iraq War vet and his artist friend who had biked 6,000 miles to bring attention through their music to the stupidity of our ongoing wars.

There is a striking contrast with the two-year-old Tea Party whose members are also voicing their anger at conditions for the average person. Unlike the grass-roots "Occupy" movement, the Tea Party has been co-opted by the corporate elite who have bankrolled it and used their corporate media to mold opinion and to

serve their own interests and those of the Republican Party.

As David Morris of the Institute for Local Self reliance describes it, "We're mad at the devastation wrought in the last four years by the toxic combination of unrestrained greed and concentrated wealth.... We're mad at Wall Street for taking our money and giving nothing back.... We're mad at the 1 percent of the country who make decisions that enrich themselves while impoverishing the rest of us." His article, "It's Labor vs. Capital, Stupid," is rich with the facts to back up his assertions.¹

Chris Hedges², the keynote speaker for first night of the DC Occupation, has stated, "The greatest gift the occupation has given us is a blueprint for how to fight back. And this blueprint is being transferred to cities and parks across the country." As we write this in mid-October, there are nearly 1,500 occupations in the US, and many more around the world.

In his remarks in DC, Hedges challenged us all by saying, "There are no excuses left. Either you join the revolt taking place on Wall Street and in the financial districts of other cities across the country or you stand on the wrong side of history.... Either you are rebel or a slave."

There is indeed, "something happening here." But what it is, is getting clearer. The people are rising up to take back our country. We stand together in this new movement.



- 1) <http://onthecommons.org/its-labor-vs-capital-stupid>
- 2) Chris Hedges was a foreign correspondent who, for 15 years, covered wars throughout the world for the New York Times. He was an early critic of the Iraq War and left the paper to become a senior fellow at The Nation Institute, write books, and teach (see www.truthdig.com/report/category/hedges/).

MICHAEL IS A MEMBER OF LOCAL CHAPTER 27 VETERANS FOR PEACE, VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, AND THE AUTHOR OF FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM. CYNTHIA IS ALSO A LONG-TIME PEACE ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR OF SHOCK WAVES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO LIVING WITH A LOVED ONE'S PTSD.



VVAW Members at Occupy Wall Street Saturday, October 8th, in New York City.
Left to right are George Weber, Ken Dalton and founding member Jan Barry.
Brother Frank Wagner is in the background making the peace sign.

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AUGUST, 1971



THE 1ST CASUALTY

"IN WAR, TRUTH
IS THE FIRST
CASUALTY" AESCHYLUS



A PUBLICATION OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

LIFELINE

TO

CAIRO



CAIRO, ILL.: It can't happen here?

At the southernmost tip of Illinois, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, there is a small town that has been around since before the days of the civil war. During the war between the states General U.S. Grant trained union soldiers here and it was known to be part of the underground railroad for runaway slaves fleeing north. Its name is Cairo.

During the post-civil war days, and up to the 1920's, it was a boom town and had the potential of being another Chicago. However, traffic circumvented Cairo about that time and went on to

Chicago, leaving Cairo in a state of economic depression. Industry moved out and people just kind of forgot about it until recently when it started making some papers (although not many). People started hearing about this small border town because it has been involved in armed warfare for the past 26 months.

At one time its population was 18,000, but has now shrunk to 6,000 persons, and since the 1960 census 3,000 people have left. Forty to fifty percent of the population is black. In the past 27 months five police chiefs, two

cont. p.3

THE PENTAGON PAPERS

First in a Series by Skip Roberts

I cannot emphasize enough that we must bring home the truths of the Pentagon Papers. The revelations of Dr. Ellsberg show clearly, that after the people of Indochina, the American people are indeed the greatest victims of imperialism and our military adventures overseas. Throughout the

papers, one can feel the arrogance and the contempt of the class of elite, who have run this country's foreign policy as their own private chess game for the last three decades, towards the American people and even towards their fellow elite elected as members of Congress to represent the peo-

cont. p.2

CID SEEKS VVAW SUPPORT

The American people are becoming more aware that the war in Indochina is not fought according to "The Rules of Land Warfare", or any other established rules. That is why our continuing Winter Soldier Investigations are so important. The administration realizes this, and they have started a nationwide investigation into the charges that we have made in WSI's across the country.

Having once been part of The Green Machine we know that the armed forces are not going to investigate themselves thoroughly or fairly. The intelligence branches of all services and in some cases the FBI, are contacting vets all over the country who have testified to war crimes. They are asking them to give complete written testimonies, including names of all the people involved in any of the incidents described. In some cases they are using threats of reactivation to try and force the brothers to cooperate.

Our lawyers, William Kunstler and Peter Weiss, have advised us not to give the CID, Naval Intelligence, etc., any information whatsoever. We urge you to follow this advice. We do not want to scapegoat any more individuals. If the grunts are going to be prosecuted for obeying orders, the people who gave those orders should also be prosecuted.

It is extremely important that anyone who has been contacted send us a letter with a complete description of the contact, including the names of the agents and what they asked.

The Winter Soldier Investigations are an important part of the work we are doing, so it's important that they continue without the harassment of the government. If you provide us with the details requested, we can take appropriate action against them.

Send info to Mike Oliver, VVAW
25 West 26th St., 4th floor, NYC,
NY 10010

"Mere possession of unauthorized printed material may not be prohibited."
D.O.D. Directive--1325.6

40 Years and Still Going Strong

Reprinted above is the front page of the first issue of VVAW's *The 1st Casualty* from August of 1971. In 1973, *The 1st Casualty* became *Winter Soldier*. In 1975, it became *The Veteran*.

The 1st Casualty was the first voice of Vietnam veterans in America, and has consistently addressed issues of peace and justice. Original articles on Post Traumatic Stress and Agent Orange have appeared since its first year of publication.

The Veteran continues publishing twice a year, still providing a voice to Vietnam Vets as well as vets and supporters from other conflicts.

An ongoing project to digitize all past issues continues. Go to www.vvaw.org/veteran to view past issues.

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 40 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 355
Champaign, IL 61824-0355**

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 and support the work of VVAW and its historic legacy. 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).

Signature _____

Date _____

Total Amount Enclosed _____

Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax-deductible.

RECOLLECTIONS

A Memoir of Not Going to Vietnam

GREGORY KOTONIAS

Although I was drafted during the Vietnam War, I did not go. This was accomplished in the same way that most children of the upper middle class and upper class accomplished it – connections. Unbeknownst even to me at the time, my aunt and uncle had organized an underground support network for draft resisters and deserters. In addition I was fortunate enough to have a father, a veteran of WW II, who was opposed to the war and was "not going to send a kid of mine to be killed in some God-forsaken place we don't belong." I was ultimately rejected for minor medical reasons and went on to fight the war, safely, with signs on the streets. None of my college buddies went either – you get the picture.

At the time I harbored no delusions that this was in any way a significant anti-Vietnam War act or that I had accomplished anything meaningful other than perhaps saving my life or avoiding a move to Canada. I knew someone else would just take my place, someone poorer, less educated, with

fewer connections, and probably not white.

I confess that I have always felt a bit guilty about not going – this perhaps being a mild form of survivor's guilt. What I have felt more strongly was the desire in recent years to go to Vietnam, to set foot on the land, see the people and countryside.

I did go to Hanoi and the surrounding countryside two years ago. I do appreciate that Hanoi was not the Vietnam of the war veterans, but it was important to me to simply be in the country called Vietnam. In trying to understand this pull toward Vietnam I realized a number of things.

First, I realized how deeply just the place, the name, Vietnam, were buried in my psyche.

There were so many catastrophic events in those years – assassinations, political debacles, etc., but somehow Vietnam and the war there had left the strongest mark. Why is that? Is it that I think I had escaped a certain death there? Was it that so many others died there, physically and psychologi-

cally? Was it the relentlessness of body counts, day after day, for so many years? Was it that I ended up treating so many of the war's casualties in hospitals (I am a physician)?

There is no single answer. It is all of the above plus one other very important dynamic. I also realized that I was trying to pay a strange sort of homage to all those who died and were injured there, Americans and Vietnamese. I needed to see this place which was so embedded in my psyche and where so many people, Americans my age, had suffered so much; and in many situations still are suffering. It was my trip to my own, inner Arlington National Cemetery.

I am apprehensive about how these comments will be perceived by those who did go to and fought in Vietnam. Will I be seen as a dilettante indulging myself with thoughts about horrors never experienced nor understood? I realize that my internal struggle or preoccupation with Vietnam is akin to a minor nuisance compared

to what most veterans have dealt with or are dealing with. Nonetheless, the Vietnam War did have a profound effect on many who never set foot in Vietnam. The Vietnam War injured and scarred us all, those who went and those who didn't go. The severity and appearance of the wounds and scars may vary widely, but they are ever present.



DR. GREGORY KOTONIAS IS A RETIRED PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY AND LAY MINISTER IN THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH. PRIOR TO HIS RETIREMENT HE TAUGHT MEDICAL STUDENTS AND RESIDENTS AT TUFTS, HARVARD AND BOSTON UNIVERSITY'S MEDICAL SCHOOLS AND HE WAS AN ADJUNCT FACULTY MEMBER AT THE BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC AND SKIDMORE COLLEGE. HE SERVED FOR MANY YEARS AS A PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTANT TO THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON AND THE MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION.

In Afghanistan



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NYTS/CWS Sept 8 2011 (4883)