



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Homeless Veterans Initiative Serves Hundreds in Milwaukee

BILL CHRISTOFFERSON

When two Vietnam veterans began a weekly outreach program in 2008, to find homeless veterans in Milwaukee and assess their needs, they didn't know what they were getting into. That two-hour a week commitment has blossomed into the Homeless Veterans Initiative (HVI), a program that has helped hundreds of homeless and low-income veterans to rebuild their lives. It now runs a food pantry, offers a free weekly breakfast, helps veterans get benefits, provides furniture and clothing, and connects them with other programs, services, education and jobs.

"We learned everything the hard way. We really didn't know

what we needed to address, when the project began," Mark Foreman said, but Veterans for Peace (VFP) Chapter 102, of which he is past president, knew there were several hundred homeless veterans in the Milwaukee area who needed help, and the chapter took it on as a project. Foreman, now president of the Homeless Veterans Initiative board, is a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and represents VVAW on a state Veterans Affairs board.

To learn what homeless veterans needed, Foreman and Dennis Johnson, another VFP member, began to visit a daytime shelter and resource center for the homeless

every week for two hours, with a sign saying they were seeking veterans.

It started on a shoestring budget, with donations from Foreman's friends and family and VFP members. At first, help was limited to bus passes and inexpensive cell phones, but quickly expanded to include helping veterans to get Veterans Administration benefits and other services. "We'd interview them, and if they were eligible, because they were so fragile and knew so little about the bureaucracy, we'd literally take them by the hand to help them file a claim," Foreman said. So far, 70 to 100 veterans have been able to



get benefits they didn't know they were entitled to. Others have also qualified for HUD-VASH loans to get into apartments. One 70-year-old vet was about to be evicted from his rooming house when he crossed paths with Foreman and

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Making "Vietnam in HD"

BARRY ROMO WITH DAVE CURRY



It won't surprise those who know me well that my first reaction to being asked by Reba Productions to let them include my story in their planned documentary "Vietnam in HD" was apprehension. My apprehension had multiple sources. It's not that I haven't told my story

before. I have told my story more often than most veterans who experienced combat in Vietnam, but this time was different. A documentary for the *History Channel* promised a greater audience and responsibility than my prior interviews. The proposed

length of the interview meant that I had to entrust my story and its future context to the folks at Reba Productions. Finally there is, of course, my own PTSD and the vulnerability associated with it. Trust in the reactions of others is not an emotion that comes easy to any Vietnam veteran.

The trust necessary for my participation in the film was engendered by my preliminary telephone interactions with Liz, the associate director of the project, and one of the screen writers. Their level of sincerity and sensitivity made my involvement much easier. Encouragement from friends and family, as always, strengthened my resolve to contribute to the project.

The really hard news for me was that the film makers wanted to shoot my interviews in eastern Pennsylvania. This meant spatially separating myself from my apartment and my closest friends. I have appeared in documentaries produced as far away as Paris and Germany, but the filming was always done in my apartment. I wouldn't have friends to hide with between film sessions. I would be alone with my guilt and shame with no one to tell me that I'm still "okay."

I flew to New York. There I

was picked up by a limo service and driven to a nice bed and breakfast in Pennsylvania where I was to sleep for two nights. The bed and breakfast provided the backdrops seen in the film. The first ten hours of filming began early the next day.

The film crew was very international in composition including Chinese-Canadians and a Haitian sound man. Later I would learn that the sound man had lost his mother in his country's earthquakes. On that first day we covered every aspect of my combat, military, and life experiences. Everything was filmed twice. While necessary for the quality of the final product, this process meant my going over the depressing aspects of my life at least twice. At least twice, I had to describe each of the six human beings whom I killed during my tour of duty. At least twice, I had to recount the details of my nephew Bobby's life and death. Bobby and I were about the same age and grew up more like brothers than uncle and nephew. Sometimes, I'd break down. Liz, the assistant director, had already gained my confidence in our initial phone conversations. Liz was essential to

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From the National Office

BILL BRANSON

Welcome to the Spring 2012 issue of *The Veteran*.

When VVAW first started in 1967, many of us never thought we would reach 30. Now 45 years later, we are still giving all we have to fight for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans. Many of us never thought VVAW would still be around decades after our war ended. We lost many brothers and sisters in the war, and we have lost many brothers and sisters since then. Those of us still around can feel the aches and pains of aging, the illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure, and the ravages of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). But we still struggle, to stand up for GIs and veterans, for our generation and for those that have since been sent to fight in unjust wars, like us.

We live in a time of great uncertainty. That is the one thing to remain constant. Across the world, tensions and threats of war only shift from one region, to the next, and back again. In North Korea, the passing of Kim Jung-il and the installation of his son, Kim Jung-un as the leader, has created

instability across the region. As the national 100-day mourning period of his father ended, Kim Jung-un unsuccessfully held a missile launch test, casting great suspicion as to the intentions of North Korea's leaders. In the Middle East, Iran continues to increase its uranium enrichment, reportedly for medical purposes, but Israel, another nuclear power, has threatened to attack Iran to halt Iran's uranium enrichment. In spite of the misgivings of our military, and opposition from the majority of our population, the war drums are beating for Iran. With troops still being drawn down in Afghanistan, could we be in another war before the end of the year? As veterans opposed to unjust wars, we must fight for the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and we must stand firmly against an invasion, whether by drone or by foot, into any other country. The time is past due for the US to be out of the Middle East, for our country to invest in rebuilding our nation, and taking care of our soldiers.

Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales

has been charged with seventeen counts of premeditated murder and other crimes after being accused of killing 17 Afghan civilians early in the morning of March 11, 2012. The first details to emerge about this horrible tragedy pointed to a cold, calculated and premeditated attack, spread across two incidences in a village near where Staff Sgt. Bales was stationed. The US government quickly paid out compensation to the victims and injured Afghani civilians. But it took several weeks to hear the details of what could have led to this tragedy.

Staff Sgt. Bales was serving on his fourth tour of duty overseas between Iraq and Afghanistan. He witnessed many violent tragedies and was severely injured more than once. During his second tour of duty, something happened that created a noticeable change in his behavior. He began suffering from nightmares and depression. From what we know, he never sought treatment, but these details indicate a probable case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If our government took

care of its soldiers – by not sending troops on multiple deployments, by not denying a soldier's right to heal, by working to end the stigma preventing many soldiers from seeking treatment for PTSD – then this tragedy might have been avoided. It is not hard for us to remember that the MyLai Massacre was only the most publicized massacre in the Vietnam War. How many others have occurred in the AfPak war? What Sgt. Bales did was horrendous, but what we have done as a country leaves us responsible, with the blood on our hands.

VVAW continues to provide quality Military Counseling at no charge with two full-time workers – Ray Parrish, providing military and discharge services, and Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, a licensed mental health counselor. Hans is

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Veteran Staff

Charlie Branson
 Jeff Machota
 Ellie Shunas
 Bill Branson
 Jen Tayabji

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Aaron Hughes and Paul Cameron for their sketches. Thanks to Horace Coleman, Ann Hirschman, Barry Romo, Marty Webster, Laurie Sandow, Bill Christofferson, Poppy Kohner, Charles Henderson, Crystal Colon, Nick Medevecky, Daniel Lavery and others for contributing photos.

VVAW Merchandise



Mail order and check to:
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 Saint Francis, WI 53235

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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:

Bill Branson
Dave "Buzz" Doyle
Annie Hirschman
Brian Matarrese
Joe Miller
Marty Webster

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Ray Parrish
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From The National Office

continued from previous page

working to expand the network of mental health providers across the country to help veterans in need, both with VA evaluations and with getting the care they seek.

We continue to provide IVAW's Field Organizing Program with crucial financial

support. We share our war and anti-war experiences and struggles with documentarians to preserve what we have seen and what we have worked for. And, as we have done since the horrifying realities about Agent Orange were revealed in 38 years ago, VVAW

continues to be directly involved in the struggle for victims of Agent Orange, here and in Vietnam.

We call on all VVAW members and supporters to do what you can where you can - Get Involved! We still have lots of work to do – while many of us may not be able

to take the streets as we did after Vietnam, there is still so much we can do to further the struggle for peace, justice and decent benefits for all veterans.



*BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW
NATIONAL COORDINATOR.*

Homeless Veterans Initiative

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Johnson. He didn't qualify for VA benefits, but they helped him apply for Social Security, and he ended up with a \$35,000 check for back benefits plus a monthly payment. He decided to move back into the rooming house near the VA, where his friends are.

Johnson, meanwhile, expanded the outreach program, with pre-dawn patrols to offer coffee and sandwiches to veterans living under bridges, in parks, and in abandoned buildings. One of them, found living in an abandoned factory, now has an apartment, works full-time for the homeless initiative and runs its furniture program, picking up donations and delivering them to veterans. From sandwiches and coffee, the initiative expanded to provide groceries, with deliveries once a week to a growing list of low income veterans. The food program operated out of Johnson's garage, until late in 2010 when

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, located near the Veterans Administration in West Milwaukee, opened its doors and its basement to the program. The church is now the location of the weekly food pantry, which supplies food to more than 200 veterans and family members every Tuesday, and to a free breakfast on Thursdays, which also feeds about 200 people a week. Clothing, household items and a well-stocked library are also available on pantry days, and the breakfast has become a social event that includes sing-alongs at the piano, blood pressure checks, chair massages and other activities. Dozens of volunteers now help with the program, which has interviewed and served some 700 veterans since it began.

"When we first moved into the church, I didn't know if there would be enough people to help us," Johnson said. "In the last year we have had so many people come



John Zutz of VVAW, left, helps install fan in walk-in cooler. VVAW loaned the money to purchase it.

forward who want to help, are happy to help, have great skills, and unlimited energy. I'm just dumbfounded and so grateful. It has changed my whole outlook on the human race." When the program needed a walk-in cooler, Milwaukee's Vietnam Veterans Against the War chapter loaned HVI the money to buy it, and John Zutz, a longtime VVAW member and activist, helped organize the installation. Bill Christofferson, another VVAW member, is secretary of the HVI board.

In its early stages, the program raised most of its money in small donations, collecting money at neighborhood festivals, street fairs, and parades. Now it has begun to attract some foundation grants, including two of \$20,000 each last year, when donations topped \$100,000. Veterans organizations, church groups, businesses, and individuals all have

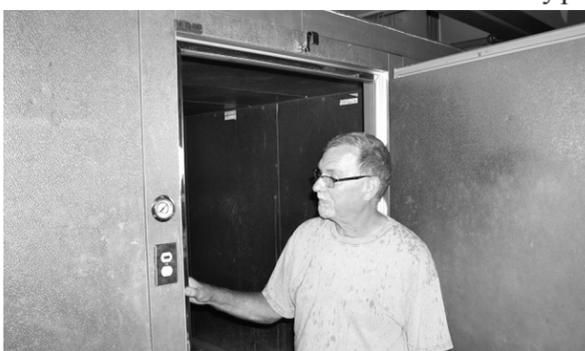
been generous donors, but small individual donations are still a key piece of the budget.

The program continues to evolve. Johnson's next vision is for a home visitation program to reach out to home bound veterans – who still get weekly food deliveries – and spend some time with them, offer some companionship, and see what other help they need. "We learned in the military that we don't leave our wounded behind. That's our guiding principle," says Johnson, now the program's executive director. "No one who has ever served the United States in uniform should end up living on the street."

For more information, visit the Homeless Veterans Initiative website, www.neverhomeless.org.



*BILL CHRISTOFFERSON IS A VVAW
MEMBER FROM MILWAUKEE.*



Dennis Johnson inspects the new walk-in cooler, which VVAW helped finance and install

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Last year in the Belgian city of Liege, someone planted a bomb on a crowded street. Four people died and 123 were wounded. The first reports after the incident were that, fortunately, this was not the work of terrorists.

A few years ago many of us were in the streets protesting the upcoming war in Iraq, and after the war began, were back in the streets again. Those of us who did these things, according to the President of the United States, were the same as terrorists and presumably subject to arrest. We were terrorists because, by protesting his war, we were supporting the terrorists.

So what, or who is a terrorist? Bush and others suggest it might be someone who disagrees with you on issues of national security. Too bad some of these people get to be world leaders. If you asked me, I'd keep it simple. A terrorist would be someone who terrifies innocent people.

Back in March in the middle of one night when Staff Sergeant Robert Bales walked off his base near Khandahar and into the village of Balandi and shot and killed eight children and four adults and burned their bodies, do you think other residents of Balandi were terrified? When Sergeant Bales left Balandi and walked over to the village of Alokzai where he killed one more child and three adults, were the residents of Alokzai terrified?

If, as in the Sergeant Bales incident, the person committing the terrifying act is a soldier involved in fighting a war, would this act be something other than an act of terror? Leon Panetta and others, when speaking about

Robert Bales, said that in war atrocities (my word) happen. We agree. You can't get away from terror in war, so is this different than what terrorists do?

In the aftermath of the incident words like "rage," "psychopath" and "pre-existing conditions" were being thrown around. Us veterans maybe better understand the words "post-traumatic stress disorder" and "traumatic brain injury." Rage, psychopathy and pre-existing conditions are not required.

Commenting on the Bales incident, John McCain said we need to put more strength in Afghanistan or get out of there. The leading Republican candidates echoed what McCain said while beating the drums for more of the same in Iran. None seemed concerned about the consequences of another war.

When Timothy McVeigh blew up the federal building in Oklahoma City, was that an act of terrorism? Imagine the terror experienced by those in that building and those who had loved ones in that building. Maybe because McVeigh's body count reached triple digits he gets to be called a terrorist.

Last year when Anders Breivik, a Norwegian right-winger killed 77 people at a Labor Party youth camp, he wasn't labeled a terrorist, just a mass murderer.

Most of the time white guys don't get labeled as terrorists. Not unless they convert to Islam like John Walker Lindh (the guy who joined the Taliban army) who probably didn't terrorize, or even shoot, anybody.

A soldier needs to be held accountable for his or her actions in war. Staff Sergeant Bales should

be punished if guilty for war crimes or crimes against humanity or however you wish to frame it. Having said that, I backtrack a little. One highly suspects that what he did was the result of issues that go beyond him. His mental state was what it was because of his service in the United States Army in two wars which have been devastating to the minds of many of its soldiers. Nevertheless he should be punished if guilty. It's sad. Seems like there are a lot of victims here.

Many people are going to want to cut Robert Bales some slack because they feel he was basically a good soldier who faced all these pressures and then snapped. Many will blame the military for sending him into combat four times in just a few years. Nobody thinks about the civilians in charge who formulated the policies that caused the Army to send him into combat four times in just a few years.

As demonstrated by George Bush, there is loose talk about who is a terrorist. If you reduce it to your political opponents you negate the idea that there is a serious problem. Of course, the bomb that went off in Liege was a terrorist act. So are many acts of war. Often you can't avoid such things in war because humans are fallible, so the real guilty parties are the civilians who unleash our armies in unjust and unnecessary war.

I never thought I'd say this, but John McCain was right when he said we needed to either strengthen our troops in Afghanistan or get out. Well, mostly right. The get out part is something we understand. It's the strengthen our forces part that needs a little work. Supposing

there was a chance of winning that war by sending over whatever it takes, say 500,000 troops. What would be the cost? You'd have to enlarge our military, recruit more soldiers, pay for them and pay for their equipment. You'd have an ungodly increase in PTSD and all the human and monetary costs that involves. And you'd do this when money needs to be spent stateside on this poor economy.

Strengthening the troops doesn't even guarantee a win over there. Can you say Vietnam? Remember CG William Westmoreland asked for an additional 500,000 GIs to supplement the 500,000 already there. That was to fight a war on unfavorable terrain in a country where most of the people didn't like us. Can you say Afghanistan? Nuke 'em, goddamit.

So you have three types of terrorism. There's individual acts such as Liege or Oklahoma City. There's terrorist acts caused by powerful armies such as ours, both by its individual soldiers and by the army's very presence in another country. And then there's the shadowy world in between where Al Qaeda types pull off 9-11 or blow things up because it's fighting (in their minds) for some legitimate cause. This later kind of terror is convenient for world leaders because it can be used to mobilize a variety of military and imperial actions. The unfortunate irony, of course, is that this only perpetuates the cycle.



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



VVAW joined Veterans For Peace, Friends and Family of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Code Pink, US Labor Against the War, and members of a local congregation of the Universalist Unitarian Church in an anti-war veterans contingent in the 2011 New York City Veterans Day Parade up 5th Avenue. (left to right) - Per Odman, Michael Hayes, Ben Chitty.

What We Know and When We Know It

MEG MINER

"They should have known better," said the Vietnam War vet to the Gulf War vet. "I feel bad for what they're going through, but after this long they should have known what they were getting into."

I was calling to request support for IVAW's Operation Recovery. I hate phone banking, but here I was cold-calling a list of VVAW members halfway across the country on behalf of the latest generation reeling from the effects of "defending" American ideology.

"They should have known better." It knocked the wind out of me. He meant that they had volunteered, not been drafted like his generation. Or maybe he meant that after years of anti-war work, this generation should not have been fooled. They must have understood the stakes.

With very little further discussion he did agree to a few ways he would help the group but his words stayed with me. In my mind, the accusation became "I should have known better." My career spanned over a decade before our first war in the Gulf region and only a handful of years afterwards. I voluntarily enlisted in 1979 at age 18. Why hadn't I learned from Vietnam? After enlistment, why hadn't bearing witness to the routine violence of military culture been enough to turn me against it? I was sheltered from the struggle VVAW was going through by the culture you readers of *The Veteran*

were working to change. It took becoming a student, in college and through self-education, not actual combat, for me to start seeing our militarized country clearly.

But that's not the thought that came to mind on phone banking day. Quickly the thought came, "He's right." I've been a VVAW member for a little under a decade. I stood on street corners with like-minded peace advocates in my community even before that, starting out right after the suicide bombers ignited America's fuse in 2001. First daily, then weekly, then monthly, we braced against the insults hurled by other citizens, adults and teens alike, for taking a stand against the prevailing winds of war words. Odds are good that some of these same smart-mouthed teens marched off to our recent wars.

It seems to take a deep sense of self and personal courage to stand up in the face our country's thirst for vengeance. Or maybe it takes the kind of wisdom that comes with hindsight...with the pile of debris that remains when our personal ideological towers fall.

Ribbons tied, care packages sent, tours rotated. How many now-grieving families of the dead and suffering ever thought one thing that countered the flag-waving masses? How many of today's young veterans were like the mocking teens in my community? And how many have come back

and started protesting? And now, many are part of IVAW's efforts to secure needed services for their generation of vets. Isn't that what VVAW members did before them?

It's been awhile since the concept of an economic draft was raised, but even when it was being talked about it wasn't a new idea. That's the trick that got me to enlist. A steady paycheck is all it took to buy my loyalty. Oh how times have changed! An indebted college senior I work with recently told me he'd talked to a recruiter. When he graduates he'll be a nurse and he was offered an Air Force commission AND \$40,000 to sign on for a four year hitch. What obscene temptations we taxpayers support. Their effectiveness should not be surprising!

I talked to this young man for a long time about what the military might want in return for that 40K, but I don't know him well enough to know what he'll decide. Should he know better? What 20-something doesn't think mortality is the thing that happens to other people? What young American hasn't been brought up with a sense of a birth right to invincibility?

With the blood spilled, treasure gone, minds and lives strewn in the wreckage of this never-ending War on Terror, I wish I would have told my phone call recipient, "We should ALL have known better." DOD receives astronomical budgets and devotes more resources than seem

believable on slick multi-media enticements. On the other hand, American communities hold diminishing economic opportunities for our youth who too often come from school systems that languish on thin budgets—that must teach to tests and not to enhance the power of thought. Movies, music, games, news, religion, politics... all support the glories of war and the infallibility of American actions. What person stands a chance against the economical and psychological forces that assault us all daily?

Yes, we should know better, but we never do. The question to face is, can we swallow our own disappointment long enough to help make sure this generation of vets will be there for the inevitable generations to come? I didn't find VVAW right away, but the steady voices of VVAW members in my community during the run up to our invasion of Iraq helped me find confidence in my veteran's voice.

Growing up in America doesn't equip the majority of us to reason through alternatives to the party line. I support IVAW because I'm willing to work with anyone who figures out the Big Lie of our peace-loving nation no matter when or how they get there.



MEG MINER RETIRED FROM THE AIR FORCE IN 1995 AND BECAME A LIBRARIAN IN 2001.

Making "Vietnam in HD"

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my getting through the interview process. She helped me keep my story on target.

Still by the end of the day, I was psychologically very broken down. A local Vietnam vet took me out to dinner where the restaurant owner gave us some free ouzo. I didn't drink much or take medication to sleep, because I was told to anticipate eight more intense hours the next day.

That night I called friends and family in every time zone. Of course, I couldn't sleep, and I couldn't stop crying. The second day was as difficult as the first. That day was devoted to shooting what the film makers called "B Roll" or background. With each take, I'd get more and more nervous. Throughout the interviews I rubbed a "worry stone" that I'd found in front of my son's and

his partner's apartment building. I rubbed that stone so constantly that I imagined the stone becoming soft. When I finished on the second day the Haitian sound man personally thanked me for helping him better understand what Vietnam had meant to those of us who fought there.

After the second day, the production company owner Scott Reba took me out for a big Italian meal. This time I felt comfortable enough to enjoy his generous indulgence of me with Italian beer. He left me with a quart of Italian wine to take back to my room.

On my return to the airport, the owner of the limo service drove me himself. When he asked what kind of music I'd like to hear, I realized that I didn't want to hear any music. After that my driver courteously left me to my own

thoughts.

Throughout the process, I was well treated by the production supervisors and crew. I still worried a little about what the final version of the film would be like. In the weeks that followed, my fears were allayed as representatives of Reba Productions shared production CD's and solicited comments. Friends came over and held my hand while I watched the material.

I'm very pleased with the finished product. The film captures well the contradiction between duty and command. That contradiction is embodied in trying to keep your friends alive while crossing the line while engaging in our slaughter of the Vietnamese people. The film and its creation make my story a little easier to bear. I have had total strangers contact me to discuss our shared PTSD. One of my squad

leaders from 1968 contacted me to say that he is proud of me. Only a minority of others' reactions to the film have been negative. I consider most of these negative reactions to be from war wimps or racist ideologues. One individual even said, "I'm glad your nephew died."

My nephew died at age 20. He was a virgin who didn't want to go to Vietnam. I feel the series gives Bobby a form of "continuing life." Bobby had written me in Vietnam. He was excited that I was an officer at battalion headquarters. He hoped that I could help him get out of Vietnam. All I was ultimately able to do was formally escort his coffin home.



BARRY ROMO AND DAVE CURRY ARE LONG-TIME MEMBERS OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

Where We Stand

BRIAN MATARRESE

"In March of 2008, two hundred and fifty veterans and active-duty soldiers marked the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq by gathering in Washington, DC, to testify from their own experience about the nature of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Inspired by the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigation held by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, they too sought to express their opposition to those wars with their first-hand accounts, bearing witness with voices not generally heard. It was chilling, horrifying, and challenging for all who witnessed it." From: www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com.

On February 1st nearly 40 members of VVAW joined with many others for the premiere of *This is Where We Take Our Stand*, the documentary of the IVAW Winter Soldier Investigation. Screened at the IFC center in New York City it was a powerful statement on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is the story of the Winter Soldier Investigation and the events and planning that led up



(from left to right) Bester Cram, Geoff Millard, Selena Coppa, Jason Washburn and David Zeiger.

to it. The film begins with scenes from the original Winter Soldier held by VVAW in Detroit in 1971, and gives much credit to VVAW for inspiration and support. Among those in attendance were Frank Toner and Joe Treglio, who worked on the planning and testimony in Detroit. Both expressed the view that the film was both important and successful in bringing the message of all that was wrong with the war and treatment of those in the military and returning veterans.

The film was followed by a question and answer session,

which included the directors Bester Cram, David Zeiger, and IVAW members Geoff Millard, Selena Coppa and Jason Washburn. The discussion was both lively and insightful and they gave many actual reasons for the creation of the film. Director Cram had returned from Vietnam and had joined VVAW. Geoff had been in the New York National Guard for 9 years and served in Iraq. Selena was on active duty at the time of her testimony and Jason had served 3 tours with the Marines. Zeiger had previously made the film, *Sir, No Sir*, a documentary

about GI resistance during the Vietnam War.

The film will be appearing on PBS stations and is available on DVD. We encourage all to see it in theaters, and arrange for screenings in your communities. In addition, if enough requests are made to local PBS stations, they will show it. So pick up the phone and give them a call.



BRIAN MATARRESE IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR FROM NEW YORK.



October 2010 Washington DC - Iraq Veterans Against the War member Zach Choate in his Class-A Uniform leads a press conference on the steps of the senate building at the launch of the Operation Recovery Campaign. Zach spoke about his untreated injuries during his deployment and why he felt all service members deserved the right to heal.

Records Request Forms

RAY PARRISH

VA claims or discharge upgrade situations often require veterans to provide documentary evidence that exists somewhere in government files. These records can verify the facts of military service and medical treatment. They will help your current doctors provide accurate diagnosis and treatment. Veterans with less-than-honorable discharges can get VA benefits if a psychological evaluation is submitted that explains that the veteran was "insane" (using the VA definition) at the time of the misconduct and supports that conclusion by referring to these old military or medical records. If you run into problems getting records, Congressional offices can help.

Often several requests will be necessary before you finally get the records you want. Some records offices will refer your request to the appropriate office on your behalf. Just as often, you'll have to fill out another form and submit it to a different office. Each year more records are discovered, declassified and released. For example, the VA is forced to acknowledge herbicide

exposure to increasing numbers of veterans as new ships and bases are added to the list where Agent Orange was stored, transported or used.

SF 180, Standard Form 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records, is the most used NA (National Archives) form and has changed over the years. The "current" version says it "Expires 10/31/2011." Section II, "Information and/or Documents Requested," (with the boxes to check off down the left side) is the important part. Unless you want ONLY the DD214, skip down and check off "All documents in Official Military Personnel File, OMPF," which will include certified copies of the DD214. The next box is "Medical Records" and if you can read the small print there, they say they won't send you "hospital" records unless you write in the year, month and place of the treatment. (Refer to the reverse side for a chart showing if your "service treatment records" have been given to the VA. If so, use form 3288, see below.) The last box is "other." Records used to support "administrative"

discharges can be had if you write in after "other": "Case Separation File." You can check the box "other" to request court martial records. They don't have them, but they will direct you to the current address of the right legal office.

NA Form 13036 Authorization for Release of Military Medical Patient Records is used for "sensitive" records that they will not release directly to the veteran because it may "adversely affect the individual." The form allows the veteran to have these military records (such as mental health, drug/alcohol rehab, STD/HIV) sent directly to your medical providers.

VA Form 3288, Request For and Consent to Release of Information from Individual's Records can be used to request most records held by the VA. If you want a copy of your VA "claim file," address it to your local VA Regional Office. The claim file will also contain the military medical records if they were sent to the VA. If you want your VA medical records, send form 3288 to your VA Medical Center.

VA Form 10-5345 Request

For and Consent to Release of Medical Records or Health Information Protected by 38 USC 7332 is used by the VA to release their "sensitive" records on you (as described above) directly to your health care providers. Be sure the appropriate boxes are checked off under "Veteran's Request."

Joint Services Records Research Center (JSRRC), the Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections have unit records, morning reports, ships' logs, casualty reports and every other scrap of paper floating around a unit clerk's desk. The VA has to request relevant records from them as part of their "duty to assist" if you have a diagnosis of PTSD and need verification of traumatizing "stressors." They don't use a specific form, so write a letter with as much place and date details as possible.

Be sure to make photocopies of records requests before mailing the original.



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

Complex

This is what it said:

"Trauma, anything that makes our body panic."

Wait, my body, just my body?

It seems to me that trauma is a shock to all of our systems, all our parts.

Trauma brings home to us that we are complex beings with much more than a body.

I get it that we can now see trauma on detailed images of our brains and maybe blood tests?

What about the mind?

Trauma makes people feel all the time that they are out of their minds

I'm going crazy, what is wrong with me?

I'm no longer who I was, it's racing: my mind, my brain, my sanity, my thoughts, out of control, out of my control.

Controlled by triggers and rage.

And my spirit or soul?

Where does trauma leave my spirit and soul?

I see it, it's watching me, illusive, separate, gone, lost, my spirit no longer lively and loving and caring.

Surely out of me.

Me no longer me.

Anything that makes the body panic?

Trauma.

Complex.

—Hans Buwalda

Spreading the Wealth: Training Mental Health Providers Nationwide to Work with Veterans

JOHANNA (HANS) BUWALDA

John is a Vietnam veteran in California and has never before tried to get treatment for his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He now wants to apply for VA benefits, and needs supporting documentation from a mental health provider. Amanda is an Afghanistan veteran in Georgia. She received an other-than-honorable discharge and was told by her local VA that she is not eligible for VA services. Amanda needs a discharge upgrade and VA care for her service-connected mental health problems. Brian is a Gulf War veteran from Pennsylvania and feels so overwhelmed every time he enters the crowded VA hospital that he has not been able to keep his appointments.

They find their way to VVAW Military and Veterans Counseling because of the VVAW website, through the GI Rights Hotline, Iraq Veterans Against the War, The Soldiers Project, Civilian Medical Resources Network, or through a friend.

I am a licensed mental health

provider and work with VVAW's Military and Veterans Counseling Service in Chicago. But there are more veterans in need of help than I can work with and they are spread all across the country. That is why we are developing a network of providers across the country that is willing to provide free, quality mental health services. I am often

struck by these providers' amazing generosity. Some are familiar with veteran issues, but others are willing to go at great length to learn about this work. In addition, they need to learn how to write the supporting documentation to get the benefits and services these service members and veterans need.

Many people assume that I spend most of my time talking to veterans and service members, and

that is often true. But I also spend very large chunks of time training generous colleagues from all over the country over the phone and online, making it possible to serve more veterans and creating a larger pool of skilled providers who understand military and veteran mental health. They are going to be even more crucial if the VA

does cut its budget, at a time that huge numbers of men and women return from combat zones.

So what is it that providers need to know when they write supporting evidence? I usually send them a sample report. While each provider has their own way of writing evaluation reports, they find it helpful to see how I write them. My reports are often considered a little lengthy and extensively detailed. However, I find it important that a veteran or service member feels heard. I also find it important that after all they have gone through, these men and women have the right to have their story recorded in their own words and in as much detail as they like to share. That is why I spend as much time as it takes for a veteran or service member to complete this evaluation. We take breaks, go for walks, have a cup of coffee, or get together more than once or twice – whatever it takes to get the process done in a way that is as painless as possible.

Regardless of how a provider chooses to write the evaluation report, there are several statements that are crucial. The first statement is essential for veterans like Amanda who received an other-than-honorable discharge after she could no longer meet the standards in the military because her best friend had been killed. This statement is often called a "Nexus Statement." This establishes that the diagnosis is connected to military service. It is very important to understand that just because a veteran has a diagnosis, it doesn't establish that it was caused by military service. As long as the diagnosis is not documented

to show it is connected to their military service, the VA can refuse to treat it and doesn't have to consider providing disability benefits to this veteran.

The second statement is needed to establish what the VA calls "Character of Service." If the character of their service can be deemed honorable, even when the veteran has an other-than-honorable discharge, this veteran can receive services at the VA to treat service-connected problems. Basically, what this evaluation report can show is that this veteran was unfairly discharged and should have received proper treatment for his or her service-connected mental health problem and/or a medical discharge instead.

In addition, I always send the mental health provider a copy of the VA rating scale and explain why using the language of the scale is necessary. While a diagnosis is important, the VA Benefits Administration bases how much money a veteran may receive depending on the impact this diagnosis has on the veteran's daily functioning. For example, "intermittent inability to perform activities of daily living (including maintenance of minimal personal hygiene)" versus "neglect of personal appearance and hygiene" can result in hundreds of dollars difference in benefit payments.

Providers usually send me multiple drafts (of course with identifying information removed because of privacy) and ask for feedback. They call with questions and concerns, want me to suggest books and websites for them to read, and email me about their progress. This process usually becomes the basis for a long and fruitful collaboration between mental health providers in other states and myself.

Together through this process, we are able to complete the evaluation report needed by the VA, and most importantly, provide treatment for veterans in need across the country.

If you are a mental health provider interested in helping, please contact me at (773) 370-4789 or vetcounseling@vvaaw.org. For more information on VVAW's Military and Veteran's

It is very important to understand that just because a veteran has a diagnosis, it doesn't establish that it was caused by military service.



October 2010 Washington DC - At the public announcement of Operation Recovery, Maggie Martin, with a platoon of other IVAW members, marched from Walter Reed Medical Center to the Capital, where they put the Senate Armed Services Committee on notice for the deployment of traumatized troops.



Thoughts, Memories, Conditioning

GREGORY ROSS

I live in Oakland, California. The local VA clinics [medical and mental health] are on different streets, but both less than a block from the Greyhound Bus Terminal. I don't know about where you live, but here that means a "dangerous" neighborhood. Conditioning: Hyper-Vigilance.

Recently, I left home early for the VA drop-in/urgent care clinic to seek treatment for a pernicious, painful sinus infection. Antibiotics were prescribed. The medications would not be ready for at least an hour, maybe more. I decided to walk a few blocks to a "nice" part of Uptown Oakland for lunch. As I walk, I pass a newspaper box and glance at the headlines: "IRAQ VET SNAPS, KILLS GIRL, 11". I keep walking. Conditioning: Avoidance.

At home I read the article. A 27-year-old Iraq Vet killed his sister and himself, and possibly his mother. Her body has not been found. Page one news, at least here. You probably have your own disturbing local veteran related news. As I read, I cry. Conditioning: Human.

The next day headline: "DEATH, FEARS TRAILED VETERAN." The article details how, since he came back from his latest tour in Iraq, he had changed: sleeping with a rifle; always carrying a handgun; threatening family and neighbors; threatening homicide, threatening suicide; exclaiming he could not forget the smell of death. Conditioning: Severe Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Thoughts and Memories run through my mind. My experiences were minor compared to direct combat veterans. The one death I witnessed; of a young girl, still drives me to seek treatment. One "stronger" veteran, called me a wimp. A civilian therapist opined that my problem was that I had a conscience. I knew what he meant but??WTF?? Most Vets flinch when I tell the story. When in the VA PTSD/Alcohol and Drug residential program there was a weekly meeting called "The Vietnam Group." You had to petition to be part of this group. My counselor thought it would be good for me. I was doubtful. I did not think I would be accepted. I petitioned. The response was heading towards a resounding NO, until a Marine; two combat tours; respected by the group, said, "S**t is S**t, a little or a lot, makes no difference." I was in. Conditioning: Survive and Heal.

Memory: While in the VA program, I witnessed the following: [these are not real names] Kennedy, a combat Infantryman, while playing pool with Jones in the rec room, flashes back and loses control. Kennedy breaks the pool cue to use as a weapon and goes for Jones. Smith, thinking quickly, yells out in his best Drill Sergeant Voice; deep, powerful, loud, controlling, "Kennedy! Tent Hut!" Kennedy snaps to attention. Smith orders him to drop the pool cue. He does as ordered then wakes

to reality. Cognizance brings a laugh. Smith was a R.E.M.F. Yeoman in Da Nang. Conditioning: Draw your own conclusions.

Memory: Recently, I angrily confronted my brother-in-law, a Draftee Army Veteran, who never left the States; for again telling a story about a C4 training wherein he blew up a tree. Decades ago he drove my sister to tears declaring he had been cheated out of a significant "Male Rite Of Passage Experience: Combat." He announced he was going to answer ads in Soldier of Fortune magazine under the heading "Mercenaries." A few days later, he decided he could live without that particular male bonding experience. Stress the word live. Conditioning: Male Macho Acculturation.

Thoughts: The powers-that-be train humans to become combat ready, kill upon command, Biocomputers. The powers-that-be take no responsibility when these Biocomputers break down under the dehumanizing Conditioning. The powers-that-be ignore in depth de-programming of combat Biocomputers back to their original human state as soon as possible, if even possible. The powers-that-be do not take responsibility and therefore offer no immediate help for the impact of war: Agent Orange poisoning, Depleted Uranium poisoning, Brain Trauma Injury, PTSD. The powers-that-be take no responsibility for helping Vets with the suicides, jailing, homicides,

homelessness, alcohol and drug problems. The death toll due to suicides for Vets is two or three times that of civilians. Civilians do not die of Agent Orange or Depleted Uranium poisoning. It is cost-effective for the powers-that-be to just wait. Compared to treatment, a white cemetery cross and an American flag are cheap and oddly enough, still somehow, good PR.

Thought: This is not to show disrespect for those that have died or for those that are presently serving. The only disrespect intended is for the powers-that-be.

Thought: This is not to malign the VA. I think they do a great job with the limited monies the powers-that-be trickle down to them.

Thought: The powers-that-be are the Department of Defense, defense contractors and other powerful corporations making billions of dollars off of war. But you already knew that; I just wanted to say it out loud.



GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY, THE GUN LINE OFF COAST OF VIETNAM WITH THE 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. 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." FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM

Our Allies



GI Coffeehouses: Serving Ourselves Since 1967

POPPY KOHNER & LT TAYLOR

In downtown Killeen, soldiers are organizing...

Not far from the East Gate of Fort Hood, two GIs are casually chatting outside on the porch, their cigarette smoke blending with the warm aroma of coffee, which beckons them inside the coffeehouse. Peek inside Under The Hood, and you will see more active duty soldiers, veterans and community members relaxing on a sofa, listening to music and catching up on the week's events. On the walls, "War is Trauma" is written in large letters, and a stencil of the word, "stigma" has been stuck up as a reminder of a previous art project, and of what people here are fighting against. Pocket-sized reading materials are arranged in a stand, which summarize GIs rights, what the Army doesn't want you to know. On one side of the room is a small stage area with a microphone, from which, spoken word poetry regularly fills the space to an enthusiastic crowd.

This scene could very well be from a summer evening in 1968, from the corner of 4th and Avenue D in downtown Killeen, when Oleo Strut was first opened, and the coffeehouse movement was beginning to thrive. Back then, some 600 people might frequent the coffeehouse every week, disaffected with the war and in need of a place outside of the barracks, away from the influence of the military. It was a

place where GIs could find support and solidarity. "War is a terrible thing that changes a person, and contact with supportive people is a must," says Terry DuBose, a Vietnam Veteran who frequented Oleo Strut.

Today, 44 years later, Under The Hood Cafe and Outreach Center, is offering just that. Active duty members, veterans, civilians, and IVAW organizers make up a team who are still asking the same questions that were relevant back in the late 60s and early 70s - How do we empower ourselves and each other, share our personal stories, and build them into into a collective struggle?

Open 5 days a week, Tuesday through Saturday, Under The Hood is working to build community and support leaders in the GI resistance movement. During weekly organizing meetings, active duty service members and veterans focus on the obstacles Ft. Hood soldiers face, for example, getting care for issues such as PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury and Military Sexual Trauma. At present, the community is leading a campaign on base to hold General Campbell accountable to his own command policies which, according to recent interviews carried out by Under The Hood, are simply not being carried out. The community is also demanding that service members have the right to heal from the traumas of war and military service.

"In our fight for service members right to heal, we have to look at the impact of what we are fighting," said Lori Hurlebaus, director of the cafe, about the healing work of Under the Hood. "People cannot fight for systemic change in the military without having their own basic needs met whether that's through a referral to a counselor or lawyer, an art project or support from this community."

The coffeehouse movement of the 60s provided important solidarity between military, civilian, race, ethnicity and gender. Today, at weekly Women's Nights, women come together from all parts of the community to discuss openly how the military affects women's lives every day. The Ribs and Rights days are the highlight of the week. The whole community gets together to discuss a different topic, which is usually led by a different active duty member each week, before sharing stories over a delicious BBQ. On Saturdays, you can find art projects and garden tools scattered around as the community finds healing through creative expression.

Since May of 2011, Under the Hood Cafe has been working with Iraq Veterans Against the War on the Operation Recovery campaign to stop the deployment of traumatized troops. Based on models of poor people's movements, Operation Recovery is using a focused campaign to

win concessions from General Campbell in order to improve the lives of soldiers and families, and train leaders who will carry on the work beyond this fight to other bases and other movements. Through daily outreach on post, organizers have been gathering personal stories from soldiers denied care, on over-prescribed medications, and redeployed despite clear symptoms of trauma and injury. In the face of a massive draw-down, troops are being processed out and denied benefits for symptoms due to their military service. By building a fight around service members access to care, this campaign does not allow the command to abuse service members in order to extend occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan despite a lack of public support. Putting power and resources in the hands of soldiers to take care of themselves and each other has the potential to change the way the military does business, to bring troops home, and slow the drum beat for a war with Iran.

"Our campaign is forcing the military to re-evaluate its strategy and make an earlier withdrawal by highlighting the toll these occupations have taken on service members and civilians such as the recent massacre in Afghanistan," said Maggie Martin, an organizer with Iraq Veterans Against the War and resident organizer at Under the Hood. "Raising awareness of the numbers of traumatized soldiers and lack of adequate care makes it clear we are in no position to engage in future conflicts."

Operation Recovery and Under the Hood need your support to continue this critical work, to find out more or make a donation check out www.ivaw.org and www.underthehoodcafe.org.



•**POPPY KOHNER IS AN PHD** STUDENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW, AND IS CURRENTLY LIVING IN KILLEEN, TEXAS WHILE WORKING ON HER THESIS IN MILITARIZATION AND RESISTANCE.
•**LT TAYLOR IS CURRENTLY A** RESIDENT ORGANIZER WITH THE OPERATION RECOVERY CAMPAIGN AT FT HOOD AND A MEMBER OF THE CIVILIAN SOLDIER ALLIANCE (WWW.CIVSOL.ORG).



Vets Radio Show —and Organizing in Northwest Indiana

KIM SCIPES

Iraq combat veteran and IVAW member, Vince Emanuele, hosts a weekly two-hour radio show he calls *Veterans Unplugged*. This show, and the people around it, is central to veterans organizing in Northwest Indiana.

Emanuele, who did a tour with the Marines in 2003-04 in Anbar Province, near the border with Syria, turned against the war when he saw the violence he and his fellow Marines were committing against the people of Iraq.

After getting out in 2005, Emanuele joined IVAW. He participated in Operation First Casualty in New York City in 2006, and later testified about his experiences and what he saw in Iraq at the Winter Soldier Hearings at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Maryland in March 2008. He participated in protests at the Democratic National Convention in 2008. He participated in and spoke at the protests in Madison and Indianapolis in February-March 2011. Emanuele is also one of the protagonists in Olivier Morel's prize-winning films about returning Iraq vets, *On the Bridge*.

In 2007, Emanuele began his college career at Purdue University North Central (PNC) in Westville, Indiana. PNC is located in the far north of the state, about 10 miles south of Lake Michigan on US Hwy 421. It's a small campus of about 4,500 students, but Emanuele has been inspired by his experiences there.

After speaking on a radio show about veterans' issues, Emanuele and fellow Iraq vets Jason Lewis and Mark Strudas were asked to do a week radio show on WIMS-AM 1420 in

Michigan City. Initially, all were involved, but Strudas decided to focus on his work with the PNC Veterans Club, while Lewis left and subsequently deployed to Kuwait while working for the USO.

On the radio show, Emanuele focuses on veterans' news and affairs, but joins it with an incisive look at current events. However, the highlight of each show is an extended interview with internationally-renowned movement intellectuals and activists from around the world. So far, he's interviewed people like Noam Chomsky, Vandana Shiva, Frances Fox Piven, Derrick Jensen, Ward Churchill (a Vietnam vet), David Swanson, Leare Keith, Paul Street, Michael Hardt, John Bellamy Foster, Christian Parenti, Ross Caputi (Iraq vet) and Jose Vasquez (IVAW Executive Director).

The interviews are each quite interesting, and of high quality. Unlike most interviewers who continually try to demonstrate how smart THEY are, Emanuele asks intelligent questions and then allows interviewees sufficient time to answer them and discuss their work: each interview extends from 45 to 75 minutes. Interestingly, he also invites each interviewee to discuss how she/he got to their understanding, which often reveals something about their personal lives.

In addition to broadcasting live over AM airwaves on Sunday evenings between 5-7pm (Central) time, *Veterans Unplugged* is live-streamed over the internet (www.wimsradio.com) at that time, so anyone in the world can listen—and the show has developed a following in Brazil and Japan!



And, if that doesn't work, the interviews are archived at www.veteransunplugged.com, so one can go and listen to previously broadcast shows at any time.

Emanuele also is active with the PNC Veterans' Club, coordinated by the aforementioned Mark Strudas. The Veterans Club tries to support vets in their transition back into school and civilian life. One of their most important successes has been to get veterans first priority in registering for courses at the university. They have developed extensive ties into the local community—especially in Chesterton, Indiana, where both Emanuele and Strudas hail from—and over the last two years, have sponsored a PNC Veterans fundraiser which has been well attended, as folks listen to live music donated by local bands, play games, chow down and raise money for the Club programs.

Where these two sets of activities have merged is in their organizing "An Evening with

Derrick Jensen" on March 24, 2012, which was sponsored by the Vets' Club. Jensen, who has published 22 books, is widely known as a philosopher and thinker of the Deep Green Ecology movement—but he was also raped by his father, and suffers from PTSD. It has been his experiences that have caused him to look at the degradation of the environment—he says over 200 species perish each day—and resistance efforts to stop this planetary mass murder.

In a wide-ranging and provocative presentation, Jensen talked for over two hours to almost 70 people, which is pretty amazing in a town of 11,000 people, although a couple of participants had traveled from as far away as Columbus, Ohio to hear him. Ranging from his own experiences to planetary ecocide, Jensen gave his audience much to think about and consider.

Isn't this a bit much for a vets' club? Vince doesn't see it that way: "Look, man, we got sucked into the military by lies; we didn't know any better. I'm wanting to get people to think about what's going on. How better to get them to think than to expose them to world-class thinkers and activists?"



KIM SCIPES IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTH CENTRAL AND FACULTY ADVISOR FOR THE VETS' CLUB. HE IS A VIETNAM ERA VET, SERVING IN THE USMC FROM 1969-73, ULTIMATELY ATTAINING THE RANK OF SERGEANT.

Battle-Scarred

Father's Day 2005,
The day my dad last was alive.
Diabetes, heart disease, lung cancer too,
Agent Orange, what did you do?
You stole my father through and through.
A Bronze Star, 2 Air Medals, and a Purple Heart,
Are still not enough to unbreak my heart.

—Lura Stephanie Gaiek



Premeditated

BRYAN REINHOLDT

For an act to be premeditated it has to be planned. In the United States we hear about premeditated murder and in some states this has been defined as mere seconds before the criminal act. Our reasoning for going to war with Iraq and Afghanistan was the premeditated plans of terrorists, among other things, that seemed to fail evidential scrutiny. Our "preemptive" or "premeditated" actions were framed as a response against those who, as President Bush put it, "hate us for our freedoms." On September 12, 2001 the United States government decided to act in self-defense to those countries it deemed guilty of harboring terrorists. Iraq was the only country to endorse the attacks saying it was a "lesson for all tyrants and oppressors." When violent actions aren't premeditated they are classified as self-defense which is the legal justification for killing in situations that would otherwise be deemed as murder. In this case, the act is called

"justifiable murder." Are these wars premeditated murders or justifiable murders? The debate over the wars/occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan can be summed up in an analysis and comparison of premeditated acts (unjustifiable murder) and self-defense (justifiable murder).

In the recent killings of 16 Afghan women and children in Panjwahi district of Kandahar province by, allegedly, one rogue staff sergeant who had gone through multiple deployments, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said, "War is hell. These kind of events and incidents are going to take place. They've taken place in any war. They're terrible events. This is not the first of those events, and they probably won't be the last." If we can place the Defense Secretary's comments in the larger context of global war, we are all (US and Al Qaeda) simultaneously acting in self-defense for what we believe is just cause for an enemy's premeditated murder. Chicken

and the egg, but this is more than theory, it is about human lives. If we know, like Panetta states, that these kinds of atrocities are going to happen, how are we preventing them? Are we trying to prevent them or does that impair soldier readiness? Make no mistake: we went into Iraq and Afghanistan with the premeditated intent to kill. Whether soldiers are told to engage in violent actions that amount to murder or justifiable murder against an enemy, this is the tightrope that Panetta seems to be walking on. Reports suggest that all safeguards were in place to thwart premeditated actions of this kind. Yet, soldiers exposed to traumatic experiences (PTSD, MST, and TBI) are repeatedly treated as if their experiences are justifiable while the soldiers themselves deal with the trauma as if they carried out premeditated murder. The trauma is mounting within each soldier and the nation collectively. A draw down in troops from Iraq and Afghanistan

doesn't mean the war is over. It continues in the minds of veterans.

IVAW's Operation Recovery campaign seeks to support service members standing up for their right to heal, to expose those responsible for deploying traumatized troops, to demand that those who deploy traumatized troops end their inhumane practice and end these wars by winning our Right to Heal.

Support our troops. Support Operation Recovery.



BRYAN REINHOLDT IS THE NATIONAL TREASURER FOR IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. HE SERVED AS AN APACHE ARMAMENT AND ELECTRONICS MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST DURING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM III WITH THE 8/229TH AVIATION REGIMENT UNDER THE 42ND INFANTRY DIVISION ON FOB SPEICHER. HE IS CURRENTLY A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY.

Dear American Public

CHARLES HENDERSON

As a Afghanistan Veteran I'm speaking out against NATO, for reasons of my belief that our presence is causing more damage to the country of Afghanistan than good.

The American public forgot about Afghanistan for such a long time, the focus was on Iraq because it was such a controversial war. Afghanistan was considered the good war at one time, now look at the outcome.

When I was in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010 as part of the surge, the situation wasn't getting better. I realized that the people of Afghanistan didn't want us there anymore. I remember seeing racism, which bothered me, against the people of Farah Province. As a Black and Mexican

person myself I would tell the soldiers especially the minorities it's not right that we treat them like this with racist comments. How can we do this, when we as people of color, dealt with this problem for so many years in the United States and till this day are still dealing with this issue of hatred of race and religion?

We have been in Afghanistan for over 10 years now, the longest war in US history. It should be obvious to the politicians - after being there so long we need to get out of Afghanistan. American taxpayers have spent billions of dollars on this war we cannot win, money that could be used to create new jobs, and help this recession in our country. The government is making cutbacks on simple



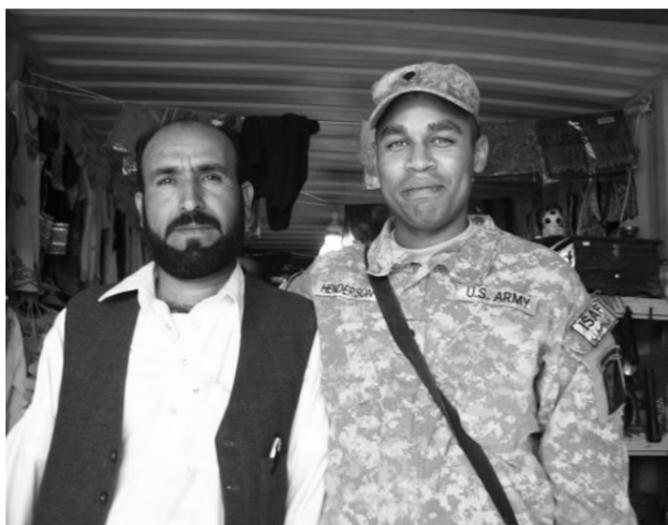
things that average Americans need in their communities, like clinics, after school programs, and education. In the US, we have our own problems - look at the inner cities, violence across the nation, and the poverty there. Sad to say, the inner city is where the military recruits many people, not at the cost of a politician's or lobbyist's child, no it's us average Americans who suffer. It's always been a poor man and woman's fight.

The United States should've learned from the mistakes made by the Soviet Union and the British in Afghanistan. Nobody has ever conquered or won a war there, the Afghanis are a proud people with

a rich history. That's why they call Afghanistan the graveyard of empires. I'm calling on the people of the United States to come out to Chicago, my hometown, and give NATO a piece of our mind. As Emiliano Zapata said, "I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees."



CHARLES HENDERSON WAS IN THE ARMY'S 82 AIRBORNE DIVISION. HE'S AN AFGHANISTAN VETERAN, THE IVAW CHICAGO CHAPTER SECRETARY AND A MEMBER OF THE AVAW COMMITTEE, DLO, BLACK CAUCASUS, WRL, AND IRFP.



Enemy Kitchen

CRYSTAL COLON

Enemy Kitchen is a social art project created by Michael Rakowitz in 2004. Initially it was an after-school cooking program for teenagers in Chelsea, New York aimed at engaging students on the topics of war and Iraqi culture. Michael has recently reincarnated the project as a food truck that will roam the streets of Chicago, providing traditionally prepared Iraqi cuisine served by American Veterans of the Iraq war. The food truck is currently part of an installation called "Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art" at the Chicago Smart Museum of Art.

The goal of Enemy Kitchen is to serve up complex flavors along with cultural conversations. The project is working to bring together veterans, Iraqi refugees and Chicago citizens. As veteran and Enemy Kitchen member Greg Broseus stated, "People love to get together and eat; there is no better way to start a conversation."

Enemy Kitchen celebrated its launch outside Milo's Pita Place on March 19th in order to mark the ninth anniversary of Shock and Awe. Milad Sheer, owner of Milo's, along with his father and brother agreed to prepare and provide traditional dishes such as kibbeh, dolma, hummus and schwarma for the duration of the truck's tour. Rakowitz has also teamed up with the Iraq Mutual Aid Society (IMAS) to ensure that Iraqi refugees are included in the project and are given an opportunity to have their often silenced voices heard.

While touring Chicago two days a week (Sundays and Wednesdays), I am hoping not only to serve food but also to raise consciousness in the community. Most Americans have never met an Iraqi, and a large percentage of them have never met a veteran. By taking our food offerings to the public, we are providing a space for individuals of different

communities and backgrounds to talk and share their experiences, all while stepping away from the mainstream discussions of war. Instead, we focus our conversations on the personal aspects of war and how every individual is affected by it.

For the veteran community, this project has the potential to begin repairing relationships with the people we formally occupied. While we can never fully repair the damage done to the country of Iraq or its people, collaborations such as Enemy Kitchen can start us down the path to reconciliation.

For more information on Enemy Kitchen you can go to www.michaelrakowitz.com/projects/enemy-kitchen. To see where to truck will be stopping next, follow its Twitter page at www.twitter.com/#!/EnemyKitchen. Milo's Pita Place can be found at www.milospitaplace.com



CRYSTAL COLON SERVED IN THE US ARMY AS A COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST FROM 2004-2010. SHE WAS DEPLOYED TO IRAQ 2005-06 AND AGAIN 2008-09. SINCE HER RELEASE FROM THE MILITARY, SHE HAS WORKED ON VETERAN ISSUES WITH SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING: UNDER THE HOOD CAFÉ, FT. HOOD DISOBEYS, MARCH FORWARD!, AND IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



Fair Food

MAGGIE MARTIN

In March I went to Lakeland, Florida as a representative of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and participated in a "Fast for Fair Food" with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). I had never fasted in my life nor had I really been involved in an action as a supporter; all my organizing experience has been with IVAW. The nearly week-long fast and the experience of building community with people I had never met, but felt connected to because of our common cause of working for human rights and dignity for all people, was really powerful for me and I will never forget it.

The CIW, Student Farmworker Alliance (SFA), and other allies came together to hold Publix grocery store chain accountable for the unfair working conditions that exist in the Florida tomato fields that supply Publix. CIW has been asking for a penny more per pound and that growers adhere to a code of conduct regarding the treatment of workers.

While the grocery giant has said it is not responsible for worker abuse and poverty wages that persist in the tomato fields of Florida, we know that large buyers can make dramatic changes in conditions and wages for workers if they simply agree to buy from growers that are doing the right thing.

I felt proud to travel to Florida, join in the fast, and support such a worthy cause as a member of IVAW. There are many threads that tie veterans struggle together with

the movement for farmworker justice and I want to highlight some of them. The CIW and the SFA have been an inspiration to our membership as we have built an organizing force in IVAW.

Back in 2010 SFA member/organizer Marina del Mar came to Chicago and taught, facilitated, and shared with IVAW members as we developed our first strategic campaign, Operation Recovery. She shared CIW and SFA's story of the long struggle building the power it took to take on a big corporation like Taco Bell and win! We also learned about the relationship-building and "spade work" it takes to bring people together to stand up for a common cause, and to stick with it until we see the change we are fighting for.

Another thing that we have learned from CIW and SFA is the relationship that exists between members of affected communities (for them farm workers, for us soldiers and veterans) and supporters (for them SFA for us Civilian Soldier Alliance-CSA). CIW and SFA have modeled the kind of work we want to be doing by war and military service speak for themselves and are encouraged to take on leadership. Like SFA our allies in CSA support the campaign and the work that moves us forward but also have an eye on lifting up the voices of the affected community.

Finally the most important influence CIW and SFA have had on my work in IVAW is the continued focus on human dignity.

As we have moved through the years and our work has taken on different forms, some things have become clear: war is dehumanizing, oppression is dehumanizing, and dehumanization of ourselves and others causes harm to all of society. The "Fast for Fair Food" was an expression of human dignity and the ties of solidarity built there will be felt long into the future.

Fasting has a history almost as long as mankind. Fasting has been used as a tool to raise social and political consciousness, to express protest, and to get closer to the spiritual world. For me the act of fasting was a chance to get in my body, get grounded in what I was standing for, and let go of the many distractions of day-to-day life. It was an offering of myself and at the same time a claiming of myself.

The power of the CIW community was invigorating. We fasters became more and more committed and bonded together as the week went on. Publix officials were on the defense, and support flowed in from all over the country. The resolve of the community is clear. Over forty CIW, SFA, and supporters fasted in Lakeland and many others fasted from afar or joined in throughout the week. Publix will have to come to account with the demand that they join the Fair Food Agreement, which 10 other national corporations including Taco Bell, McDonalds, and Trader Joe's have, thanks to the work of CIW and SFA.

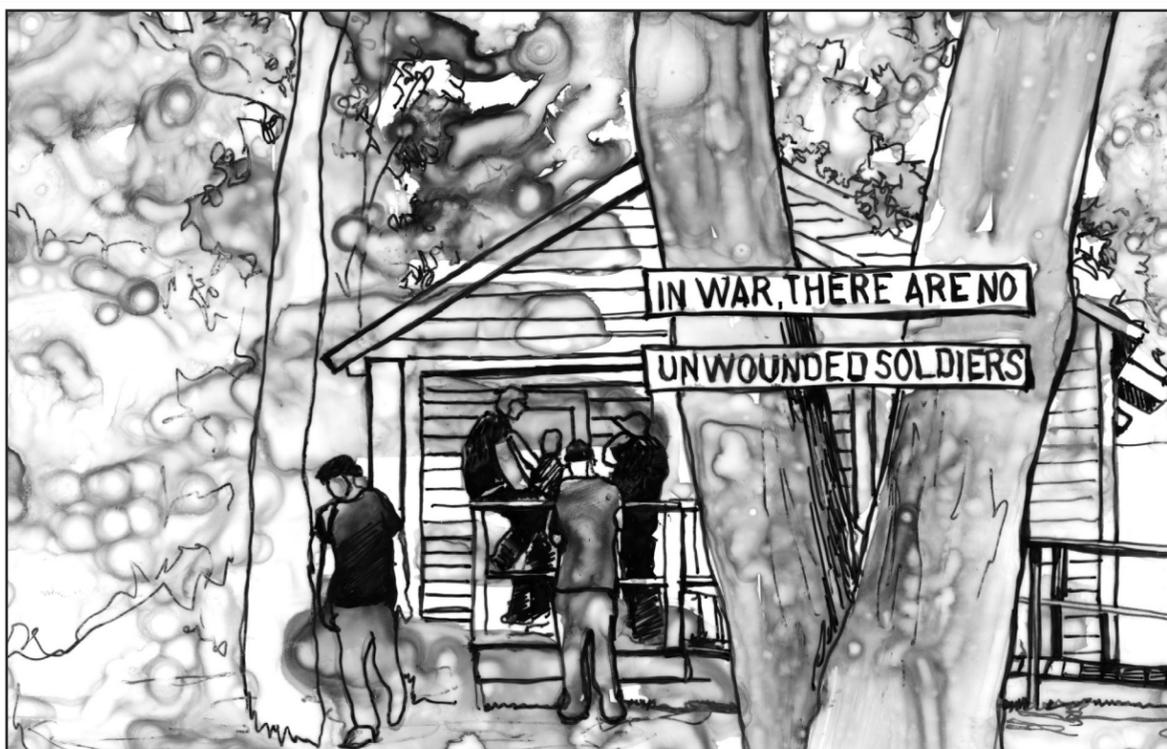
The week passed by with

music, prayer, and lots of sharing. The fast culminated on Saturday in a 3-mile march from a local Publix grocery to the Publix corporate headquarters where we had been all week. Special guests came out in support. Major Mexican music star Jose Jose, and members of the Kennedy family. Robert F. Kennedy's children Robert F., Jr. and Kerry F. Kennedy, and his widow, Ethel Kennedy all joined in the closing ceremony and the breaking of the bread, as Robert F. Kennedy himself had done exactly 44 years earlier with Farmworker rights leader Cesar Chavez.

Publix has yet to respond but CIW supporters faced Publix headquarters with a crowd of nearly 1000 chanting, "We'll be back." I know this fight is not over and my experience fasting for six days with CIW has given me a renewed commitment to their cause, energy to bring back to my work with IVAW, and knowledge to see how our humanity is tied with so many others so that we can build solidarity in all of our work for justice.



MAGGIE MARTIN SERVED AS A SERGEANT IN THE US ARMY SIGNAL CORPS; SHE SERVED TWO TOURS IN IRAQ. MAGGIE IS CURRENTLY A FIELD ORGANIZER WITH IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR AND SITS ON THE ADVISORY BOARD OF WARRIOR WRITERS. MAGGIE HAS A BA IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS AND IS A GRADUATE STUDENT, STUDYING SOCIAL JUSTICE AT MARYGROVE COLLEGE IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN.



Under the Hood Cafe and Outreach Center is strategically located just outside of Fort Hood, the largest military base in the United States, and is home to the Operation Recovery Campaign. The center provides a safe space for service members and veterans to meet and lead the fight for the right to heal and concessions from III Corps Commander General Campbell.

Warrior Writers

LOVELLA CALICA

Warrior Writers is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to create a culture that articulates veterans' experiences, provide a creative community for artistic expression, and bear witness to the lived experiences of warriors.

We are excited to announce the completion of the third anthology by Warrior Writers! *After Action Review* is a powerful collection of over 100 creative works by veterans who have served in the US military since 9/11, most having deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. The book features work by many veterans from Iraq Veterans Against the

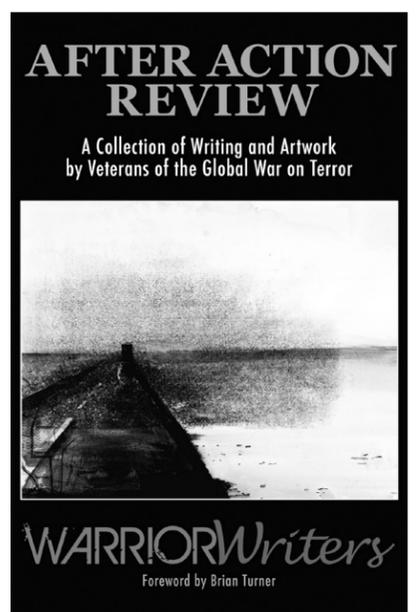
War, such as Garrett Reppenhagen, Kelly Dougherty and Jon Turner. It also features art from IVAW's Field Organizing Team including images from Aaron Hughes and poetry by Maggie Martin. With creative expression as a unifying force, veterans from many walks of life share poetry, prose, stories and visual art to articulate what is too often unspoken. These honest, self-reflective works of art collectively move us towards better understanding veterans' experiences.

Although the Iraq War has been declared over - the stories, memories and experiences live on in our veterans. As those

who want to truly welcome our veterans home, it is up to us to read and share what they have to say. Please consider purchasing a copy of *After Action Review* for yourself, for veterans or family members you know, for your local library, etc. For information about bulk pricing, contact info@warriorwriters.org, or order your individual copy today for just \$20 at warriorwriters.org.



LOVELLA CALICA USES ART-
MAKING, ESPECIALLY WRITING, AS
A WAY TO HEAL AND SURVIVE LIFE
EXPERIENCES.



Eviscerated

I am your walking wounded broken toy soldier, and your flag is burning and all your yellow ribbons have fallen down. I cut open these festers to force your eyes to see the truth so damn it, LOOK! Look at what has become of me, of us.

I will gladly reopen these wounds if there is change that will come of it. So that no one else receives these scars.

We walking wounded broken toy soldiers salute your burning flags, untie your yellow ribbons and bind up our open wounds that are proudly on display for you.

But most bow your heads low, and shut tightly your eyes ignoring our evisceration.

—Robynn Murray

Veteran

Born of war and the lie of lies, buried and uniformed into silence,
signed away lives in pursuit of Service
commanding you to hold onto some flag or book
that clings to Patriotism as if it's a guiding star
leading us to a future of promises and certainty
until coming home breaks itself upon you in a wave you can't see—
an invisible bomb blast, and there's the Duty to be back,
to be right, to be a person who can forget,
while the day drives a memory back into light,
into a war that won't let you go—
won't allow you to escape the world of Honor you're supposed to hold high
like a Flag hoisted on the moon, showing you what we once could do,
but you can never Reconcile the day with the night—
the ghosts in the mind—the holes in the thoughts,
until they tell you it's PTSD, and you listen and you hear
and you see it in the eyes of the mirror,
everything lettered into a name for what only
you and those like you can know,
men and women searching for a healing world and voice—
a gentle guide into every night's desperate end
where you find yourself over and over again
staring into darkness and pain, secrets and boxed up tears
waiting for the everything in the world to die.

—James A. Moad II

We are Broken Bottles

Reflected florescence
Refracted candescents
Nuance of neons
Outshining ions
Broken bottles
Glisten in the gutter

There is more glass in the streets here
than stars in the sky
More light in liquor stores
than shining in eyes

The bottoms of bulbs and bowls burn
brightly in front of our face
Outshining the hell we live in
as hell is outshining space

Reflected florescence
Refracted candescents
Nuance of neons
Outshining ions
Broken bottles
Glisten in the gutter

Fueled by pharmaceuticals
pill bottle bottoms bomb us
But other people's pills
are other people's problems

Even after emptying every vexing vessel to maintain
memories
mixing menacing most minds may contain
Because this is a military town
there is no such thing as sane

Reflected florescence
Refracted candescents
Nuance of neons
Outshining ions
WE are broken bottles
and the might of the military is reflected in our remains.

—Malachi Muncy

Marv Davidov: My Friend, My Inspiration

MICHAEL ORANGE

Marv Davidov, the man the noted historian, Howard Zinn, called "the apostle of nonviolent direct action," died on January 14 at 80 years of age. The litany of Davidov's life as a devoted advocate matches the turbulent history of the peace, justice, labor, and environmental movements over the last six decades. He was a Freedom Rider and protester on the Peoples March on Washington, a hunger striker in several Southern jails, a union organizer, a protector of family farms and Native American rights, a riveting speaker and teacher, and a tireless leader in the fight to end the Vietnam War.

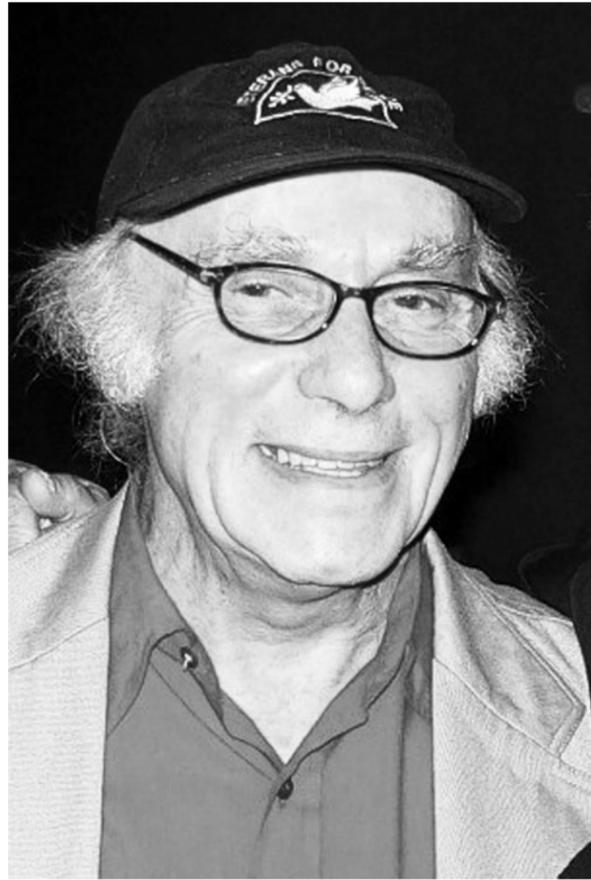
Best known for founding the Honeywell Project in 1968, a worldwide movement to stop the production of indiscriminate weapons of war, Marv also founded the Minnesota chapter of the War Resisters League and helped found the Minnesota Campaign to Ban Land Mines, which was part of the international organization that was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize.

With Marv's life of dedication and unflagging work across the country, it would be hard to find a famous peace and justice worker who didn't know Marv. He was admired and embraced by the likes of Phil Berrigan, Fr. Daniel Berrigan, Dave Dellinger,

and Noam Chomsky, to name a few. In fact, the Justice Studies Association chose Marv for its 2007 Noam Chomsky Award. To honor Marv and his contributions, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Minnesota House of Representatives proclaimed March 10 as Marv Davidov Day.

Soon after he died, I was in Marv's room at a local nursing home helping his closest friend, Barbara Mishler, and my wife, Cynthia, with his possessions. We stepped out of the room when the man from the Cremation Society arrived so he could do his job. A few minutes later, he told us he would now bring out Marv's body. He slowly wheeled the blanket draped gurney out of the room and paused where the three of us had lined up to offer our deep respect and love for this giant of the peace and justice community. We said our last goodbyes and stood there for a few moments more, almost at attention, as one would do when the body of a dignitary or national hero passes for military review.

Marv and I were both in the service, and I thought of saluting but dismissed the idea even though it always struck me that the story I heard Marv tell repeatedly was about the incident while in the Army that launched his activist vocation. He refused to participate in the brutal beating



of another soldier and that act of courage resulted in his own beating. I wanted to pay tribute to his bravery.

Although acquaintances for two decades, Marv and I became good friends after he agreed to address the students in a class I co-taught in 2007 about Vietnam and the 60s. Wearing his Honeywell Project T-shirt (as did I), his bushy white hair exploded from under his Vets for Peace cap. "Mine was a breach birth," he began. "I came out feet first kicking and then screaming and I've been doing it ever since." Then he recounted his Army story, fresh as if it was the first time, complete with his characteristic drawn-out vowels and no-holds-barred-expletives. He finished an hour and a half later only pausing occasionally to breathe. He so transfixed the students that they ranked his presentation as the highlight of the course.

On that Saturday morning with Marv, January 14, Cynthia and I joined Barbara and two other close friends of Marv at his bedside as he lay dying. His breathing was somewhat labored and, for a time, he seemed to try to speak to Barbara who sat close to him on his bed.

Earlier, Barbara described some of the last words Marv spoke the night before he died. "I said to him, 'Marv, what should I do with the rest of my life?' He thought for a long, long time; so long that I thought he forgot the question. Finally, he turned to me and said:

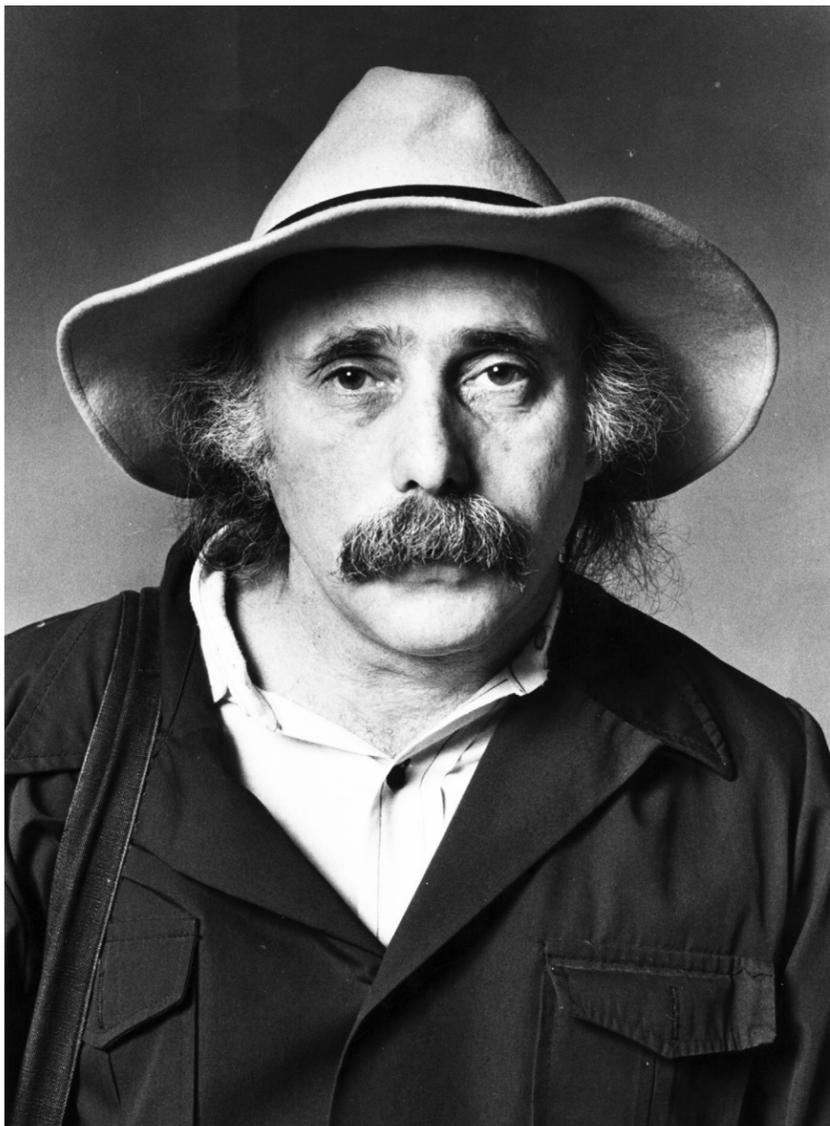
'You must locate your deepest private feelings—philosophical, religious and spiritual—and then decide to live out these beliefs in a commensurate way, in public, as much as possible without compromise.' It's no surprise I loved and admired him immensely."

As we gathered close around Marv, Cynthia sang him the Beatles' lullaby, Goodnight. He reached up to touch Barbara and she held his hand gently. He relaxed and his breathing grew softer. At about 1:15 p.m., he turned his face and gaze towards the ceiling as if he recognized something (or someone), then shut his eyes and died peacefully moments later.

Over the last months of his life, we started a little ritual when I visited him. I always gave him a little kiss on the top of his bald head as he lay in his bed and we both said I love you. Just before the tall man in the long black-leather coat took Marv for his last trip, I completed my role in our ritual one last time.



MICHAEL ORANGE SERVED AS A MARINE IN VIETNAM AND EXPERIENCED COMBAT IN NUMEROUS SEARCH-AND-DESTROY MISSIONS DURING HIS ONE-YEAR TOUR OF DUTY. IN 2001, HE PUBLISHED A MEMOIR OF HIS SERVICE, FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM AND HE TEACHES CLASSES ON THE HISTORY OF THE WAR AND PTSD.



Comparisons of the Synchronous Neural Interactions Among Neural Populations in Pre and Post War Brains of Veterans Exhibiting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:

©2012 Billy X

THE SMART WISE Bomb
Hi Ya Kids! I'm a Really Smart Bomb!

Reports Indicate War Weary Troops Are Stressed.

Reports Indicate Veterans Often Remain Stressed.

END YEAR

PREHOMELISS

PRE-WAR BRAIN

POST-WAR BRAIN

Reports Indicate P.T.S.D. Alters Brains.

Reports Indicate Stressors Can Push P.T.S.D. Sufferers Over The Edge.

Them Drones Be Comin' Home.

It's "All" On The Table In US Negotiations, Baby!

Reports Indicate Suicide Sometimes Prevents P.T.S.D. Sufferers From Doing Something Worse.

Reports Indicate Less WAR Less P.T.S.D.

Reports Indicate Suicide Cures P.T.S.D?

SUICIDE DON'T DO IT!!!

Talk It Out:
Call: 1-800-273-8255 Vets Press 1
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

comments or suggestions? billyx.net@gmail.com www.billyx.net

Walgreens Tells Vets to Shop Elsewhere

MICHAEL CASCANET

Walgreen Co., the largest drugstore chain in the US, published a press release last month announcing that as of the end of December 2011, they would no longer accept or fill Tricare prescriptions for drug purchases. Tricare is the medical insurance program that covers US military veterans. Walgreens claims that Tricare prescription payments are lower than industry standards and therefore not as profitable as other programs that it subscribes to.

Our free market system gives Walgreens the right to do business as they see fit. It also gives me the

option of voting with my feet and my wallet. As a disabled veteran who pays Tricare premiums out of my retirement I have decided to boycott Walgreens as well as any other merchant who refuses to support this country's veterans.

I urge all veterans to avoid Walgreens in the future. I won't buy a single battery or a pack of Q-Tips from a corporation that refuses to provide prescriptions to America's veterans.

This past Veterans Day Walgreens pretended to honor vets with percentage-off sales on selected items. How stupid do they

think we are?

In the past 3 months Walgreens has spent \$700,000 on lobbying the Department of Defense and the Department of Health and Human Services to increase prescription payments from Tricare and other government sponsored insurance policies. They grossed \$6.13 billion in October with a 4.6% increase in pharmacy sales operating 7,786 stores. So what if I don't buy batteries from them anymore? I admit that I am just one small voice. My opposition to them is as futile as spitting into the wind.

But what if every veteran in all 50 states decided to boycott them? Would that send a message?

The moral of the story is: sometimes you get what you ask for... Shop elsewhere you say? You don't need us? You, the American veteran, are not important enough, not profitable enough for us? You got it, Walgreens. I'll never patronize any of your 7,786 stores again.



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



Barry Romo and Bill Davis in Chicago marching with VVAW on Veterans Day.

VVAW AGENT ORANGE

VVAW Supports the Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011: HR 2634

SUSAN M. SCHNALL

FIFTY YEARS AGO: The United States used approximately 19 million gallons of 15 different herbicides, including 13 million gallons of Agent Orange over south Vietnam. Between 2.1 and 4.8 million Vietnamese were exposed during the spraying and many more are continuously exposed through the environment. Agent Orange exposure continues to negatively affect the lives of men and women in both Vietnam and the United States. Agent Orange exposure is associated with cancers, immune deficiencies, reproductive illnesses and severe birth defects in Vietnamese, American and Vietnamese Americans directly exposed as well as their children and grandchildren.

SEVEN YEARS AGO: David Cline and Merle Ratner founded the Vietnam Relief and Responsibility Campaign. The Campaign is dedicated to healing the wounds of the American conflict in Vietnam by bringing together former enemies to jointly assist the victims of the war and to hold responsible those whose use of chemical weapons constitutes crimes against humanity. VVAW has been instrumental in working with the core leadership on educating the public about the continuing harmful impact of the spraying on American veterans, their children and grandchildren and the Vietnamese people. Marty

Webster is an active member of the core leadership and Barry Romo is an active member of the VAORRC board.

FOUR YEARS AGO:

The American Public Health Association passed Policy #20078 recommending:

1) The President direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to address the enduring psychological and physical health effects of Agent Orange and dioxin on US veterans of the Vietnam War and their children;

2) The US government and involved chemical companies provide resources for services for the disabled in areas where dioxin victims are concentrated; provide medical services, nursing and social services for those harmed by Agent Orange;

3) The US government and the involved chemical companies be responsible to remediate or attempt to clean up those areas in Vietnam that still contain high levels of dioxin. Anne Hirschman of VVAW's leadership played a key role in support of this policy at the APHA's annual meeting.

SIX MONTHS AGO: Congressman Bob Filner introduced the Victims of Agent Orange Relief



New York area Agent Orange activists meet with a leadership delegation from VAVA (Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin) this past December.

Act of 2011 (HR2634). This legislation would provide:

- medical assistance for the children and grandchildren of American veterans who served in Vietnam,
- health care for Vietnamese Americans and their children affected by Agent Orange,
- extension of the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study,
- health care and social services for exposed Vietnamese people and,
- remediation of those areas in south and central Vietnam that remain contaminated by dioxin.

This legislation addresses the ongoing health problems of United States veterans, their progeny, and the Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans harmed by the use of

Agent Orange/dioxin. HR 2634 offers an opportunity to heal the terrible suffering and wounds from the Vietnam conflict, 50 years after the beginning of the spraying of Agent Orange/dioxin in central and south Vietnam.

Help pass this critical legislation - contact your member of Congress. Ask your Congress member and Senators to co-sponsor HR2634.

Call or visit their office, and let them know that, as a constituent, you want their support for this bill.

Please email us at info@vn-agentorange.org and let us know who you've contacted and their response.

Read the full bill at www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h112-2634

Contact us at: info@vn-agentorange.org Our website is: www.vn-agentorange.org/



SUSAN SCHNALL IS A CO-CORDINATOR OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF AND RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN, CHAIRING THE LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH AND SCIENCE GROUP. SHE IS CURRENTLY A PROFESSOR IN HEALTH POLICY AND PLANNING AT NYU AND A MEMBER OF VVAW, VFP AND APHA. IN 1969 SHE WAS TRIED AND CONVICTED BY A GENERAL COURT MARTIAL FOR HER ANTI-WAR ACTIVITIES WHILE A MEMBER OF THE US NAVY.



(l to r) Nguyen Minh Y, VAVA Director of External Relations Department, Marty Webster, VVAW National Coordinator and a core member of VAORRC, and Lt. Gen. (Rt.) Nguyen Van Rinh, President of VAVA share a moment of solidarity.

WORK CONTINUES

Second and Third Generation Children of Vietnam Veterans Stricken Gather

MARTY WEBSTER

On April 14-16, seven Agent Orange generational Victims from around the United States gathered in Canfield, Ohio for three days of a power packed and emotionally charged collaboration and brainstorming session. They were meeting to form a new group, created for the children of Vietnam Veterans by children of Vietnam Veterans. Among the attendees were a retired Mental Health worker and an Agent Orange Victim suffering from over 25 unexplained illnesses, the founder of the Daughters of Vietnam Veterans (DOVV), a daughter of an affected Agent Orange victim, and a woman born without her arm who was the subject of Japanese photographer Goro Nakamura's 1982 photographs chronicling Agent Orange devastation in the US and in Vietnam. Also attending was a Professor of English and Creative Writing at The University of Arizona, born with Agent Orange-related birth defects. The host of the event Heather Bowser is a long time activist for second and third generational victims of Agent Orange. Heather is also a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor who was born with multiple Agent Orange related birth defects.

Perhaps the most moving aspect of the meeting was Tanya and her daughter Jenna Mack's participation. She is from California, a daughter of a Vietnam Veteran who has been stricken with a potentially fatal form of cancer which costs \$12,000 per month for a life sustaining medication. Her daughter, Jenna Mack, is a third generation victim of Agent Orange. This lovely young woman is a beauty queen and the current Miss Teen California. Jenna carries the mutation within her body. She lives with the thought

that it is probably only a matter of time until it becomes active. She has evidence already which the doctors are watching very closely. From her platform at beauty pageants, she teaches others how Agent Orange has affected her life. She shared her crown with me and I was visibly moved. I feel that whatever befalls her in life she will always be wearing that crown.

The new group will be called Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance (COVVHA). Marty Webster, National Coordinator of VVAW (Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign) also attended this meeting and has been asked to mentor this group and to help facilitate the early stages of its formation.

Never before has so many US Agent Orange second generation victims come together to change the face of Agent Orange activism. COVVHA will be committed to serving as a voice for the children of Vietnam veterans including, second and third generation victims of Agent Orange and Dioxin exposures worldwide. They believe in empowering each other to hold the companies and governments responsible for causing so much devastation and suffering. Their mission is to fight for justice globally. Many children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans are suffering from birth defects and unexplained illnesses which have no prior family history. Like their fathers, many have become seriously ill in the prime of their lives. There is currently no recognition for the birth defects and illnesses in the children of male Vietnam veterans except for certain types of Spina Bifida

The generational victims of



Miss Teen California and 3rd Generation Agent Orange victim Jenna Mack and Marty Webster.

Agent Orange from around the country hosted a reception and film screening of *Living The Silent Spring*, by Japanese Filmmaker, Masako Sakata. Masako is the widow of an American Vietnam veteran. The film featured Canfield, Ohio resident and Agent Orange Activist, Heather Bowser, a thirty-nine year old, born with birth defects associated with her father's exposure to Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. The screening which was open to the public was well attended.

Fifty years ago, Rachel Carson's landmark *Silent Spring* warned of the danger of widespread use of pesticides and herbicides, helping to launch the environmental movement in the US. Around this same time, the US military began to spray defoliants in Vietnam, to deny cover to guerrilla forces entrenched in dense jungles and swampland. The defoliants, including Agent Orange, were potent mixes of chemicals used in agriculture, but they were contaminated with the deadly poison, dioxin. In a decade of US spraying, some 4 million Vietnamese were directly exposed to defoliants, and the health effects continue today. American soldiers stationed in Vietnam were also exposed, and many veterans suffer a range of diseases as a consequence. In both countries, the effects have now carried over to the children and grandchildren of those exposed - including Heather Bowser, the daughter of an American veteran, who was born missing a leg and many of her fingers. Heather has visited Vietnam, her father's battleground,

and discovered the importance of building links between victims of Agent Orange in the US and Vietnam. *Living the Silent Spring* depicts the struggles and courage of American and Vietnamese children who bear the imprint of Agent Orange, and asks us to once again heed the prophetic warnings of Rachel Carson.

The event was open to the public and was well attended. Those present were available to talk and answer questions regarding Agent Orange and the effect it has had in their lives. Goro Nakamura, award winning photographer and author, photographed the historic event and Kyoren Takamasa, a Japanese reporter interviewed the Agent Orange generational victims. Both photographers and an interpreter flew in from Japan to record this historic event. Takamasa was also in attendance to record the entire weekend.

Agent Orange the chemical defoliant, sprayed in Vietnam during the Vietnam War, has been linked to many illnesses in our country's Vietnam veterans. Many people do not know of the long term, unrecognized, damage the chemical has done to the children of Vietnam veterans from around the world not just in the US, and Vietnam. The Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance is working to bring awareness and justice for all generational victims of Agent Orange wherever in the world they may be.



MARTY WEBSTER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.



Part of the group at the meeting.

Meeting Lamont B. Steptoe, Warrior Writer

HORACE COLEMAN

I met poet (Army scout, dog handler, 'Nam vet) Lamont Steptoe during a lay over in LA on the cross country trip he'd made from the East Coast.

How many 'Nam vets do you know who'd dropped out of college so they could enlist? And, how many people selected for Officer Candidate School do you know who dropped out of it because they "didn't want to lead men to their death" even after being told quitting would guarantee a funky assignment? Steptoe got in country a few months after I'd left the "green war" as he calls it. The death of Martin Luther King greeted me less than two months after I was back in "the world." That same event drove him to a place where he traded one circle of hell for another, lower and broader, level of anguish and death. He got a CIB, a Bronze Star, and eventually, a 100% PTSD rating. He walked point and was first in strange boony places where no round eye had been ever or recently. One of the dogs he worked with had two kills.

The title poem of his poetry collection *Uncle's South China Sea Blue Nightmare* has many stanzas that begin with the words "In country." Each stanza stands by itself as a poem and links thematically with the others in a mini Iliad:

you scream "How many cellars / of fear are there sky scraper deep / in earth with oceans of fire above / and the sea lobster red?"

You come across memories about things you treasured or loathed:

ice could usually be found / only in snack bars, clubs / and the eyes of those who / had killed too many times

On another page you find yourself standing outside a mortuary, say one with aluminum shipping coffins stacked stories high:

graves registration / was always busy with choppers / landing day in and day out / night in and night out / returning American dead / to the American living / to wrap, pack, sew, tack, / tape and stuff for the long, long / journey back to

North America / and for the long journey still / across the uncharted regions / that only spirits know / but rarely speak of

And on the facing page:

Many find God / in the first burst / of automatic rifle fire / that rips a friend's belly open / like a can of hastily open beans / Some discover God / or Jah or Yaweh or Jehovah / in the crash of mortars / that quake the earth and buildings / with angry exhortations / Others came to know / the all-seeing eye / the moment a friend / gasped a final thought / through lips thick with blood

The horrible, the tender, the descriptive and the hinted at mingle and mix. Steptoe needs few words to weave pictures:

tears flowed like sweat / on both sides / on both sides / blood ran like milk white rubber / pooling on leaves of grass

some dreams saved your life / drugged you senseless / to keep you from waking up / to a night mare

His words paint the beauty of Vietnam:

one morning three thousand feet up / while the world was wrapped / in the body bag of night / the sun ambushing our search and destroy mission

The Amtrak from San Francisco was late but even after the five-hour-plus ride from San Francisco Steptoe was gracious, wide awake and full of anecdotes and information. Among his favorite writers are Samuel Allen (a lawyer, pen name Paul Vesey, first published by Richard Wright). And, Bruce Weigl (*The Monkey Wars, Song of Napalm*, numerous fellowships). Also, Gwendolyn Brooks (Pulitzer Prize, Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress) and the late South African anti-apartheid activist Dennis Brutus. Poet Sonia Sanchez with whom he traveled to Nicaragua (when Uncle Sammy was helping the Contras) is another favorite. Besides visiting the countryside, Steptoe and Sanchez demonstrated outside the US Embassy.



An essay "Lamont B. Steptoe as Contemporary Griot" by Don Riggs is in Steptoe's poetry collection **A Long Movie of Shadows** which won an American Book Award. Riggs' definitions of griot include genealogist, historian, warrior, outcast, performer and exhorter. Steptoe, a graduate of Temple University, is all that and more.

There's a saying on the back of souvenir jackets some GIs bought in 'Nam, "When I die I'll go to heaven because I've spent my time in hell." Steptoe hasn't died but he's spent time in both places. Here are two poems from his award winning book.

Spider Holes

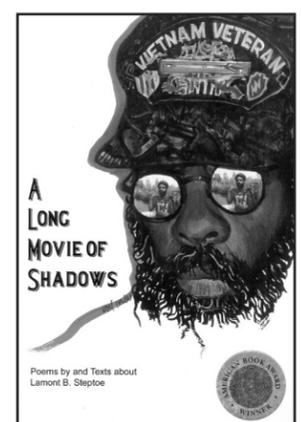
suddenly
i remember
vietcong spider holes
those hiding places
only large enough for one person
to conceal themselves in ambush
singular sniper
invisible until the victim drops
no one explained
how memories of terror
can pop out of spider holes
claim victims
decades after the ink of peace
treaties has faded

Who survived?

i am a daddy
who survived the train wreck
of war but i cannot erase
the horror from the blackboard
of my spirit
forgive me daughter
for making you
a little soldier
and striking you
with the tropic lightning
of my hands
and words

'Nam don't mean nothin'—
but every thing. It's a large part
of Steptoe's writing but hardly all
he has to say.

Lamont B. Steptoe's latest book is **Oracular Rumbblings and Stiltwalking**. He's the author of, among other works, **Crowns and Halos, Between Thresholds, In the Kitchens of the Masters, Dusty Roads: A Vietnam Suite, Catfish and Neckbone Jazz**, and **Mad Minute**. He's the editor of **leafdrift**, a collection of poems by Dennis Brutus.



Peacemaking Under Fire: A Vietnam War Memoir

AARON DAVIS (REVIEWER)

Peacemaking Under Fire: A Vietnam War Memoir

John Arnold

(CreateSpace, 2011)

www.peacemakingunderfire.com

I felt compelled to volunteer to read and review John's book. My read brought out in me many memories of the USMC and many conflicting emotions. John and I have communicated via e-mail over the course of the past few months. You see for me, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." John is now fighting stage 4 prostate cancer attributed to Agent Orange, and is in hospice care.

Although my attitudes and beliefs about war have been formed by listening for many years to combat veterans who have "been there and done that," my own research in reading history has brought me to the conclusion stated by General Smedley Butler

that "War is a Racket" and General William T. Sherman that "War is hell."

John Arnold joined the Marine Corps in 1968 after seeing the movie *Dr. Zhivago*. He was anti-war before he joined so he thought "you can't stop a war if you are not where the war is." The Marine Corps guaranteed he would go to Vietnam. "...being a Marine would position me to both fulfill my duties as a citizen..." John held a communications MOS and served in Vietnam from 1969-1970 in the 5th Marine Regiment of the First Marine Division near An Hoa.

John's favorite task in Vietnam was "serving as a radio operator on Medical Civic Action Platoon...to offer free medical care to anyone who needed it out in the villages we visited." John's sense of compassion and community revealed themselves early in his

tour in Vietnam while commo man for the base garbage detail. "...it was absolute pandemonium as hundreds of men, women and children frantically scrambled for a chance to maybe find something to eat in the garbage we were dumping."

We are right there with John in monsoon season, foxholes, guard duty and many missions. John tells it like it was for him, and shares his emotions and thoughts, which for a Marine is very difficult. His anticipation in "going back to the world on the freedom bird" certainly is not the only reason to read his book, but what he has accomplished since then.

John served as executive director of three large regional food banks in Michigan for the past 28 years and distributed 321 million pounds of food. John is the kind of human being I always

hung out with while in the Corps. This book is special because it has forged a spiritual giant of a man, who is still serving mankind with it.

The book has changed me and made me more appreciative of every moment of life. Let's all pray for John as he now is in the last firefight of his life. We are there for you brother. Ain't nothin' but a thing man.



p.s. - John passed away March 27, 2012. He was trying to hang on until the Veteran came out. I shared the review with him a month before he died. Peace - Aaron.

AARON DAVIS IS VVAW CONTACT IN UTAH. HE WAS A MARINE CORPS SERGEANT IN THE EARLY 70'S AND ARMY OFFICER IN THE 1980'S.

Peacemaking Under Fire - Another Look

GERALD R. GIOGLIO (REVIEWER)

Peacemaking Under Fire: A Vietnam War Memoir

John Arnold

(CreateSpace, 2011)

www.peacemakingunderfire.com

In *Peacemaking Under Fire* author John Arnold proves to be a delightfully unpredictable peace activist - and I might add a patriot of a similar style. Here's a guy at age 17 who believed, like so many of us, in an America of good guys wearing white hats, but began smelling something rotten wafting out of Southeast Asia. Hey, what's a boy to do? For Arnold, it was grab that white hat and enlist in the Marines. Then, head to Vietnam as a Communications Specialist and do whatever it took to promote peace, justice and the American way - be it at the point of his pen or the barrel of his Tommy Gun. Really. As they say, "it's a long story," and one to savor. *Peacemaking Under Fire* is an accessible, appealing narrative that traces one man's remarkable journey and witness for peace. The "Peacemaking" part begins with justifiable adolescent rage over the war leading to civilian peace activism. The "Under Fire" part begins in high school, depicts boot camp life, documents Vietnam experiences and ends back home with Arnold navigating PTSD.

In boot camp and in Vietnam, he orchestrates continuous and

ongoing anti-war letter-writing campaigns and gets intensely involved with the GI Press. In some of the best vignettes, he brings us along on Med Cap missions. Here he helps care for and, when needed, helps protect the civilians in the villages of Vietnam by shouldering that Tommy Gun. Really. As a trusted "#1 GI," he receives valuable logistical warnings from civilians that once saved his life and many times saved the lives of his buddies. Coming home he connects with VVAW and GI-civilian peace action, finding redemption in the arms of the woman who would help him navigate PTSD.

Arnold presents his experience in a light, folksy style, with humor, irony and a keen eye for the absurd. Anyone who has done eighteen-hours of Kitchen Police (KP) duty will appreciate the vignette entitled "The Messman From Hell." Here, Arnold and a gang of "E-Zip-Zero Private Maggot" nobody's go above and beyond a Mess Sergeant's directive to clean up, with some amazing, jaw-dropping results.

Then, if you've ever been under surveillance by Military Intelligence (and, if you're reading this paper you know you were), you'll appreciate the "Marine Attack" Arnold and his mates launched on a couple Naval

Intelligence types, who shall we say, were a bit too obvious when going undercover.

But this is only the comic relief. Arnold can travel on the dark side and when he does, he fires for effect. Indeed, the brutality of basic training and the horror of war are up front and center on many of these pages. His description of punishments handed out during boot camp that led to hospitalizations, mental health problems and a reported suicide is the kind of stuff that few civilians believe when it is depicted in a novel or a Hollywood movie.

The work could use an index and would have benefited from a bit of fact checking. For example, the founder of the American Servicemen's Union, Andy Stapp, appears here as Andy Sapp. A reader might also hope for more reference notes to be able to research the GI resistance and certainly some of the more shocking assertions reported in these pages. But hey, this is a memoir after all — it's not masquerading as a scholarly tome.

These days, VVAW Contacts frequently get requests from high school and college students seeking interviews and for information about the war and GI resistance. Some of us who respond to these requests ponder the best approach to help these

students. Do we agree to the interview or send them packing to the library to do the research? I submit that *Peacemaking Under Fire* provides us with a third way. Like, "Dear X, we got your request for an interview. Go read John Arnold's book, get shocked, awed and inspired to learn more, and then yeah, call us."

The bottom line is this. The book is worthy of your shelf. Hopefully, it will soon be an eBook. With luck, some publisher will latch on to it, address some of the loose ends and give it a greater distribution. Meanwhile, let me recommend it to vets, GIs, anybody thinking about enlisting and/or those currently being harassed by recruiters, and anybody else wanting a fresh take on military training or the national nightmare known as the Vietnam War.



GERALD R. GIOGLIO, OFS IS A VVAW MEMBER. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF DAYS OF DECISION: AN ORAL HISTORY OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN THE MILITARY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND EDITOR OF I REFUSE: MEMORIES OF A VIETNAM WAR OBJECTOR. HE WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE US ARMY IN 1969 AS A CATHOLIC CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR AND IS A MEMBER OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER.

Everyday Courage

GREGORY KOTONIAS

Recently I saw a young man, a double amputee, in a wheelchair in a supermarket. I assumed his current physical reality started someplace in Afghanistan or Iraq. Whether or not my assumption was accurate in his case was irrelevant, as there are so many like him who did lose their limbs in the recent and current wars. As I watched him negotiate the crowded aisles and deal with out of reach items one word kept resonating in my head, the word courage.

I don't mean the courage that took him to Iraq or Afghanistan, but the courage that takes him every day outside his loss and keeps him going. I felt awed by his courage. I have disabling, painful and incurable medical problems. People tell me that I am courageous in that I continue to live life fully without getting bogged down in hopelessness or inactivity. Perhaps I am courageous, yet that evening

in those aisles in the supermarket I felt that my courage was minimal compared to that young man's aura of fortitude and determination.

We talk about the sufferings of wounded war veterans, about their physical and psychological wounds. We also talk about the treatment and support they deserve and need. Of course we should talk about these things, as we need to remain constantly aware of the immediate and ongoing costs of war. We also talk about the courage of veterans in their willingness to have placed themselves in harm's way. However, do we talk enough about the courage that the injured and disabled exemplify every day they choose to continue to make the most of their lives?

Living with chronic pain, disabilities, PTSD or any of the innumerable ravages of war is very difficult and challenging, every single day, day after day. One must cope with not only the

evident challenges of the injured mind or body; one must also cope with the myriad associated psychological and physical consequences. I am referring to phenomena such as the social and psychological feelings of isolation that often accompany disability, the despair and depression that often accompany chronic pain, the challenges to self-esteem and identity if one is unable to work, financial difficulties and worries due to extended or permanent unemployment – the list is very, very long. Overcoming and adapting to such realities requires considerable daily courage and fortitude. The alternative in the absence of this courage is despair and hopelessness.

Therefore, I suggest that we psychologically re-frame what we mean by courage when referring to injured and scarred vets. Our respect and admiration should not be limited to the courage they

displayed by placing themselves in harm's way. We should remain aware of and respectful of the "everyday courage" that they summon in living their lives after having paid heavily for the cost of war. Their daily courage is not just admirable, it's inspirational and in many situations extraordinary.



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.

Ambush on The Street Without Joy

Ambushed Friday, late afternoon,
tracers etching fiery lines in the dusk,
Spooky flares silhouetting clouds.
Fourth of July on April 18th,
year of the Cock.

Saturday evening barbecuing steaks,
Tuy Hoa Officer's Club,
breakers rolling in on the South China Sea.
Budweisers cold and dewy,
buzzed and pumped, my XO and I
celebrate our renewed subscription to life.
A major approaches and says
he'd been on watch the night before.
Thinking it just another instance of
frightened troops shooting at nothing,
he compliments me on the damn fine show.

He hasn't been invited to our party,
he isn't a member of our club, and
in my best imitation of an arrogant ass,
I look him in the eye and tell him
we lost three dead, four wounded.
He mumbles an apology and disappears,
leaving me alone, diminished.
In his stead, survivor's guilt cozies up,
eyes my beer, orders another.

— Paul Hellweg

Paul Hellweg served with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment at Xuan Loc in 1968. He is a member of both VFP and VVAW, and is devoting his life to speaking out against war.



Sketch by Paul Cameron, 69-70.

Are Americans Their Own Worst Enemy?

HORACE COLEMAN

"Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever." Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia.

"My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; and if wrong, to be set right." Carl Schurz, Union Army General (Civil War), US Senator [from a speech given in the Senate].

According to our national branding we're "the land of the free and the home of the brave." And "We're #1" except for little things like life span, infant mortality rate and per capita income. We do quite well at calorie consumption, however.

When each of my children was still in the primary grades of their education I told them a condensed version of US history. This country was founded on three things — Indian land, black chattel slavery and white indentured servitude. Yeah, I know; that leaves out the hard work, ingenuity and sacrifices of the settling and founding fathers (women and certain ethnicities didn't do anything of significance, evidently—which is why some people call history his story). I

knew they were going to be taught the traditional, conventional myths, glossed over facts and be indoctrinated in school, they were going to have to sort through and figure out things for themselves, which they were quite capable of doing while realizing they had rights and responsibilities.

We've always been a fearful nation. Either it was Indians, the French (or both of them) or the British. Haitians were a bad example, passing on unsettling ideas to our slaves. Labor unions are bad; owners and bosses always do right. We are fearful of various ethnic groups from Europe, Asia or south of the border, and threatened by anyone who's non-Christian and socialist, communist, democrat, liberal, etc. Communist Cuba is an outrage, and wouldn't fail on its own soon enough so we tried an invasion, sabotage and various boycotts and sanctions.

We don't consider ourselves terrorists even though we've interfered with nations in this hemisphere with politics, economics and military force since the Monroe Doctrine. We used our experience in World War I to get our feet muddy and bloody

in European and global affairs. We went deeper into European and global affairs during and after World War II and have kept at it ever since.

Now it's illegal aliens (we like cheap labor but not the laborers) and terrorists. We ignore the shenanigans of manipulating Wall Street smoothies, rapacious banks and mortgage firms and the many conniving con artist politicians. We don't really mind that few politicians go to jail and none of the recent financial fraud meisters have been indicted let alone arrested.

We're the planet's most well armed country and its largest arms dealer. We invented new terms and treatments for the international criminals we call terrorists and are so afraid of them that we lock them up indefinitely, offshore of course, after sending them to foreign countries to be tortured so we can keep our hands clean. We kill Americans overseas we identify as terrorists and kidnap anyone we think might be a terrorist but won't try them in the US.

We do all this while knowing God loves us best, because Christian theocracy is superior

to Muslim theocracy. And, the entire USA is a shining city on a hill where we'd all be safe if almost every man, woman and child here had a permit to carry a concealed gun.

Too often we don't go to war because we have to. We do it because we're imperialistic and frightened. We tend not to go to war with any nation that's close to being in our weight class, though. We just bully them. The fans in the stands can really get behind our current wars, especially since there are no war taxes to pay for them or a draft to staff them. We know God loves us best and we're still #1!

The only relevant questions are: 1) When will we have an open, full out, class civil war instead of the current charade and 2) Will we grow up before we ruin ourselves into the ground?



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



Memorial Day Weekend 2011, Killeen, TX - Operation Recovery Fort Hood Organizing Team prepares to go on to Fort Hood to deliver a letter to General Campbell at III Corps in order to request a meeting with General Campbell and inform him that he would be held accountable for the deployment of traumatized troops and the abuse of service members' and veterans' right to heal.

Prolonged Exposure Therapy

GREGORY ROSS

Prologue: The original piece I wrote starts with the next paragraph. My VA therapist for Prolonged Exposure Therapy [PET] asked me to be one of a few PET "graduates" to speak to prospective new enrollees. I read this to them, then spoke the Epilogue, the last paragraph.

I close my eyes. This is what I see: Eleven months with the Seventh Fleet off the coast of Vietnam. Our ship had sixteen inch guns; powerful enough to throw two thousand pound ordinance up to twenty miles. Back from Sea Duty - I need Philippine Pesos. The Black Market offers the best exchange rate; which buys a lot more beer, pot and bar girls. I take the Navy bus to the base at Subic Bay, then a jitney to the Bazaar on the outskirts of Olongapo City. As I wander the Bazaar I come to an open spot. It is a beautiful tropical day; sunny, warm, clear. I stop in the middle of the opening. I am in a very good mood: back from sea; a beautiful day. I am just feeling good.

Why I notice the Fleet Sailor, I don't know. I do remember he is smiling; like a Rube who just bought a \$10 knock-off watch and believes he got a bargain. He is holding it out in front of him; admiring his good fortune; his shrewd dealing.

Then everything changed: the sun warm, the air clean, the temperature agreeable but, everything changed. Faster than can ever be told, a life ended. A Philippina girl came from behind the Fleet Sailor; grabbed the watch as if he handed it to her and ran. The Fleet Sailor yelled. Almost in front of me, just slightly to my

right, she exploded. Her white shirt turned red. Her body slammed down into the dirt. I watched her slide, face down and come to rest, crumpled. Then I registered the gunshot.

I turned to see a Philippine Constabulary; forty five caliber pistol still raised. The girl was not moving. Her shirt was now almost all red. Blood was pooling around her. She was not breathing.

Then everything changed: the sun warm, the air clean, the temperature agreeable but, everything changed. Faster than can ever be told, a life ended.

The Fleet Sailor is as white as his Dress Uniform. I see the PC start walking towards the girl, who was still not moving, not breathing but, I thought she might get up and run; might get away; just leave the watch and blend into the crowd. I still thought she might be saved.

I observe the PC pick up the watch, holster his weapon and while grinning, walk towards the Fleet Sailor. The Shore Patrol and the Military Police have shown up; surrounding the Fleet Sailor, leading him away. He is in shock. Before they can leave, the PC tries to hand the Fleet Sailor the watch. An MP takes it. They leave.

No one has touched the girl. She is not moving, not breathing; not even bleeding; just there, driven into the ground by the force of the bullet; sinking slightly into the little puddle of mud formed by her blood and body fluids. It is still a beautiful day, sunny, warm, clear,

clean, and tropical but, everything has changed. The girl is dead; inhumanly killed over a cheap trinket. I am no longer able to deny that I am in a war. Her death is a symbol of war: callous killing, not worth one life. I could deny the one ton ordinance because I did not see the death and destruction. This small piece of metal, not fired by me, shattered all denial.

I realize that I am the only

American in the clearing. I look at the body one more time but, she does not get up, does not breath, has no more blood; cannot be saved. I fear for my safety. I leave. I hail a jitney. I go to the Navy Base at Subic Bay. I show my ID card and walk in. I take a deep breath; the first since the shot was fired. Waiting for the bus I go to the Enlisted Men's Club and drink rum and coke. The bus comes. I ride in a stupor, some of it alcohol induced. When we get to my duty station, I go immediately to the Enlisted Men's Club; more rum and coke. Back at the barracks, I roll a fat joint, stuff pot in my mouth and begin to chew, as I walk down to the beach to smoke. On the way back I stop off at the Enlisted Men's Club; more rum and coke. I pass out. The next day, I remember nothing.

More than a decade later I enter a VA drug, alcohol and

PTSD program in Menlo Park, California. In eleven months of this program I do not remember this event. But, I get my life together: I fall in love; get and remain married, have a son; finish Acupuncture College; work for twenty five years with chemical dependency programs; with HIV and AIDS programs; with a SART [Sexual Assault Response Team]. Thirty years after getting out of Menlo Park; I get laid off. I have no place to put my guilt; no place to make a difference, no place to help others and myself; no way to balance my Karma. I begin to remember the girl; to once again cry uncontrollably. I go back to the VA because I have lost my medical insurance. I ask for help. The VA therapist says, "Close your eyes and talk about it," again and again and again.

Epilogue: In a sense, my therapist recruited me to speak today. Unlike a recruiter, I will not lie to you. This is hard work. Perhaps the hardest emotional work you will ever do. But, it is healing work. Whatever brought you to this meeting; to hear us speak our pain and our healing; for you to carry this without help is harder work, and, destructive.



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY, THE GUN LINE OFF COAST OF VIETNAM WITH THE 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. 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". FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM.

New Documentary on Vietnam Seeks Funders

Long after that last helicopter lifted off from the American Embassy in Saigon, uncommon Vietnam vets have quietly returned to their former battlegrounds to clear unexploded ordnance, work with victims of Agent Orange, and build schools and orphanages. *Same Same But Different*, by filmmakers Deryle Perryman and Moises Gonzalez, tells their stories.

Among them:

- Chuck Searcy runs PROJECT RENEW, an ordnance clearing project that has literally saved thousands of lives and limbs.
- Suel Jones worked many years for the Friendship Village,

an organization that takes care of Agent Orange victims

- Chuck Palazzo advocates for Agent Orange victims.

- Deryle Perryman himself is determined to open a school in the Central Highlands where he was stationed during the war.

To make the film, Deryle and Moises traveled to Vietnam in 2008 and 2010 to record oral histories and document the Lunar New Year Celebration and the 40th Anniversary of the 1968 Tet Offensive. From Saigon to the Central Highlands, they visited fire bases and outposts where Deryle had served as a 20-year-old Army Sergeant in Tet 1968.

In Dak To, Pleiku and Kontum they interviewed Americans on their own war pilgrimages. In Nha Trang they interviewed a former North Vietnamese General who later invited them to a traditional Tet dinner.

As well, the film makers have collected oral histories, archival footage and hours of original music pertaining to the war for years now.

A trip to Massachusetts yielded six interviews with combat veterans. At the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at UMass Boston they studied various war photos. These included the Gloria

Emerson Collection of Vietnam War Photographs (Emerson won the Polk Award for her *New York Times* war coverage, and her book, *Winners and Losers* won the National Book Award), footage shot by the North Vietnamese, and 12,000 photographs by war photojournalist Francois Sully.

The film makers are hoping to raise funds to complete the project and bring it to a wide audience. To help Deryle and Moises visit: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/320072119/same-same-but-different>.



Post Traumatic Stress Dis-washing

CLIFF E ADAMS

Let's see, 2012 minus 1969 equals 43. Forty-three years since I returned un(visibly)scathed from Vietnam. What could I have to complain about? I wasn't dead, no complaints about that, as if I could complain if I was dead, which makes any double entendre intended. Hey, I wasn't wounded and didn't see much dead and dying (that I remember) so why should I have good ol' PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

Today is January 1 - New Year's Day 2012. My resolutions, which are not entirely related to the New Year, are in full force. For the past few years I've consistently made a resolution to follow Michael Pollan's advice concerning diet, "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants" - this should be proof my resolutions being in full force and this happening to be the first day of the last year of time (according to the Mayans) is

a pure coincidence.

Regardless, I'm deep into Isa Chandra Moskowitz's "Vegan with a Vengeance" cookbook and I've just finished a killer homemade Vegetable Soup Base. I'm letting it cool before stashing in the refrigerator. Tomorrow I'll use it to complete the French Lentil Soup with Tarragon and Thyme recipe. Isa promises, "This is the last lentil soup recipe you will ever need." Talk about good Feng Shui - it's the first day of the last year of time, and I'm making lentil soup for the first time from the last recipe I'll ever need - and it has thyme in it! Can't beat that!

Anyway, it's early evening, the broth is complete, now I'll just wash the dishes to beckon my kitchen's good Feng Shui to return and I'll retire for the evening. Just need to go check on my elderly parents who I'm looking after, probably spend some time

playing our nightly series of little card games then turn in, it'll be an early night. OK, I'm at the sink, almost finished washing the last of the dishes.

FLASH - instant darkness!

Here is the report (unabridged) of the mental scenarios charging into, looking around, and doing a little dance in my head during then the 4 or 5 seconds (approximate) it takes my brain's frontal orbital cortex to evaluate, unravel, solve, and resolve the reason or reasons for the room's sudden plunge into darkness:

First - It's a global attack! Maybe nuclear! No - No - too quiet! 2012?! Time ending?! No - I'd feel it! Local power outage?! No - neighbors lights are still on! What the hell is it?! A lone attacker! Someone's pulled plug on my power meter behind the trailer! They'll be coming in! Which way?! Watch the back door!

Hit the floor! No-No- wait! The standby light in the CD is still on! I've still got some power! And the bedroom light's still on! OK take a breath - no attack - probably tripped the breaker. Hold it! There's only one breaker! Stuff's still on! Can't be the breaker! What the hell?! Aliens?! A paranormal event?! Whoa! Whoa! Slow down! Probably blew a light bulb. Go back over to the sink - check it out. What happened? Ah Ha! A large water glass on the edge in the dish drainer tipped over! It hit the rocker arm of light switch and turned off the dam light! Move the glass, flip the switch - Bingo! Light's back on! Everything's back to normal. All "AOK" and normal. It is normal isn't it, to think this way?



CLIFF E ADAMS WAS IN THE USMC 1968-69. "SUGARBEAR" IN COUNTRY FROM 7/68 - 7/69.



New Book Will Recount Operation POW

ELISE LEMIRE

I am looking for members and supporters of VVAW who participated in Operation POW on Memorial Day weekend in 1971.

Organized by VVAW's New England office, Operation POW reversed the route Paul Revere took on his 1775 midnight ride. The veterans and their supporters marched from Concord to Lexington to Bunker Hill, performing guerrilla theater along the way. POW culminated with a rally on Boston Common.

Operation POW is also

the occasion of the largest mass arrest in the Commonwealth's history. Citing a local ordinance forbidding people on the Battle Green after 10 PM, the Lexington selectmen obtained an injunction and had over 400 veterans and civilian supporters arrested for attempting to bivouac. The press took notice. For three straight days, Operation POW was front-page news in New England.

Battle Green, Vietnam: The 1971 March on Concord and Lexington will recount the events

of that Memorial Day weekend.

I am not a veteran but I was a young child living in the Lexington-Concord area when Operation POW took place. Several family friends were arrested that weekend in solidarity with the veterans.

I can be contacted at Elise. Lemire@Purchase.Edu. For information about my previous work, you can go to www.BlackWalden.com.

ELISE LEMIRE IS DORIS AND CARL KEMPNER DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE AT PURCHASE COLLEGE, SUNY. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK WALDEN: SLAVERY AND ITS AFTERMATH IN CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS" (2009) AND "MISCEGENATION: MAKING RACE IN AMERICA" (2002), BOTH PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS.



The Pledge of Resistance Could Change the Game Against a War with Iran

ROBERT NAIMAN

If you sometimes find yourself at a bit of a loss of what to make of the on-again, off-again drumbeat for war with Iran, you should at least have the consolation that you're in good company. Close students of US and Israeli policy who oppose war have expressed divergent views about how great the threat of war is, especially in the shorter run. (There is much less divergence about the long-term prospects: if there is no progress on the diplomatic front, the weight of expert opinion is that the long-term prognosis is very bad, from the point of view of avoiding war.)

The problem of accurately perceiving the danger is complicated by the multiple motivations of those currently beating the war drums. Clearly, among other things, the war drums are a political gambit to attack President Obama and elect Romney. The war drums are also a channel-changer from the continued dispossession of the Palestinians and the political shifts in the Middle East brought about by the Arab Spring. At the same time, the war drums are part of a campaign to constrict political space for a diplomatic resolution with Iran, thereby making war with Iran more likely in the future.

The lack of urgency resulting from this murky picture presents a dilemma for anti-war activists. If people were convinced that there were a 90% chance of war in the next three months, if the White House were leading a crusade for war, many people would be in the streets.

But that is not the situation we are in. Our situation is more akin to what one analyst described as a "slow-motion Cuban missile crisis." We are on a path to war with Iran, but we are not on a quick path to war with Iran. We are on a slow path to war with Iran.

If the path is slow, there is a natural tendency to focus elsewhere. There's a lot going on in the world. People are being killed by the war in Afghanistan. Palestinians are on hunger strike against administrative detention. Honduran journalists are being murdered. Colombian trade unionists are being killed. These things are happening right now.

By inaction on the threat of war with Iran, people are effectively saying: "so we're on a slow path? Give me a call when

we're on a fast path. I have other demands on my time."

The problem with this is that by the time we are on a fast path to war, our political leverage to stop the war will be very small - much smaller than it is today.

Millions of people around the world marched on the eve of the Iraq war. When the war happened anyway, some people said: we marched and the war happened anyway. Therefore, protest doesn't change anything.

That was drawing the wrong lesson. What happened didn't prove that protest can't stop a war; what happened was evidence that protests that come too late might not stop a war. Mass protests would likely have had a much bigger impact a few months earlier - especially, if they had occurred before Democrats in Congress handed over authority to President Bush to wage war.

And if the last ten years of war should have taught us anything, they should have taught us that starting a war is like getting on the expressway. If it turns out to be a "mistake," it's far from clear when we'll practically be able to change course. After the September 11 attacks, Congress approved war in Afghanistan with no dissent in the Senate and one dissent in the House. If Congress could have a do-over now, do you think that there might be a little more dissent? So, when we think about the killing in Afghanistan, we should think about what more we could do to stop it. But we should also acknowledge how hard it is to stop, and therefore, that we should redouble our efforts to stop the next war before it starts.

To the extent that it's true that some people appear to want to be told that we're on a fast path in order to get them to move, that creates an incentive for people concerned about the danger of war to play up evidence that we're on a fast path.

But of course, that also carries a danger. If we are perceived to "cry wolf," that will make it harder to mobilize people in the future. It's like sprinting in the middle of a marathon. You may get a nice adrenalin rush, but in the long run, it's going to compromise your ability to win the race. The proponents of war are playing a long game. The opponents of war must play a long game too.

And that means something that some people don't want to hear. It means that we need more people to engage politically, to lobby, call, and write members of Congress and their staff, to agitate with the Administration for a realistic diplomatic engagement with Iran to produce agreements that will reduce tensions, to agitate in the news media and the blogosphere for real diplomatic engagement with Iran to produce agreements that will reduce tensions. Look what the "Israel lobby" is doing: it's agitating inside the institutions to constrict the political space for any long-term outcome besides war. If we want to beat the Israel lobby, we have to meet them on the same turf, to open the political space for other outcomes besides war.

Unfortunately, this is the kind of "long march through the institutions," as Herbert Marcuse put it, that much of the "traditional anti-war left" doesn't have much experience or interest in organizing. It doesn't sell the party newspaper, advance the party's political line, or recruit more dues-paying members to the party. Much of the "traditional anti-war left" wants to organize demonstrations. But unless demonstrations lead to more engagement in the political process, they might not do much to help us stop the next war.

This is why I am hopeful about the potential of the new Iran Pledge of Resistance - www.iranpledge.org. The Pledge of Resistance has the potential to help create a real movement that can stop the next war; a movement that can go toe-to-toe with the Israel lobby for influence in Congress, the Administration, and the news media.

One of the reasons that I am hopeful about the new Pledge of Resistance is that I know some of the people involved in organizing it. These are people who "stand in the gap" between Washington peace advocacy and grassroots peace advocacy. If you want to know why the "Israel lobby" is so effective, one of the reasons is that there is essentially zero gap between their Washington advocacy and their grassroots advocacy. It's a highly disciplined operation. If you want to know what AIPAC activists in Chicago are pushing on the Chicago

Congressional delegation, you just have to look at the national AIPAC web page.

Regardless of what one might desire, this highly disciplined model probably isn't on offer for the anti-war movement, at least in the short run. Anything that carries out the functions of a "movement," including making sure that grassroots efforts back up strategic Washington efforts, is going to require more negotiation, more meetings, more conference calls, at least until reinforcements from the bigger institutional players arrive. Therefore, people who "stand in the gap" - who have trust relationships with Washington people and with grassroots people - are going to be really important.

The second reason I am hopeful is that I'm old enough - and have been engaged long enough - to remember the model, the "Pledge of Resistance" against Reagan's war in Central America, and how effective it was in drawing people into political engagement, including me, at the age of eighteen. It was organized around the idea of civil disobedience, but a lot of the practical activity was lobbying, letter-writing, passing leaflets, organizing talks, showing films. It may seem quite counter intuitive that a way to draw some people into politics is to talk to them about civil disobedience. There's a traditional view that runs the opposite way: you start to get people engaged by talking about the least militant tactic - a vigil, perhaps - and that's the "gateway drug" that can lead to further political engagement.

But sometimes it works the other way. You have a bunch of people that are pretty alienated from traditional politics, and perceive Congress and the government generally as pretty unresponsive to their interests and values, and they don't want to hear about lobbying. But getting arrested to stop a war - that they might do. So, maybe some people need a different "gateway drug" to bring them into political engagement. To stop a war, it's worth a try.



ROBERT NAIMAN IS THE POLICY DIRECTOR AT JUST FOREIGN POLICY.

Overlooked / Looked Over

PHOTOS BY BARRY ROMO

On March 10, 2012, the National Veterans Art Museum in Chicago opened an exhibit featuring art by eight women veterans called *Overlooked / Looked Over*. This exhibit shines a light on the unique experiences of women during service, in war, and as veterans.

Mae West, the late American actress and sex symbol, once said,

"I'd rather be looked over than overlooked." With *Overlooked / Looked Over*, curator Erica Slone responds to this false dichotomy of attitudes about women and the way these polar attitudes toward women are exacerbated within our armed forces.

The show's opening reception was timed to coincide

with the centenary anniversary of International Women's Day. Annually on March 8, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate achievements. All around the world, women are connected by activities ranging from business conferences and networking events to local

women's craft markets and theatrical performances. Hundreds of guests enjoyed the opening, with artist and curator talks and a musical performance.

Support the National Veterans Art Museum by going to www.nvam.org and clicking on the "Make a Donation" button.



Iraq vet Robyn Murray





Sketch by Paul Cameron, 69-70.

Memories Lost

How can I not remember now just when or where we were,
 The names of valleys, viles, or of a fiercely fighting foe,
 When down we swooped on bending, beating blades
 To board the bloody bodies of young men I'd never know?
 Or names of upturned eyes in dirty sunburned faces
 Whose hands aloft did pass me precious friends,
 Winding chestdeep through the rolling seas of grasses
 To bid adeu to buddies they might never see again.
 The blur of years still freeze those frantic seconds
 Till we climbed alast aloft on dusty humid hazes.
 I'd fire at shrinking treelines at winking angry shadows
 Then watch the sweating faces of the grunts around their gazes.
 I'd see the silent questions they would never ask aloud
 "Will they now live or will they lose this final fight?
 "Will I, too, join them on some future medivac,
 "Or suffer here the months ahead, this hell my only sight?"
 I still kneel nights o'r bloody tattered greens,
 The squirting, bubbling flows I fight to stem,
 Or hold a head, a hand, while bloody bandage pressing,
 While confidently smiling and hiding tears from them.
 Those countless staring eyes I still touch and gently close,
 I still see bloody shreads where once an arm had been,
 A rolling boot reminds me it was once upon a leg,
 I still am writing words I mailed to wives or to a friend.
 I remember gutsy boys who clung too long to living
 When lesser men might choose to simply die;
 Their lives unlived, their girls unloved -- in triage,
 Were set aside to die, but did not cry.
 How many deadly darting dives

To frame and flame those angry little men
 Who fought and fled to kill or die
 As I, to live, did kill again.
 With rockets spent and barrels warm
 We'd often get that urgent call
 To follow smoke to battle ground
 To lift out wounded, dying all.
 Then pale in face and dry of tongue
 We downward skimmed and flared to slow
 To pause exposed our ship to load
 The seconds dragged till time to go.
 Our humor flowed, relief to share
 When high we leveled free from harm.
 Our wit and common pain would soar
 To match our joy and mask alarm.
 Yet as the years compound the time
 Since we flew on a jungle sweep
 My misbelieving mind plays tricks
 Rekindling dread, disturbs my sleep.
 The wind in teasing grass and limbs
 And sounds of choppers dry my throat,
 A popping, crackling stops my heart
 And garbage bags say bodies bloat.
 The faces, places linger on in vivid live review,
 Events and scenes rekindle all my grief and endless pain.
 Although I see them bleeding and dying to this day,
 I can't to endless places or to faces put a name.

—*Andy K. Williams*

Blood on the Tracks

ED NIZALOWSKI

For any male coming out of high school in the 1960's, the Vietnam War became a dominating imperative that could not be side-stepped. The rudimentary process of registering for the draft became an increasingly nerve-wracking rite of passage as the war began to escalate, first with troop deployments followed in short order by body bags. Patriotic fervor and duty often became resignation and despair as the war seemed to have no end. The psychological state of the country worsened as criticism went from academic teach-ins and mass demonstrations to civil disobedience and sporadic violence.

One person who "covered the water front" in this regard was S. Brian Willson, who spoke at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca on Thursday, November 10th, 2011. Seeing him step onto the stage gave me chills. Although six years older, at age 70, I looked at him as I examine myself and my actions from that time period. We both have graying hair, but his body is much less complete than mine having a pair of prosthetic limbs, limbs that were not lost during the war but as a consequence of it. Willson had come to relate his journey of life as exemplified in his recently published book *Blood on the Tracks*.

Willson was born in Geneva, New York, but moved to western New York and graduated from

Chautauqua High School in 1959. After undergraduate work he entered law school and became, in his own words, "just another small town young man hoping to live the American dream." His draft notice came in 1966. He believed that the war was just, but he had no desire to actually be placed in a position to directly annihilate the communist threat. Consequently, he joined the Air Force and had a comfortable position in Washington, DC.

This would change in 1968 when he was ordered to take Ranger training and was sent to Vietnam. He became commander of a special Combat Security Police Unit at the Binh Thuy Air Base. At some point he received orders to examine and report on the effectiveness of napalm bombing raids on three supposed Viet Cong villages. What he witnessed shocked him and became a trans-formative experience for him. These were not Viet Cong villages, but homes to simple people who made their living primarily from taking fish from the river. A majority of the dead were women and children. One body especially stirred his compassion. It was a woman clutching her three children with her eyes staring blankly into space, her eyelids burned off by napalm. He felt he was gazing upon the face of his sister.

Willson left the service and became active in the anti-war

movement. His commitment to peaceful solutions for US foreign policy led him to become active in the campaign in the mid-1980's to stop the flow of arms to the Contras who were resisting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. This led him to the Concord Naval Weapons Station in San Francisco where munitions left the station by train bound for various groups in Central America.

Willson and two of his friends planned to sit on the tracks. They knew they would be breaking the law and expected to do jail time. What Willson and his friends did not know was that Willson had been labeled a "terrorist" and that the engineers were told to expect a hijacking. Not only did the train not stop, it actually sped up. Willson's two friends jumped out of the way. Two weeks later Willson woke in a hospital room having sustained nineteen injuries including the loss of both legs and a hole in his skull the size of a lemon.

That Willson survived the accident was miraculous and that he can still function in daily life is a miracle beyond comprehension. And this incredibly traumatic experience has not kept him from departing from the epiphany he had after seeing hundreds of innocents murdered senselessly by American firepower. His mantra became "We are not worth more. They are not worth less."

Just as the Vietnam War

technically ended in 1975, the turmoil, contradictions and chaos of that era are permanent parts of my life. The name of one of my classmates is on the Vietnam Memorial. I have numerous other classmates and friends who willingly served or who decided not to escape their "duty." I was very fortunate. I was able to keep my student deferment from 1965 to 1970 and managed to bag a high number in the lottery. I was able to avoid compromising my principles. I didn't have to wrestle with the consequences of going to jail or going to Canada, but there is a guilt that my karma didn't include going into a pointless, devastating war started by a lie (the Gulf of Tonkin incident) when so many of my peers were not that fortunate.

Route 38 has been designated as the "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway." I'm glad this was done, but in the spirit of honoring the warrior and not the war, how many Vietnam veterans saw things similar to Willson and shrugged it off as what happens in war or simply buried it somewhere in the recesses of memory hoping that time would heal both the physical and psychic wounds. But the poison of our presence in Southeast Asia has gone both ways. Our effort to eliminate sanctuary for enemy forces with Agent Orange resulted in many of our troops having severe health problems and their children with numerous birth defects. For the Vietnamese some 400,000 died from exposure with a half million children with birth defects.

We have a Memorial Wall for the 58,000 American troops who died or were killed in conflict, but will we ever have a memorial to those who have died by their own hand or from accidents or other illnesses? Many estimate that this number surpasses the 58,000 mark. Can we hope that someday there will be a park or natural area in honor of the Willson's, the Berrigan's and all the others who made an effort to point our foreign policy and our nation's moral compass in a different direction?



ED NIZALOWSKI IS A RESIDENT OF NEWARK VALLEY, NY. HE IS A GRADUATE OF SUC POTSDAM AND SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY. HE WAS THE LIBRARIAN AT THE NEWARK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL FROM 1985 TO 2010 (NOW RETIRED).



Sketch by Paul Cameron, 69-70.

AK-47

JOSEPH GIANNINI

Senator Bob Kerry's admission that he was involved in an incident in Vietnam that caused the death of unarmed civilians reminds me of several times when I was on the edge.

In March 1968 I'm in my 9th month of a 13 month tour, leading a platoon of salty Marines, Delta One, Delta Company. Mad Dog, the Company Commander, gave me this platoon to straighten them out. I've had them about a week. So far they remain rebellious and undisciplined. We are moving in a V formation through knee-deep rice paddies, one squad up two back. I'm behind the point squad with my RO, (Radio Operator). Under a gray sky we lean into a hard Monsoon rain. We're soaked to the bone, tired, miserable. We trudge on through the muddy water. I climb on top of a paddy dike. Then step off on to hard object. I freeze. A mine! Fuck.

I yell back to my RO, "I'm standing on a mine. Tell the

platoon to spread out, take cover and face out board." Backing away he radios my orders. Suddenly I'm standing alone in the cold rain, on the edge, facing death or worse. I take a deep breath and carefully look around for anything to replace my weight on the mine. Fuck. I see nothing but mud and water. Slowly I squat, careful not to move my right foot. I'm fucked and about to meet the Big Kahuna. My only chance a slim one, to dash and dive. I reach down with my right hand into the muddy water. I want to see how big the mine is. I feel metal under my foot. It's a big mine. Wait. No it's not a mine. It's a weapon, an AK. It could be booby-trapped. But that doesn't make sense. It must be a discarded weapon. The owner dead or severely wounded - or maybe nearby. I slowly slide my foot off the weapon. Into the sound of hard rain, I say "Thank you Kahuna."

I pull the weapon from the muck and hold it above my head.

I've heard the AK is reliable. Unlike the M-16 it never jams. I put the weapon on full automatic and pull the trigger. A burst of automatic fire rattles out. Damn that was fucking stupid. But I'm sold. This is now my weapon of choice. I yell back to my radio operator, "Tell the squads, all clear. Saddle up and move out."

We move on in the unrelenting rain. I haven't seen the sun or stars for twenty days. I never realized Nam could be this cold. A Marine up ahead slips and goes down on his side. He attempts to rise but falls again. Now almost completely covered in mud he rises again and falls again. I start to laugh. I still can laugh. A bit of humanity remains. Pointing at the fallen Marine I ask my RTO "Who is that stupid bastard?" He responds, "Lieutenant, that's Platoon Sergeant Scott." Fuck, he's right. Sergeant Scott finally gets to his feet.

We slog on. Suddenly my

First Squad leader yells back, "We've got a prisoner" I move up to take a look. An NVA (North Vietnam Army) trooper is half lying in the corner of the paddy, just below the dikes under a makeshift lean-to. Blood is soaking through his utility shirt, seeping into the muddy water. He has a stomach wound. He is probably the owner of the AK. I point it at his head. I'll kill him with his own weapon. He would do the same. I'll show Delta One what a crazy bastard I am. Get their attention. The trooper looks at me. Weakly extends his right hand. I lower the AK. I'll do something worse. Leave him. Let him slowly bleed to death. "Fuck him. Take the lean to down. Get ready to move out." I wait a few moments then shout, "Move out."



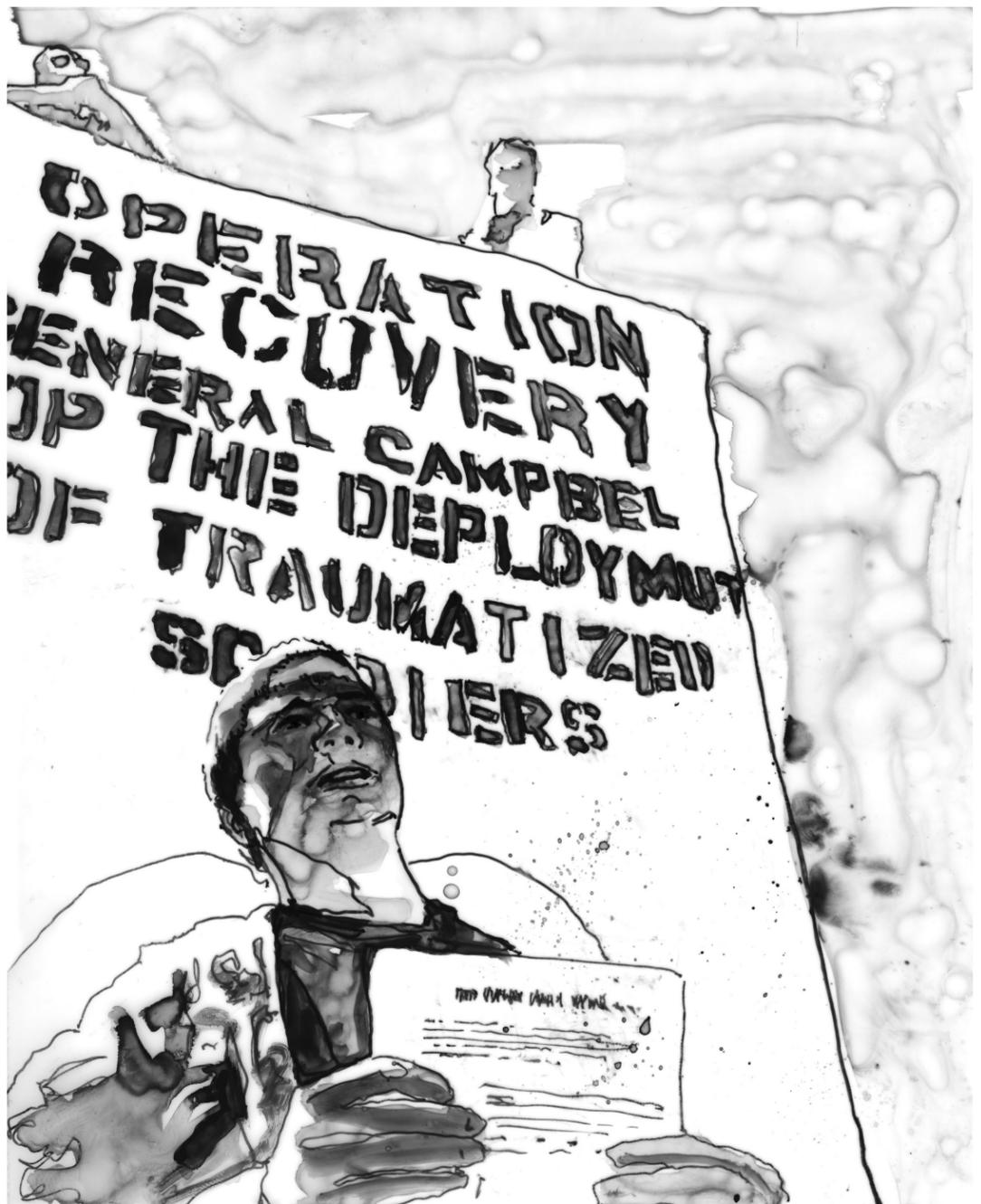
JOSEPH GIANNINI IS A FORMER MARINE GRUNT WHO FOUGHT IN 'NAM 1967-68 WITH THE 1ST BATTALION, 3RD MARINES.

Forty-Three Years and Counting

Invitations declined,
alone by choice
Christmas eve,
fiber optic tree twinkling
green yellow red blue,
indulging in Cabernet Sauvignon
and Double Black Scotch,
watching DVD,
the History Channel's
Vietnam in HD.
Disc Two: An Endless War,
1968-1969, my time,
year of escalation,
dead bodies twisted and strewn
like discarded wrapping paper,
blood spilled far and near,
my own a part of the sacrifice.
Read poem today
about how an injured animal
will isolate itself, finding quiet place
to lick its wounds
before rejoining the pack.
Poem didn't say
how long.

—Paul Hellweg

Acknowledgment: Inspired by Angie Thompson's poem, "Here We Stand Glorious, Emerged From The Den."



Memorial Day Weekend 2011 Killeen, TX - Fort Hood veteran and conscientious objector Kyle Wesolowski reads a letter to General Campbell at the Operation Recovery guard tower, erected to put General Campbell on watch for the deployment of traumatized troops and demand service members' and veterans' right to heal. IVAW members stood watch throughout Memorial Day weekend to ensure that General Campbell knew he would be held accountable for the abuse of service members.

Stand To

Stand to, but whispered, stand to	the mist as thick as batter.
When every sense was brought to bear	Stand down. Fatigue that few have ever known
We stretched to know the morning's air	weariness of every bone
Adrenaline...beyond beware...	the single thought...to make it home
Nerves not strong were shattered	the luxury of water!
Stand to. Selector switch caressed like braille	Stand down. The mud that kept mosquitoes off
each tick of time a separate tale. We willed	the blessed ground that's almost soft
the dawn to no avail; and nothing, nothing mattered	the drone of casper high aloft
Stand to. When in the silence breathing's loud	no doubt which side I'd rather.
cursing exhalations cloud; should war erupt	Stand down. Squad by squad we're dusted off
would dad be proud? Will I survive the latter?	back to beds with pillows soft
Stand to. Altho the curse of morning's rain	a chance to grieve the ones we'd lost
when every sense is stretched and strained	and trounce the whores who flatter.
the clicker of the sentry's plain...	
Or was that Charlie's clacker?	Stand down again stand down.
Stand to. For all of those who've left us now	Bring solace to each other
It's we who show the others how	Take an honest look around
the subtleties of surviving now	and see where each of us is bound.
that's all that really matters.	Let not our lot be six feet down
	I'm begging you my brother.
Stand Down	
We opened "c's" so quietly	Stand Round
while digging foxholes frantically	We've come too far
and saddled up the nights O.P.s	to die in vain, despite our anguish
The silence growing fatter.	and our pain
Stand down. Weary from the mountain climb	Count not your loss; instead your gain
the commo check go's down the line;	and doubt and fear will scatter.
a letter read a final time	

— Rick Harrienger



*A South Vietnamese jungle after Agent Orange.
Photo reprinted from the Fall 1978 issue of The Veteran.*

The War At Home

NICK MEDVECKY

We all have stories of suffering abuse for our political commitments. One of mine was going to visit my Uncle Jack who was the Commander of a VFW Post in Florida. Uncle Jack was a 22 plus year veteran of the Navy, a Senior Chief Petty Officer, who died from Agent Orange exposure not many years after his retirement. When I went to the VFW Post to visit him, he wasn't in yet. I expressed my desire to wait and ordered a beer. Asked for my membership, I produced my VVAW card, as different organizations usually honor other groups. I was refused service and told, "We don't recognize you guys; members here performed honorable service." I left. While I hold no animosity, I never make the mistake of confusing politics and service.

I'm a Vietnam-era vet member of VVAW. My own service was in the 101st Airborne at Ft. Campbell, KY, from 1959 thru 1961. The division commander was William C. Westmoreland. Even then, American servicemen were dying in Vietnam. We all know The Wall Memorial in Washington DC journeys from 1959 thru 1975.

I was an anti-war vet before VVAW was formed and I was the Chairman of the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam. One of the significant programs we initiated was to send letters

of support along with anti-war literature (who we are and why we oppose the war) to GIs in Vietnam. We perceived the need at the time to educate the anti-war movement on the clear differences between the war and the warrior, and the need to communicate that reality to our comrades in Vietnam and returning veterans. That program was eminently successful.

In early 1967, Vietnam vet Carl Campbell and I founded the Veterans Against the War (VAW) in Detroit. On April the 15th, 1967, we traveled to New York City to march with some 600,000 protestors from Sheep Meadow in Central Park to the UN Plaza. Among the notables at the front of that mass demonstration was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Behind Dr. King were military veterans led by six Vietnam veterans carrying their own sign, Vietnam Veterans Against the War. That event marked the first time that Dr. King had joined civil rights to the anti-war movement. It was also the first occasion of Vietnam vets formally joining the movement in their own name.

By June 1st, 1967, Jan Barry Crumb and several other Vietnam vets from that April protest met to create VVAW.

Meanwhile, back in Detroit, we came to the conclusion that future mass movement demonstrations would be best served if



Drs. Benjamin Spock and King leading April 15th, 1967 anti-war march.

they were led on point by Vietnam veterans. On July 20th, 1967, I traveled to the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago and met with some other vet leaders from around the nation. We discussed a national strategy to engage Vietnam vets to protest the war. The rest is history.

As it turned out, on July 22nd I got a call from Detroit to return home immediately as mass rebellion (the so-called Detroit riots) had broken out. As the 45-minute flight circled over Metro-Wayne Airport, we could all see massive columns of smoke rising straight into the hot July air and hitting a temp-inverse layer at about 5,000

feet, forming a cathedral-like ceiling over the city.



JUNE I'LL BE 70. RAISED IN NY. 101ST AIRBORNE 1959-61. CIVIL RIGHTS, ANTIWAR AND HUMAN RIGHTS 1961-PRESENT. BS IN PSYCH WSU, DETROIT; DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY (PSYD) CALIFORNIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY. PRIVATE PILOT. JOURNALISM AND CRIMINAL DEFENSE INVESTIGATIONS 1969-89 (BEIRUT 1969-71). CHAIN-GANG TN 1964-65. FEDERAL PRISON 1989-2011. CURRENT: RETIRED/ BLOGGER AT AMERICANTRIBUNE.ORG.



On Veterans Day, November 11th, 1978, members of VVAW joined with vets from city colleges in New York City to demonstrate that vets need something more than a day, a parade, or some pious words from politicians; tired of being used once and then thrown aside, New York City vets demand testing and treatment for the effects of Agent Orange.

A Berkeley Confrontation

continued from page 36

"That's a bunch of bullshit. How can you believe such left-wing crap?"

"Much of that information comes from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings Senator Fulbright held beginning in February 1966. What's left-wing about that, Lavery?" Jerry quipped.

After a moment of silence to consider, I asked, "Do you have a copy I can read?" "Sure. I'll grab it off the shelf." The report was two inches thick contained in a bound book with a cover featuring Senator Fulbright questioning Dean Rusk.

They had me on the defensive when I confused the Viet Minh and Viet Cong with the North Vietnamese regulars, and parroted Eisenhower's domino theory. Jerry continued, "Johnson used that theory to justify invading Vietnam to stop communist expansion in South East Asia. He claimed if we didn't invade South Vietnam, all the neighboring countries would

come under communist rule from Russia and China. Most scholars disagree because the Chinese are their traditional enemies. Berkeley has good book stores with the history of Vietnam. Check them out."

"Yeah, but I see posters in their windows saying, "Get out of Vietnam, Now." You must know they're full of radical propaganda."

"You don't think the military feeds the troops propaganda?"

"I read what I trust and I've always gotten plenty of information from the Navy, Newsweek, and CBS. I've never heard anyone call that propaganda."

As I read the sources these students suggested, gradually I began to recognize much of the information our government fed the public was propaganda. In my sheltered and controlled military existence, I had let my purpose in life drift far from those values that had almost led me into the ministry. I began to consider for the first time that the peace marchers might be right. They were not



Dan entering RA5C Sanford Florida, 1965.

wild-eyed radicals bent on tearing down America. After three months, I joined VVAW and Vets for Peace before my ship departed with fifty books from Berkeley, a beacon from a lighthouse that kept me from sinking and enlightened my path.



DANIEL CRIM LAVERY: 1964 NAVAL ACADEMY GRADUATE, PHOTO-RECON NAVIGATOR IN THE RA5C, NAVIGATED USS OAKHILL (LSD-7) TO VIETNAM, BECAME OPPOSED TO THE WAR, JOINED VVAW, GRADUATED HASTINGS COLLEGE OF LAW, BECAME ACLU CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW, 34 YEARS PRIVATE CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY, WRITER OF MEMOIR, POETRY, AND SHORT STORY.



Dan at Peace Rally in San Francisco.

Wounded

I lost much blood,
but I had enough left
to be afraid of death.
After all,
I was only 23-years-old
and a virgin
in both
love and life,
and I really wasn't
all that experienced
in killing
and dying,
so when the medic
slipped a morphine syrette
into my thigh,
I was naive enough
to think
all was well, and
would be forever.

—Paul Hellweg

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 Berkeley Confrontation Over Vietnam

DANIEL CRIM LAVERY

In 1966 I drove from San Francisco to Berkeley for softball with Jerry, a high school friend and third year law student in Berkeley, a city with radical politics, the Free Speech Movement, and anti-Vietnam War protests. After the game, he invited us to his apartment where I noticed bookshelves of literature, history, politics, philosophy, law, and more. His friends were graduate students in Law, English, Comparative Lit., and History. I tried not to feel intimidated by the academic achievement surrounding me. I needed to inform Jerry of a crucial decision I had made and blurted out, "I turned in my wings and transferred from flying in jets a few months before the Navy assigned me navigator of my ship. So did my pilot."

"Why did you do that?"

"I heard pilots say at the officer club, 'Here comes the pilots and there are the bombardiers. The ones that fly are men, and the others are queers.'"

"What else?"

"Our ready room instructor referred to navigators as 'dipshits' even though some navigators died in the RA5C nicknamed, 'The Flying Coffin.'"

"Nice."

"The heaviest jet to land on carriers, it had the most losses in Vietnam, and the worst safety record with maintenance problems."

"Those are damn good reasons."

"I cheated death by transferring. The North Vietnamese shot down the crew who replaced me. They didn't recover the navigator. His pilot remains a prisoner in Hanoi."

"Sounds like the smartest thing you ever did."

When I said I was about to navigate 300 Marines to Vietnam, the mellow mood shifted. "Why the fuck are we in Vietnam?" Jerry spat out.

"To stop communist aggression into a country that needs us," I offered. Unexpected laughter greeted this simplistic explanation.

"Where did you learn that?" A tall bearded law student asked.

"Naval Academy classes in Far East History and counter-insurgency, the Coronado Naval Base courses, and Defense Department articles."

The History grad-student asked, "Don't you remember Dien Bien Phu?"

"Refresh me?"

"The French colonial army lost the civil war to the Vietminh. The seventeenth parallel separated North and South Vietnam at the Geneva Conference with an agreement that free elections would take place in two years. One dictator after another ruled the South, they held no elections, and we backed them ever since."

"So you don't think the Viet Cong are terrorists?"

"The Viet Cong are fighting a civil war against the unpopular regime. Ho Chi Minh assists with supplies and his army."

His explanations calmly shredded my comment. Still, I felt compelled to defend our position from my background, the third Naval Academy graduate in my family, but it seemed I could not counter their logical, historical, and humanitarian arguments. "After our ships were attacked by torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin, Congress authorized President Johnson to respond by an executive order to repel aggression," I added.

"No. That was a false report. Our ships were not attacked on August 4, 1964 in Tonkin, but Johnson used the Congressional resolution to launch an illegal

war." Jerry added, "He never sought a declaration of war from Congress. Two nights before the claimed unprovoked torpedo attack, our airplanes and CIA fast boats initiated the hostilities bombarding the North Vietnamese coastline and islands."

My anger grew. I knew friends in Vietnam. Some had died there. I controlled myself, and asked, "Where did you get that information?" Jerry admitted, "We attended a teach-in by Norman Mailer who demonstrated the lack of international support for Johnson's war, the false basis for it, and hideous civilian casualties from a genocidal air war."

The history student added, "An expert described the horrible burns from napalm and said our anti-personnel bombs sent millions of razor-sharp 'fletchets' spinning to the ground slicing up any living thing in an area the size of a football field." They characterized B-52s carpet-bombing large swaths of landscape with penetrating heavy bombs as a "War crime under Geneva and other human rights conventions."

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Our Afghan Fighting Position

