



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Get Out and Vote: Demonstrate Our People Power

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

When we were younger, it was all or nothing for Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). We had to end the Vietnam War and bring our brothers home. In the context of a national anti-war movement, which was inspired by, and sometimes part of, the civil rights struggle, we learned that there was, in fact, a worldwide anti-war movement fighting against imperialism. In our early work for social justice, we learned to embrace those whom our "masters" called our "enemies" – first the Vietnamese, then African Americans, Soviets, Cubans, Nicaraguans, et al. We also embraced many of the

lessons from their struggles.

Leaders like Ho Chi Minh knew that their struggle would not end with the war. The beast of imperialism does not go away so easily. And our need to organize for our brothers and sisters did not end when the war did. But the times ARE different – it's not just some cheesy saying. There was a movement then. Hundreds of thousands of people were organizing, in every way possible. VVAW members studied and learned from the pioneers of the Civil Rights and Union struggles. We learned how to organize chapters, conduct outreach, recruit new members and come up with strategies and tactics for both advertising our

goals and taking on the enemy.

We recognized that people power was nothing without organization. We also learned that demonstrations were our tactics and strategies to reach our goals (and not the goals themselves). We collaboratively worked as part of the United Front, as we learned from our comrades in Vietnam. They did not win just on the battleground with military strategy. We had B-52s and they had bamboo sticks. They won because they had the political tactics and organizations needed to pull together. The times ARE different. As we saw with the Occupy movement, people power dissipated quickly without organization. A handful

of fractured events and efforts that make good sound bytes, but do not have the support of the people, are not a movement.

We also have learned from our life experiences the unity between organizing and protesting. The Chicago chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) uniting with the Nurses Union to help influence the VA officials and fight for better conditions IS organizing. The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), representing the third largest school system in the US, going on strike AND winning a new contract (after many attempts at negotiating a

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Revisiting Vietnam: Agent Orange/Dioxin Devastation Continues

SUSAN SCHNALL

We are a group of seven scientists and public health professionals brought together by our interest in and concern about the lasting impact of the use of Agent Orange/dioxin sprayed multiple times over south and central Vietnam from 1961-1971. We have spent months, some of us years, reviewing studies and articles.

It is 9:30 pm on June 4th. We are at the end of a 24-hour plane trip, preparing for landing at Hanoi Airport. I can see the lights of the city and, even though this is my third trip back to Vietnam, I feel the nervous excitement of going to north Vietnam on a peaceful mission. In my mind's eye, I can see the news broadcasts of the horrors of battle, the men screaming from pain, filthy with

mud, blood seeping through their bandages, crying while holding a buddy in their arms. And I picture the young girl running along a dirt path, naked, on fire from US napalm. Then I am back in the long, open wards of Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. It is 1967, midnight, on a unit that houses 40 young men who are groaning and mumbling to each other as they make their way through a mine field and their nightmares: "Hey, man, be careful, there's a booby trap, watch it, watch it." Reliving their fear and uncertainty as they crawl on their bellies through the jungle. Every three to four hours, when their pain medication is available, there is a chorus of voices for "nurse, nurse." My heart, my soul wants to soothe them, tell each one of them that



Madame Binh with Susan Schnall.

they will be ok—these young men missing an arm, a leg, their limbs being held aloft by devices that look like butcher hooks. I know even then that their trials are only beginning, that this war will be with them the rest of their lives.

In June, 2012, I am part of a delegation of science and public health professionals affiliated with the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign a project of VVAW and VFP, invited

to Vietnam by the Vietnam Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin. The purpose of our trip is to visit people suffering from illnesses recognized among American veterans to be associated with the spraying and use of AO/dioxin by the US military during the American conflict in Vietnam. We also survey the land that continues to be contaminated by dioxin, threatening illness,

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Get Out and Vote

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fair contract) IS organizing. The power to populate the picket lines, confront VA officials, demand an end to wars, fight for warriors right to heal, comes from organizing and working for concrete goals.

On the other hand, taking over Obama's campaign offices to protest for Bradley Manning's release displacing primarily people of color working to re-elect the first African American president, is not organizing. Burning voter registration cards at Obama's campaign office, when people of color struggled and continue to struggle for their right to vote, is not organizing. These protests at Obama's campaign offices will not get Bradley Manning freed (and yes, we most certainly agree he deserves his freedom) and they send the wrong message. This message says that we don't care about voting, the outcome of the elections, or the fate of millions of people who depend on programs like Medicare and Social Security as financial lifelines. We don't care about uniting with everyone possible in the fight for an end to the Rich Man's Wars, Decent Benefits for Vets, medical care, and jobs

for Veterans.

Take Action and VOTE

The right to vote is arguably the 21st century's civil rights issue. As states like Pennsylvania seek to limit voter turnout through voter ID laws, other states are seeking to limit early voting by reducing the time period in which someone could vote early. The Rich "job creators" were frightened of the high early voting turnout in 2008 and 2010. These restrictions target seniors who could not produce some of the necessary IDs in Pennsylvania, the working class who tend to vote early because it is hard to make it to the polls the day of, and people of color, particularly African Americans, who turned out for early voting on Sundays in "Souls to the Polls."

VVAW is calling on our national membership to get out and vote in the general elections on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. We recognize that you may feel disenfranchised, like your vote doesn't matter. We feel the

same way at times. We may be turned off by the ever-increasing negative ads flying around on TV. We may have some less-than-ideal candidates running against some even greater evils. But when the outcome of the elections means protecting and preserving (or defunding and dismantling) programs – like VA benefits, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – that concretely improve millions of people lives, then we choose to exercise our right to vote in this less-than-ideal situation.

We don't live in a world where we have the luxury to vote only for perfect candidates. The corruption in this system may make us cynics, but we are also realists. Organizing and voting to win some partial, though incomplete, progress takes maturity and life experience. We need to bring our hard-learned lessons home. We are not in our twenties anymore. The average age of a Vietnam vet is 65. We are the ones applying for Social Security and Medicare benefits, the very benefits some candidates running for office want to take away from us, and from our children and grandchildren.

Getting out and voting is

not just important for the US presidential race. The election of Congressional Senators and Representatives is key as well. On September 20, the Veterans Job Core Act of 2012 received more than half the votes of the Senate, but due to it being a procedural vote, it failed to move forward by TWO votes. This Act would have increased hiring and job training for veterans over the next five years, addressing the extremely high unemployment rate amongst veterans.

After November's election, we have four more years to organize to change policies, to fight against wrongs, and to strengthen and improve on the programs that are working. But what we are struggling against those four years depends on the outcome of the elections.

So get out, vote and fight for the right of others to vote on November 6, 2012. Your vote DOES make a difference.



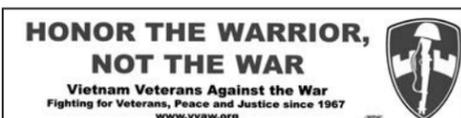
BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

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Changes in VVAW's Military Counseling Project

JOE MILLER

It is with a heavy heart that I announce that longtime VVAW Military Counselor, Ray Parrish, has decided to leave his position. The VVAW Board accepted his letter of resignation effective July 31, 2012. We wish Ray the best in his future endeavors. I have known Ray since 1979, when he was a student at the University of Illinois organizing against Jimmy Carter's re-establishment of the Selective Service System. His work on that issue included organizing rallies and writing opinion pieces for the campus newspaper. We reconnected when I returned from teaching in Australia in the

mid-1980s. By that time, Ray was deep in his work with the Midwest Center for Military Counseling (MCMC), which provided GI and veteran counseling services until after the first Gulf War. The void that Ray is leaving will be hard to fill. We need to make sure that VVAW's Mental Health/Trauma Counselor, Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, has all the resources she will need to continue this very important work.

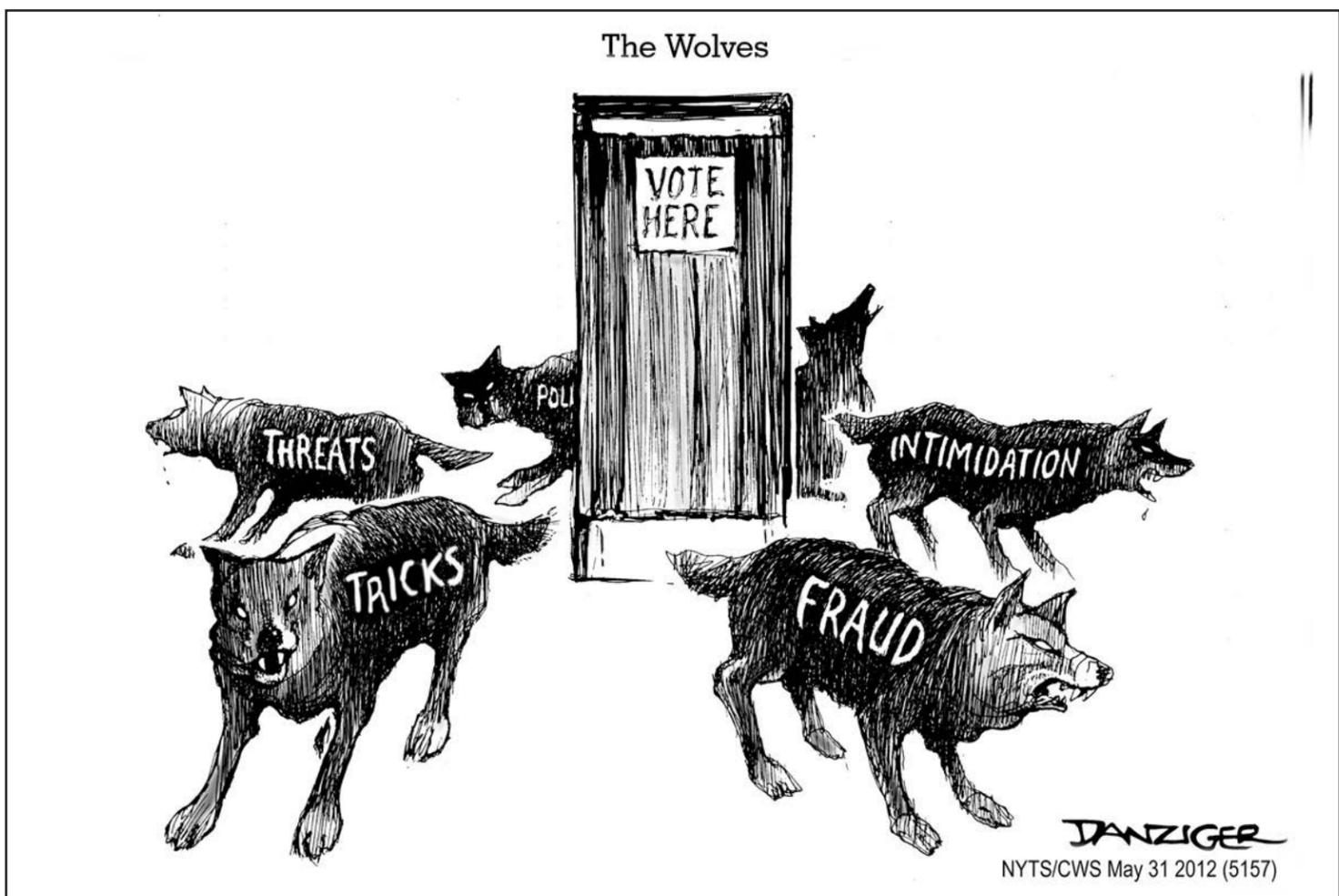


JOE MILLER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.



Ray Parrish at Chicago Memorial Day event, 2012.

VVAW is a 501(c)19 nonprofit organization that does not engage in partisan support or candidate endorsements.



Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

A couple of months ago I went to a White Sox game. As happens at every sporting event the national anthem was sung before the game. Everyone stood up, and most people removed their caps and sort of faced the flag. When I got home I looked up the protocol, and sure enough, you're supposed to stand, remove your cap and face the flag. Me and a couple of others hadn't removed our caps so I suppose I wasn't much of a patriot that day.

I used to recoil at the thought of being associated with patriotism. My country right or wrong seemed to mean follow the leader when he's wrong with all the consequences that surely follow. Will my obituary not have a flag in front of it because I didn't remove my hat?

At the ballgame they did announce that gentlemen should remove their hats, but it's difficult to follow authority. I suppose the ladies are held to a different standard of patriotism. They are delicate beings who keep the homes and have babies so they are allowed to wear caps during the Star Spangled Banner. I remember being at a Cub game when some twerp was running around as the anthem started telling everyone to remove their cap. He should get a flag in front of his obit.

I know that many people opposed to our nation's policies and direction, including VVAW members, have thoughtfully concluded that opposition to bad policy is what's really patriotic. I'm moving that way although it's hard to associate with that word. The main reason I hate to be a patriot is from observing patriots. Maybe they're "patriots."

That Sox game happened

to be on a Sunday, and Major League Baseball has determined that every Sunday game would have God Bless America sung during the seventh inning. I then looked around, and sure enough, everyone stood, most everyone faced the flag and about ninety percent of the caps were removed. I looked that up also and could find no protocol for God Bless America. Maybe that will change after enough ballgames. We are

that they were singing God Bless America to support this country. It's more like "in your face." We'll show 'em who is number one. That's how patriots do it.

There's another thing that bothers me about God Bless America. What if you really buy into this chauvinism, but you're an Atheist? Or a Muslim? Or a Buddhist? But I digress.

I remember the good old days when I was young and going

manipulated by politicians to promote what they want - like dubious wars. The key to this concept (and the reason we are conditioned to stand for God Bless America) may have been uttered by LBJ during Vietnam when he said, "If history indicts us for Vietnam it will be for fighting a war without trying to stir up patriotism." That cynical viewpoint is part of their arsenal. I imagine there are plenty of reasons for history to indict LBJ because of Vietnam, and I don't think stirring up patriotism was possible after a couple of years of that, but he recognized the role that "patriotism" plays in promoting such debacles.

The Bush presidents got the message for their Iraq wars. They got public opinion and patriotism stirred up and the Senate to affirm war. Real patriotic dudes. However, the second of these two wars lasted too long and anti-war patriotism took hold as the nation got tired of its lying leaders. Leading up to these wars as well as the various wars on terror, they liked to use veterans to promote war. Those feelings might be sincere, but it's not patriotism when our country is fighting somewhere where it shouldn't be.

Maybe patriotism means helping to improve the lot of the 99%. Work for "of the people, by the people and for the people." Maybe it's patriotic to rebel. Come to think of it, there was a rebel or two way back when. Maybe I could get adjusted to this patriot thing.



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

Will my obituary not have a flag in front of it because I didn't remove my hat?

going to sing God Bless America during the seventh inning until when? The end of the war on terrorism? Cheney said that would last fifty years. In fifty years we'll sing it three times a game. That'll show 'em.

God Bless America always confused me. Was this like asking God to bless this country? Some people sing it as if they are demanding that God bless the country. When Irving Berlin wrote the tune in the early part of the twentieth century he phrased it so because he was thankful and wanted to say so. That was because he was a Jewish emigre from a Europe that was increasingly persecuting Jews. He needed to get away from that, and this country took him in, and he wrote God Bless America. Of course there were Jews this country refused to take, and they maybe composed different tunes. But Irving Berlin meant it as thankfulness. The announcers at the ball parks on Sunday (and 9-11) let it be known

to Cub games. Unlike many ball parks there was no national anthem sung at Cubs Park (Wrigley Field). The owner of the Cubs was P. K. Wrigley who never could put together a good team. However, he was right on about not playing the national anthem. He thought it was gratuitous patriotism. He finally started playing it during Vietnam because he thought it appropriate with a war going on. Alas, the Cubs have been playing it ever since, but it hasn't helped them to get to a World Series. At least P.K. had it right about gratuitous patriotism.

I don't suppose our government has ever been "of the people, by the people and for the people." Maybe that's the ideal to which real patriots strive. Working toward that ideal seems more patriotic than giving lip service to a government and its policies when those policies are detrimental. It's more patriotic than removing your hat and facing the flag.

Then there's another aspect of patriotism. Sometimes it's

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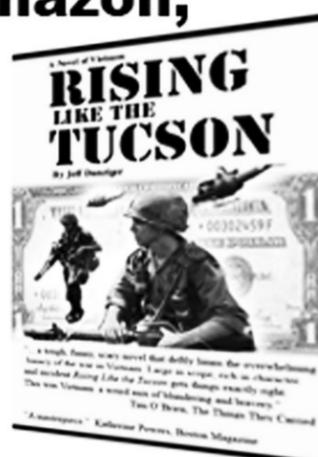
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Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I was talking recently with my daughter's father-in-law, a Vietnam-era Navy vet. Steve is one of the most interesting guys I know, and our mutual military experiences, and similar ages, ensure lively conversations every time we get together. On this most recent occasion, he talked about his duties during his nine years of active duty. During the first few years, Steve was in the Navy band. During the last six, he served as a submariner. Now there's a switch of MOS's! But as he was talking about his time in the Tuba and Trombone Corps, I remembered a conversation I'd had, a long time ago, with a Vietnam era vet who played in the Army band. I think it's a really poignant story, and I hope that readers will agree.

This vet served three years active, all of them as an Army band member. He didn't play for square dances at Fort Hood or ballroom gigs at the White House. Oh no. Jake played exclusively at events when Vietnam vets' caskets were

coming back, I'm assuming at Arlington or maybe Dover AFB. His band unit lined up every time these things happened, and he wasn't talking about once or twice a month. They happened very frequently. I stupidly asked what kinds of songs they played, and his response – which I will never forget – was "Well, Paul, we didn't play a hell of a lot of polkas." You get the picture.

He said one other thing that has stayed with me. "Paul, I'm not a Vietnam vet, but I sure as hell feel like one." Actually, it was worse than that. He talked about how a lot of guys in his unit felt guilty that they hadn't served in Nam. Think about it. These guys were lined up three or four times a week, playing the same really heavy songs, and stood there and watched these caskets come off the plane. Grieving parents and spouses, small children, the whole story. I served in an armored cav unit in I Corps, but I don't know how I could have handled that. And

this poor SOB isn't even eligible for the VFW.

So as I remember his story, I'm kind of flash forwarding to last week. The Associated Press ran a photo of a funeral of an Afghan vet, and the photo – which should win some kind of award – was of the vet's father. The shutter clicked just as the poor guy was fainting, and his daughter and someone in the color guard caught him before he hit the floor. Maybe I'm too sensitive, but I was really struck by this photo. But then I felt a little better, because I was reminded of the current Presidential campaign. I thought about how both candidates keep talking about their plans for getting us out of Afghanistan, and conceding what a really stupid idea the whole thing was to begin with, and how this country will never do anything like that again if they're elected. And then, well, I woke up.

I may be tiring you by now, but please allow me one more remembrance. Toward the end of

the Korean War, which you will recall lasted only three years and not eleven, a major newspaper purposely ran the exact same war story three days in a row. Not one reader called to point that out. As I suggested in a *Veteran* column a year ago, maybe the NCAA finals were going on, and obviously some things are more important than others. I can almost guarantee you that any newspaper in America could do that now, about Afghanistan, and no one would notice.

Well, maybe that Afghan vet's father would notice. But why would he bother to call the paper to complain? For him anyway, it really doesn't matter anymore.



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

The Price of Freedom

MEG MINER

Election season has all the usual unpleasanties in the air, including the standard reports that only about half of all eligible voters ever cast a ballot by the appointed day. We blame voters for being apathetic, and apathy is a hard impulse to resist, but that just seems like the easy way out. Blame the system and walk away. I think other blame gets passed around, though, too.

It would be interesting to know how many readers of this publication believe in the argument that the military fights for Americans' rights. I'm thinking of the kind of bumper sticker logic that reads, "Like your freedom? Thank a veteran."

The implied message is that

the fate of our democracy rests on veterans' shoulders alone. Like most of our political speech, this kind of statement seems designed to shut down any honest discussion of the issues at hand. Maybe it's just me, but it also seems like a way for some citizens to push yet another burden off on veterans.

I just don't buy it! Our liberties come from the time-tested principles expressed in our founding documents and like any good idea, they stay relevant by frequently reminding ourselves what they feel like. We must take them out and try them on now and then.

We test their relevancy when we march for a cause, when we

stand witness for each other in a courtroom, when we go toe-to-toe with fellow citizens in a public forum and then take at least a few minutes to stop and listen to each other's concerns. Every citizen who exercises their freedoms in this way and others is cumulatively acting to ensure our freedom.

To my mind, the reward for all this hard work comes when we exercise the right of casting a ballot. Our rights and responsibilities are endowed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Anyone who revels in their protection ought to be willing to pay attention to political arguments and also to show up on election day.

Veterans cannot and should not have to do the job of protecting everyone else alone; at some point people have to get off our coattails and pull their own share of the burden.

But like other citizens we veterans are not released from service once the job "over there" or in the voting booth is done. This has to be one of the most valuable contributions VVAW members make to our society: rather than an end to our responsibilities, we treat voting as part of a continuing process of civic engagement.

We pay attention when the votes are counted and afterwards. No matter which side takes control, we show our respect for democracy when we let our representatives know our expectations...and then keep an eye on them!

Voting is only a first step; holding every representative's feet to the fire, regardless of party affiliation, is our truly priceless contribution to our democratic ideals.



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



June 2012 meeting of New York Metro VVAW and friends.

War, Draft and the 26th Amendment

JOE MILLER

[First of all, I wish to make it clear that this piece reflects my personal views. VVAW does not take any formal position relating to party politics, and the organization does not endorse any candidates for public office.]

"Old enough to fight and die, but not old enough to vote!" This was the rallying cry of a significant segment of the anti-war movement during the height of Vietnam Era activism. This election year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first election in which 18-year-olds could vote. The expansion of the voting franchise is always something to celebrate.

I might speak for a lot of vets who served during the Vietnam War, especially in the early years, who never really gave this much thought. Born during or just after World War II, we grew up with the reality of the Selective Service System that required registration at age 18 on the one hand, and the 21-year-old vote restriction on the other. During that time many of us did not think about this apparent contradiction. Nor did we have any awareness of the long history of struggle to attain the vote for eighteen-year-old citizens.

As far back as World War I, veterans who were conscripted into military service during their teenage years cried out: "Old enough to fight, old enough to vote!" Decades later, the children and grandchildren of those veterans fought against fascism in World War II, and repeated the call, leading President Eisenhower to call for an amendment to the Constitution to guarantee 18-year-olds the right to vote. In his 1954 State of the Union message, Eisenhower said, "For years our citizens between the ages of 18 and 21 have, in time of peril, been summoned to fight for America. They should participate in the political process that produces this fateful summons. I urge Congress to propose to the States a constitutional amendment permitting citizens to vote when they reach the age of 18."

By the late 1960s, at the height of the war in Vietnam, voting rights activists held marches and demonstrations to draw attention to the hypocrisy of drafting young men who could not vote. In 1970, when Congress passed a bill extending and amending the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it contained a provision that lowered

the voting age to 18 in federal, state and local elections. Though Nixon signed the bill into law, he declared that he believed the provision to be unconstitutional, and that it would require a constitutional amendment

In the 1970 case *Oregon v. Mitchell*, the US Supreme Court reviewed the constitutionality of this provision. The Court held that Congress did not have the right to regulate the minimum age in State and local elections, but only in federal elections.

Under this decision, 18- to 20-year-olds would be eligible to vote for president and vice president, but not for state officials. Dissatisfaction with this situation—as well as public reaction to the protests of large numbers of young men facing conscription, but deprived of the right to vote—built support among many states for a Constitutional amendment that would set a uniform national voting age of 18 in all elections.

On March 10, 1971, the US Senate voted unanimously in favor of the proposed amendment.

The text of the Amendment is straightforward: Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United

States or by any State on account of age. Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

After an overwhelming House vote in favor on March 23, the 26th Amendment went to the states for ratification. In just over two months—the shortest period of time for any amendment in US history—the necessary three-fourths of state legislatures (or 38 states) ratified the 26th Amendment, and President Nixon signed it into law that July.

Though many expected these new young voters to help choose George McGovern, an opponent of the Vietnam War, Nixon was reelected by an overwhelming margin—winning 49 states—in 1972. After a 55.4 percent turnout in 1972, youth turnout steadily declined, reaching 36 percent in the 1988 presidential election. The 1992 election of Bill Clinton saw a slight rebound, but voting rates of 18- to 24-year-olds remained well behind the turnout of older voters. Many feared that America's young people were squandering their opportunities to enact change.

Then the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama saw a voter turnout of some 49 percent of 18- to 24 year-olds, the second highest in history. The activism and energy that was reflected in

this campaign gave new hope that there would be more engagement by young voters in the future.

We have also seen a rise in the fear by conservatives that the youth vote, along with higher levels of participation by racial and ethnic minorities, may mean a stronger Democratic showing in this year's election. Therefore, we see Republican legislatures in state after state passing laws that will suppress the vote of minorities, youth, and the elderly.

Just look at idiot pundit Ann Coulter's 2010 call for the repeal of the 26th Amendment. In her view, "Republicans ought to fight for their own electorate, which at a minimum ought to mean voters with fully functioning brains and the possibility of a tax bill. Not old enough to buy your own health insurance, not old enough to vote." Yeah, right, Ann. Your crew doesn't even want to pay taxes, and "fully functioning" brains? Give me a fucking break!

Let's remind everyone how tough the struggle was to obtain the vote and how important it is to exercise that right! Get out the vote in 2012!



JOE MILLER IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.



Barry Romo at Chicago Memorial Day event, 2012, holding photo of Clarence Fitch.

Organizing The Vote

GREGORY ROSS

I plan on voting for President Obama, again. Everyone I know, who plans on voting, is voting for President Obama, again. Everyone, being those I know in California, specifically, Oakland, and the Greater Bay Area. But, back East, where I lived my first twenty years, my sisters, in Georgia and New York, have made it clear that they will not be voting for President Obama, again. I do not plan on trying to change their minds. Nor they me, since they view me as a lost cause, a misguided resident of a present day Sodom and Gomorrah. They are Christian enough to pray for my soul, though.

I am not voting for President Obama because I think he is our salvation, nor because he and a Democratic Congress are going to save the poor, the middle class, the 99%. I am voting for President Obama because I view him as the lesser of two evils. I am voting for President Obama because I believe he might "trickle down" to the poor, the middle class, the 99%. (Aside: when I hear that phrase, "trickle down" all I can think of is "pissed on"). I am not voting for President Obama because I believe he will end the wars or end the faceless killing via drones. Nor

do I believe he will rescind the right of the President to designate assassinations or to hold a person in prison for a life time because of the suspicion of terrorism.

I am voting for President Obama in spite of the fact that the wealth of the 1% increased by almost 8% in the last four years; while the 99% has been made poorer (a Pew Institute study). I am voting for President Obama out of abject terror of what a Romney presidency would be like. I am voting for President Obama, the Lesser Evil, out of fear of the Greater Evil. I am voting for President Obama because we do not truly have a Democracy under a two party system. Both parties are bought and paid for by corporations. (Aside: favorite bumper sticker: "I will believe a corporation is a person when Texas executes one").

I have supported Ralph Nader, Dennis Kucinich and Medea Benjamin in their bids for high office with money but, never voted for one of them. Dennis Kucinich was the only candidate affiliated with one of the two party system's parties. But, because his message was threatening to the Corporations, he couldn't remain in the race. He might have had my

vote, if I had a chance to vote for him. Recently, I read about Ross "Rocky" Anderson, a two-time mayor of Salt Lake City (2000 to 2008) who spoke out against the Invasion of Iraq and was the only mayor to call for the impeachment of President George W. Bush and V. P. Cheney. He left the Democratic Party, with a public criticism calling it "unprincipled... bought and paid for by the same interests that have bought and paid for the Republican Party." He has also announced his candidacy for president in the newly formed Justice Party.

I like what he has to say. I like his history. I like the stands he has taken. I would vote for him but, I am too much of a coward. I have lost the courage I had when I was nine years old and finally, stood up to the school bully. A stance I did not take when I was nineteen and my draft notice arrived. I could have gone to Canada, gone to jail, demanded to be a Conscientious Objector but, instead managed to get myself into the Navy with the mistaken idea that this would keep me out of the Vietnam War.

In four years, I will be sixty-nine. Perhaps, then I will have mustered enough courage to forgo the "Lesser of Two Evils"

mentality and vote for someone I believe is not bought and paid for. And, if by some miracle he or she was to win, hope that I was right about the "Not bought and paid for." And, more cynically, hope there is no convenient assassination.

PS: After reading this to my wife, she said, "You are so optimistic. If Romney succeeds in buying the Presidency, what makes you think there will be elections in four years." That is something I love about her, something that has made it possible for us to remain together for thirty seven years, she can often out cynic me.

Don't forget to vote!



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

You're Voting for Your VA Medical...

NICK MEDVECKY

One of the things inherited from World War II vets was the GI Bill. I went through college, purchased a home, and can always count on medical benefits when needed. Now that I'm on Social Security and Medicare, the VA makes all

the difference in the world.

New York Times economist Paul Krugman warned in an op-ed last November, "Vouchers for Veterans," that candidate Romney intends to privatize the Veterans Health Administration.

The reality is the VA provides better care than most Americans receive. As an integrated system—both providing and paying for health care - it's a prime example of both public cost savings and universal treatment. And yes, it is "socialized medicine."

I've always been amazed that the leading corporatists in America argue, in effect, for "privatization of profit, and socialization of loss." They reap the profits, we pay for it.

While they haven't mentioned it lately (there's an election on), they fully intend to "voucher" the VHA. This is a bald design to profitize the service, jack the admin costs, and sell it back to you.

This is an election for the very soul of what remains of democracy...presumably what all vets have and continue to fight for.

Romney-Ryan would offer vets the "option" of giving them vouchers so they could buy their own private insurance, thereby

undermining and destroying the VHA. He and his corporatist pals would clean up.

The costs of that insurance? "Hey, that's private, unregulated enterprise!"

They promise precisely the same for Medicare and Social Security. Medicaid they plan to radically cut and restructure.

To their thinking, it's quite clear: "If you're stupid enough to fall for it, then you deserve what you get...an empty bag and the bill!"



DR. NICK MEDVECKY (PSYD), SERVED IN THE 101ST AIRBORNE 1959-61. A JOURNALIST IN THE MIDDLE EAST (1969-71), HE WAS ALSO A CRIMINAL DEFENSE INVESTIGATOR FOR 17 YEARS IN DETROIT, AND SERVED 20 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON. HE PUBLISHES A BLOG AT THE AMERICAN TRIBUNE. ORG.



Vince Emanuele at Chicago Memorial Day event, 2012.

Voting is the Least You Can Do

HORACE COLEMAN

These are the times that rent people's souls. Democracy has become demockcracy. Capital is the nation's capitol. Labor union is a dirty phrase; any one can teach better than a teacher.

Your civic duty isn't done when you've voted and paid taxes. According to Mitt Romney, 47% of potential Obama voters don't pay federal taxes and expect the guvmint to take care of them. Romney must not know 10 red states have the most residents who don't pay federal taxes.

Voting well means studying and understanding candidates, issues and trickily worded propositions well before you fill out the ballot. It might help to know where candidates' campaign funds and money backing or opposing propositions/initiatives come from. Or, whose dollars influence members of Congress and who they're likely to work for after they've left Congress.

Who actually benefits from the laws politicians introduce and vote for? Who really wrote them? Why are politicians' health care plans and pensions so good after only a short time in office? All civil servants are supposedly lazy, surly, overpaid and don't deserve what municipalities, counties and states contractually agreed to.

It wasn't benevolent employers who invented the 40-hour week, time-and-a-half for over time, two-week paid vacations or ended child labor and sweat shops.

Will you love feudal America as much as the USA has always loved cheap labor? Remember chattel slavery and indentured servitude?

This is the age of oligarchy (rule by the few), plutocracy (rule by the rich), theocracy (rule by those who know exactly what God wants and intend to make it happen ahead of schedule), crony capitalism uber alles and the new Robber Barons. Too many people seem to think anything left of the current Supreme Court is socialism, anything left of the FBI is communism. How will you like lowered service because of fewer municipal and state workers?

It's the age when unpleasant reality wants its bill paid and won't accept credit cards. It's time to put an end to political BS and national self delusion. It's time to become more acquainted with what you know than what you'd

rather believe.

Get informed about things that concern you and fact check your findings. Find people with the same concerns; see what they're doing or plan to do about close to home conditions and places. Like your neighborhood, church, your part of your city or suburb, local schools, etc. Organize and educate yourself and others. Demonstrating is effective—sometimes. It draws attention or creates interest.

Try finding or creating a

made sweetheart deals with people in high places and overly touted unsound company stock. He sold his shares at inflated prices.

Then he sold the company to a prominent national bank now floundering because it had bought many bad loans. When the financial police caught up with him, he was given a huge fine. He promptly wrote a check from the millions he'd acquired and kept on working on his tan.

Here are some interesting facts about our current times and

Political groups in ascending order of clout:

- The nominal selectorate (the voters—the interchangeables who have little real power as individuals).

- The real selectorate (the influentials: people who actually chose the candidate—powerful major political party members, super PACs, big money people, influential individuals [e.g. Grover Norquist], major corporations, industries, Wall Street/banks and lobbyists).

- The winning coalition (the essentials: the Electoral College which really chooses a president, the super heavy contributors, the "voters" you really need to get elected).

Changing the relative size of the two selectorates and the essentials changes policy and spending. Our politicians tend to appeal to the voters, satisfy enough of their needs and druthers to keep their votes while rewarding the people who made it possible for them to woo the voters.

Since money is the air, water, blood and food of politics, politicians often pay more attention to those who gave them money. But they must do something to please "the people." Politicians tend to promote policies and legislation that favor those who donated the most to them.

Politicians do a dance between attracting enough voters with the same priorities to put them in office and raising enough funds to run a successful campaign. Then they must satisfy the donors, cosponsoring and getting enough legislation passed they want and approve. Getting elected is a politician's first job; getting re-elected is their second job.

According to *The Dictator's Handbook*, leaders of democracies and dictatorships use five rules to get and keep power: keep the winning coalition as small as possible; keep the nominal electorate as large as possible; control the flow of revenue (e.g., taxes, tax loop holes, etc.); pay your key supporters just enough to keep them loyal; don't take money out of your supporter's pockets to make "the people's" lives better.

Voting well takes effort. You have to work, hard and thoroughly, at vetting the candidates and

Voting well means studying and understanding candidates, issues and trickily worded propositions well before you fill out the ballot.

"power lever"—something or some one that solves or improves things. It isn't always money or friends in high places that create change. What can you do because of who or what's nearby?

We're a people who want instant results. Life's not like that. "Keep on keepin' on." "You can't do nothing in a minute and do it right!" No matter who wins the presidency or control of Congress, things will basically change slowly at best. Fashion styles often come from the top down or the bottom up. So do many ideas and much culture. To make a change in a society you often have to first change yourself.

I once took an almanac and found a number of items in which the US was not #1. Among them were life expectancy, per capita income and lowest infant mortality rate. We were number one in average daily calorie consumption! There are logical explanations for some findings. If you took the per capita income of a very small country with a higher than normal number of wealthy individuals, you'd find a high per capita income. Overall we do well here. But it's not heaven when some people and conditions make life hellish for others.

The business of business is not creating jobs. It's making a profit—and staying solvent. The founder of the company that originally held my mortgage knew the business was floundering. He

how we got here:

A CIA document acquired under a Freedom of Information Act request revealed that there were no WMDs in Iraq. That's right; Saddam Hussein didn't ship what he didn't have to Syria via sand submarine. A Pew Research Center study of income/income distribution for the last four decades showed that lower income earners increased 1% each decade, while middle income earners shrank from 61% to 51% of all earners. In the same time frame, upper income earners grew from 14% to 20% of all income earners. An Institute of Medicine report showed an increase in alcohol and drug usage in the military. Think two long wars approved of (and basically ignored) by people who love to shout "We're Number One!" or "USA! USA!" have any thing to do with that? Paper patriotism lasts longer than paper flowers but isn't as useful. President Bush was advised in a 2001 daily briefing that Osama bin Laden intended to attack the US. Bush played it off. "Less than 1/2 of 1% of the US population has been on active military duty at any given time during the past decade of sustained warfare."—Pew Research Center poll

The following information is from the *The Dictator's Handbook* by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith

continued on next page



IVAW at anti-NATO protest, Chicago, May 20, 2012.



Voting is the Least You Can Do

continued from previous page

deciphering ballot issues/ referendums/initiatives. And, you have to follow up on the actual performance and effects of the people and things you voted for or against.

Voting is like maintaining a relationship, keeping your body or car in shape or belonging to a street gang. Periodically you're going to have to put a little work in.

People do what they think is best for them. What's best for one person may not be good for some one else. Which reminds me of

an interviewee in a documentary about Arlington West—Santa Monica. The guy said, on camera, that the people doing the memorial were "traitors and should be shot." When asked if he'd ever done military service he said "I prefer someone else do my fighting for me." Many people prefer someone else do their "fighting" for them.

Neither Democrats nor Republicans have the answer. Each has some good ideas. Radical GOPhers want a permanent Republican majority. Like

Mexico's corrupt PRI party that ruled for more than 60 years and is back again. The Libertarian presidential candidate wants to abolish the Federal Reserve and the IRS!! Both certainly need reform. If you abolished either one though, what would replace them? The marketplace?

When the French aristocracy got totally out of hand and living conditions became intolerable for the masses, aristocrats were physically eliminated. No need to go that far.

We're seeing the rise of the Plutocrat/Robber Barons party. Robber Barons are blatantly greedy and corrupt. Plutocrats buy what they want and may have Robber Baron tendencies. It's time for another Reform Age.



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

Will the 2012 Presidential Election Be Stolen?

DAVID SWANSON

Why would I even ask that question? I've been trying without success to get everyone to drop the election obsession and focus on activism designed to change policies rather than personalities. I want those policy changes to include stripping presidents of imperial powers. I don't see as much difference between the two available choices as most people - I see each as a different shade of disaster. I don't get distressed by the thought of people "spoiling" an election by voting for a legitimately good candidate like Jill Stein. Besides, won't Romney lose by a landslide if he doesn't tape his mouth shut during the coming weeks? And yet . . .

It matters to me whether our elections are stolen and the manner in which they are stolen. It might simply mean Romney robbing Obama. Other problems involve the barriers facing non-corporate candidates as well as candidates not running for President. Bob Fitrakis and Harvey Wasserman have just published "Will the GOP Steal America's 2012 Election? Corporate Vote Theft and the Future of American Democracy," with an introduction by Greg Palast. I recommend it especially for the history of election fraud back through the centuries, but also for the collection of Fitrakis-Wasserman articles that make up the bulk of the book. The book opens, however, with a systematic survey of the ways in which your vote can be disappeared. Here's a taste:

The Republican Party could steal the 2012 US Presidential election with relative ease. The purpose of this book is to show how, and to dissect the larger - potentially fatal - warning signs for American democracy, no

matter which corporate party is doing the stealing. Six basic factors make this year's theft a possibility:

1. The power of corporate money, now vastly enhanced by the US Supreme Court's Citizens' United decisions;

2. The Electoral College, which narrows the number of votes needed to be moved to swing a presidential election;

3. The systematic disenfranchisement of - according to the Brennan Center - ten million or more citizens (a million in Ohio alone), most of whom would otherwise be likely to vote Democratic;

4. The accelerating use of electronic voting machines, which make election theft a relatively simple task for those who control them, including their owners and operators, who are predominantly Republican;

5. The GOP control of nine of the governorships in the dozen swing states that will decide the outcome of the 2012 campaign; and,

6. The likelihood that the core of the activist 'election protection' community that turned out in droves to monitor the vote for Barack Obama in 2008 has not been energized by his presidency and is thus unlikely to work for him again in 2012.

Each of these points is explained and elaborated in the book. Why, you might ask, does it matter which party a governor belongs to? Well . . .

"Without his brother Jeb as governor of Florida in 2000, and Kathleen Harris as Secretary of State, George W. Bush could not

have become President of the United States. As we have seen, Governor Bush purged Florida's voter rolls of tens of thousands of likely Democrats. Various ballot 'problems' emerged, including the electronic 'glitch' in Volusia County. Then Secretary of State Harris stalled a statewide recount and opened the door for the Supreme Court's Bush vs. Gore decision. Without Governor Robert Taft and Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell in Ohio 2004, Bush could not have gotten a second term. Taft facilitated another purge of voter rolls, removing some 300,000 names from the lists. Then Blackwell ran an astonishing range of dirty tricks aimed at Democratic voters, culminating in his now-infamous late-night manipulation of the electronic vote count that moved the victory from Kerry to Bush. The personal, private election day visit the President and Karl Rove paid to Blackwell in his Columbus office may have been their most important stop of the campaign."

Fitrakis and Wasserman also don't skimp on proposals for actual change of the sort you won't hear discussed much in the Romnobama Debates in October:

1. Money must come out of politics. No nation can allow a tiny handful of million/billionaire corporatists to pour unlimited cash into our elections and expect to emerge with even a semblance of democracy. If elections can be bought, so can our government, to the detriment of us all. Citizens United must be reversed, corporations must be stripped of legal personhood, and money must be banned from the electoral process. This will take an unprecedented nation-wide grassroots campaign resulting in at least one Constitutional amendment. The odds may seem daunting. But George III was not Divine, and corporations are not people.

2. Elections cannot be administered by partisans. All local, state and federal election officials must be banned from playing any role in any campaign relating to the election they are administering. A strict non-partisanship must apply to establishing congressional

districts and all other aspects of our democratic process.

3. All American citizens must be automatically registered to vote upon turning 18. The arduous, unfair practice of forcing pro-democracy organizations to go out and register voters is nonsensical. Voting is an inherent natural right and responsibility. Citizens should be removed from voter rolls only upon death or renunciation of citizenship.

4. All places of voting must be convenient, stable, well-known and easily accessible.

5. Voting should be available over a period of weeks by mail, and at polling stations through the Friday-Saturday-Sunday-Monday around Armistice Day, November 11. The polls should be largely worked by high school and college students who will get school credit for the day, and who will get a holiday that Tuesday to count the ballots.

6. All electronic voting and counting machines should be banned (as Ireland has just done, and as has long been the case in Canada, Japan, Germany and elsewhere) with all ballots cast on recycled paper, to be hand-counted.

Not a bad list. Too bad you can't vote it into being. But we probably won't get it at all unless we lose every last pretense of legitimate elections. Reforming our elections must be integral to our agenda, even once we've figured out that the Messiah hasn't been nominated. After all, that realization is tightly connected to the realization that our elections need major repairs. The Messiah will never be nominated, even after all of these reforms, but we might manage to nominate a junior assistant disciple - which is actually preferable, and which will be far superior to the current crop of moneychangers.



DAVID SWANSON'S BOOKS INCLUDE "WAR IS A LIE." HE BLOGS AT [HTTP://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG](http://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG) AND [HTTP://WARISACRIME.ORG](http://WARISACRIME.ORG) AND WORKS AS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR FOR THE ONLINE ACTIVIST ORGANIZATION [HTTP://ROOTSACTION.ORG](http://ROOTSACTION.ORG).

Reforming our elections must be integral to our agenda, even once we've figured out that the Messiah hasn't been nominated.

VVAW Military and Veterans Counseling Traveling This Fall

JOHANNA (HANS) BUWALDA

VVAW Military and Veterans Counseling may have shrunk by 50% since Ray Parish left the project, but I am continuing to provide mental health services to as many veterans as possible. From January-September, I have assisted over 175 veterans, service members, and their loved ones.

While I am now in the process of referring those veterans who are facing complex VA benefit appeals and discharge upgrade requests, I continue to provide free counseling, therapy and evaluations to veterans who cannot or will not use the VA. In my search for providers who both care and have the necessary knowledge and skill, I continue to come across many amazing professionals and para-professionals.

In addition, I will be traveling to the second IVAW Women's Retreat in Pennsylvania as well as the IVAW Annual Convention in Baltimore, to provide consultations, support and referrals to any interested participants. Generally, my presence is not utilized as much as one might think during these events because the veterans have each other for adequate support.

But afterwards, when everybody has gone back home, my presence at these veteran events pays off. That is when these veterans feel much more comfortable calling a provider when they or their peers need one, because they know me already. Going to these events is mostly about doing outreach and networking to meet future needs.

In between, I will be

presenting on a panel with Annie Hirschman at the American Public Health Association Convention. I intend to speak on the implications of withholding quality care from veterans as a large public health problem that will affect all of us: civilians and veterans alike. I especially intend to speak about the public health implications of the continuously large number

of veterans who unfairly receive bad discharges as a result of service connected (mental) health problems.

It is going to be a busy, very interesting, and hopefully fruitful fall. Thank you for continuing to support VVAW's Military and Veterans Counseling.



Hans Buwalda at Chicago Memorial Day event, 2012.

Boots on the Ground/She Cried

GRAHAM CLUMPNER

The sweat was pouring down my face as I sprinted towards the mud brick wall. The low throb of Blackhawks had faded only to be replaced by the pounding of boots on the ground, merged with my beating heart. We hit the ladders and bounded over the wall like an Olympian over a hurdle. My turtle shell of body armor stuck to my skin like hot tar under the moonless night sky. I could see the target building materialize several feet in front of me and I redirected towards the door. The relative silence was abruptly shattered by AK rounds yards from my face. Calm. Slow is smooth and smooth is fast. Muscle memory spread the detonation cord over the door. Time slowing to a crawl as I'm suddenly back home drinking a beer with my best friend talking about how well the Packers will do this weekend. He puts his arm

around me and I realize if I ever want to have that tomorrow I must get through this tonight!

Booom! The door splinters into tiny little pieces followed by two concussion grenades to "prep" the room. In a single motion I am inside, training my rifle at a skinny motherfucker, pointing his rifle at me. My M4 recoiled against my shoulder no more than a video game controller in a boy's hands. No thoughts as I continued scanning the room, looking for more targets. There was a silence of silence as explosions and gunshots rang throughout the compound. My head was still ringing as I moved towards the next door. I looked into the eyes of my team leader and they said it all ..."this house is hot! Frag the next room!"

With movement choreographed better than dancers

on Broadway we released hot death in the form of M61 Fragmentation grenades into the next room. Upon impacting against the ceiling they pepper every piece of matter with jagged scorching hot metal. I will never forget the screams. When you are facing death on a regular basis you learn quickly to trust your instincts. They all heighten when you perceive danger and they can save your life, when you are not safe. Now, standing in a room filled with mangled flesh all I wanted was for my senses to turn off. Cordite and burning human flesh filled my nose like rotten eggs left out for a year. Ears ringing, disoriented as if I'd woken from a dream, my body moved without the command of my mind. The noise was getting louder now and I realized it was coming from the old woman on the floor. The one without any legs. Her torso

was moving like some dancer on Broadway. I had no emotion at that exact instant but I sensed wrongness. As I sat on the humvee, driving away from this worthless shithole of a city, I looked down to realize I was covered in blood. Her blood. I never knew her name. What her dreams were or the kind of person she wanted to be. But as I laid her in the back of the medevac, she cried.



GRAHAM CLUMPNER IS AN AFGHANISTAN VETERAN FROM COLORADO WHO DID 2 TOURS THERE. HE IS NOW AN ORGANIZER WITH IVAW AND WORKS THE LOCAL COLORADO TERRITORY. HE WAS RECALLED AND REFUSED TO GO BACK.

A New Landmark in US History Opens at Kent State This Fall

LAURA DAVIS

Opening October 20, 2012, the May 4 Visitors Center at Kent State University tells the story of the shootings on May 4, 1970, against the political and cultural changes of the 1960s—including the movement against the war in Vietnam. From the perspective of more than 40 years, this powerful and informative interactive experience remembers the students who lost their lives on May 4, while offering meaning for today in their loss.

In response to Richard Nixon's April 30, 1970, Cambodia announcement, protests against Nixon's broken promise to end the war erupted around the country. On Monday, May 4, four days of protest at Kent State expanded to decry the presence of the Ohio National Guard on campus. The Guard had been called into town by the city mayor and entered campus Saturday night when the university's ROTC building burned. After dispersing a rally scheduled for noon, Guardsmen unexpectedly turned 135 degrees at the top of a hill and fired down into a parking lot that held a mix of protestors, spectators, and passersby. 28 of the 76 guardsmen and officers at the top of the hill fired 67 rounds in 13 seconds, killing four Kent State students and wounding nine others.

Historians cite the Kent State shootings as a watershed moment in US history and an important turning point in the consciousness of Americans about the war. Substantial protest continued to follow in the aftermath of May 4, including the April 1971 action that had Vietnam veterans tossing their medals onto the Capitol steps, as shown in the exhibit.

Gallery 1 of the May 4 Visitors Center exhibit helps

visitors understand such acts by depicting what the decade of the sixties was like. As illustrated in the exhibit, the sixties was a turbulent era of change and political and cultural divide. Through words, pictures, sound, and film, it explores three central themes of the sixties: the struggle for social justice, the generation gap, and the Vietnam War.

Gallery 2 depicts what happened on May 4 in an immersive theater experience using wall-sized iconic photos and a new film documentary displayed on a screen that also is wall sized. Visitors feel as though they are standing in the stream of history as it unfolds.

Visitors exit the close, immersive space of Gallery 2 to face a wall 27 feet wide and 12 feet high that samples the breadth and the depth of the impact of May 4 locally, nationally, and internationally. Depicted is the killing of unarmed protestors at Kent State was experienced by middle America as "the day the war came home." Its impact resounded from the president's office in the US to the prime

minister's office in the USSR.

Over the past five years, scholars from Kent State University worked with humanities scholars, consultants, community leaders and students—including individuals with military experience in Vietnam—to determine the content for the May 4 Visitors Center. Members of the public and campus, local historians and community leaders contributed ideas through public forums and focus groups. Kent State professors and national experts examined exhibit content to ensure accuracy and balanced viewpoints. Reviewers for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ohio Humanities Council, the Ohio Preservation Office, and the Department of the Interior added positive feedback and constructive ideas.

In the days when the Kent State University May 4 Visitors Center was only a dream, we could hardly imagine being able to open its doors one day. VVAW was one of the center's earliest contributors. Many at Kent State remember the visibility of VVAW in even earlier days in the sixties

and the contribution to the spirit of change VVAW made at that time. We are appreciative and honored to have had VVAW's support for more than four decades. VVAW's support helped lay the foundation for what would grow to a comprehensive fundraising initiative for the design and construction of the \$1.1 million center. Recent donors include the National Endowment for the Humanities, which provided \$300,000. And as an expression of Kent State's national leadership role in promoting nonviolence and democratic values, the university's 16 deans gave \$667,000 through their colleges and campuses to help students and the public learn from the past to shape a better future.

The opening of the May 4 Visitors Center on the Kent State campus is part of a year-long series of events designed to educate, inform, and help people reflect on the legacy of May 4, 1970, and its meaning for today. The fall calendar includes an address by Tom Hayden at 7:00 p.m. on October 30. The formal dedication and acknowledgment of the hundreds who have helped create the May 4 Visitors Center will be held during the annual commemoration from May 3 through 5, 2013. Details will be posted at www.kent.edu/may4 and on the May 4 Visitors Center Facebook page.



LAURA DAVIS IS A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND FACULTY COORDINATOR FOR MAY 4 INITIATIVES AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY. A FRESHMAN IN 1970, SHE WAS A WITNESS TO THE SHOOTINGS.



Thank You VVAW

AARON HUGHES

Without the support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) I never would have become an organizer.

When I was first getting involved in Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and the anti-war movement Barry Romo from VVAW and a good friend of mine once told me that the most important way to measure the success of an organization or an organizer was not by how many times they got arrested or how many people followed what they said or came out to their action but instead by how many organizers they helped cultivate and develop.

This is a lesson that I have seen shared over and over again by history's great social justice organizers like Ella Baker, Miles Horton and Cesar Chavez, and powerful social justice organizations like United Farm Workers, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, United Workers, and National Domestic Workers. A lesson that I have taken to heart in working to build the IVAW Field Organizing Program and the reason I am writing this thank you.

You see, VVAW members not only encouraged Iraq veterans to form IVAW, supported IVAW financially every step of the way, helped IVAW organize projects like Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan, supported IVAW in forming the Field Organizing Program, helped individual veterans navigate the VA, and supported veterans through the stresses of returning home from combat, but mentored and developed a whole new generation of veteran organizers that are committed to peace, human rights, social justice and continuing the legacy of VVAW.

So as I step down from IVAW staff I want to give thank to VVAW members for the emerging community of committed veteran organizers that would not be here without VVAW just as I would never have become an organizer without the support and mentorship of VVAW.

In measuring successes be assured that VVAW continues to be one of histories most powerful antiwar and social justice organizations.



From the depths of my heart and with so much love, thank you.

In November 2012, Aaron Hughes will be stepping down from the IVAW Field Organizing Program to spend time with his family

and work on healing and his art practice. He will be attending an art residency at the Ashkan Alwan Center for Lebanese Art in Beirut, Lebanon.



VVAW NYC Metro Area Updates

BRIAN MATARRESE AND MARTY WEBSTER

On April 28th, 2012 a VVAW organizing meeting was held at Susan Schall's apartment in Manhattan. The meeting was convened by VVAW National Coordinator Marty Webster, who spoke about the important role VVAW has historically played in the anti-war movement and the need for veterans to once again play a lead role in future directions

against the war in Afghanistan. Agent Orange

Susan Schnell, a co coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, described legislation currently before the House of Representatives - Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011 (HR 2634) and the need to organize grassroots support. This bill

requests services for American veterans and their children, the harmed Vietnamese and the joining together of former enemies to heal the wounds of war.

At the next meeting, Ben Chitty reported on the Mayday march from Union Square to Wall Street. Thousands of people—including Occupy, students, union members and a large contingent of

VVAW and other vets—marched for hours, enjoying the support of thousands of bystanders along the route.



BRIAN MATARRESE AND MARTY WEBSTER ARE VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATORS.



Standing Up for Educational Justice: The 2012 Chicago Teachers Union Strike

KURT HILGENDORF

The Chicago Teachers Union's recent strike against the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) was no accident. Rather, the strike was the culmination of a combination of outrage and organizing: teachers, parents, community organizations and students banded together to challenge devastating educational policies in Chicago, the cradle of a nationwide school "reform" effort that has much more to do with breaking unions and doing urban education on the cheap than actually providing low-income African American and Latino students the education they deserve and have been systematically denied for decades. Far from being "the civil rights issue of our time," hedge fund managers, opportunist non-educators and captured policymakers have created a blueprint for privatizing perhaps the most democratic of all public institutions. It was in this environment that CTU members struck for educational and worker justice, and won. What follows is a brief version of this historic event.

Rahm Emmanuel was elected mayor of Chicago in February of 2011. His education platform was based on one main talking point (later found to be a complete fabrication): because of the short school day and year, Chicago students were in school almost four fewer years than comparable students in Houston. Emmanuel pledged to end this travesty by forcing Chicago's teachers to work more.

Negotiations between Emmanuel's hand-picked school board and the Chicago Teachers Union began in November of 2011. The school board's first offer was a four-year contract that paid teachers a one-time raise of 2% for a longer school day and year that resulted in a 20% increase in work (not including the unpaid out-of-school work that teachers, predominantly women, are expected to do).

Throughout the process of negotiations, Chicago's school board and mayor, in conjunction with Astroturf reform groups backed by some of the best-known billionaires in the country, attempted to vilify teachers and school paraprofessionals at every opportunity. For the past 15 years, these groups have been pushing a



privatization agenda in large cities that hides behind the language of so-called school reform: measure teachers according to standardized tests, fire experienced teachers and replace them with inexperienced (and therefore cheaper) novices, and open a wave of often for-profit charter schools that give parents a (false) choice. These teacher-bashing efforts were relentless and occasionally bordered on the absurd. The mayor and his allies even went so far as to pay protestors to support policies that fired teachers and threw long-standing community schools, overwhelmingly in African American and Latino neighborhoods, into complete disarray.

Despite these challenges, by mid-September 2012 the CTU won a strong contract with major new provisions and protections after a seven day strike in which more than 20,000 teachers walked picket lines every day, parents of CPS students supported teachers 2-to-1 over the mayor, money and support for the CTU flowed in from across the US and countries around the world, and the conversation about education reform in the US was plastered across the front page of almost every major newspaper. Perhaps most importantly, the CTU became a model for how to stand and fight for schools that students deserve. Teachers in Chicago inspired workers around the world. How did a union that as recently as a few years ago caved on almost every reform measure turn into an organization that won a high-profile battle against President Obama's powerful and well-funded former chief-of-staff?

Simply put, the Chicago Teachers Union organized and inspired its own members and built broad and deep connections to community and parent organizations across the city. The union transformed itself from a service union struggling to maintain what it had earned decades ago into an organizing union that actively pursues a vision of what public school could be.

The current CTU leadership came to office in 2010. As members of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE), the leadership promised to shake up the union and vowed to defend public education. Officers and other office staff took a pay cut compared to the previous union administration and used the savings to create new research and organizing departments and to expand the communications department. The union's organizers went school by school to develop active union delegates (stewards) and strengthen school-level organization. The research department developed a report called "The Schools Chicago's Students Deserve" to lay out a research-based vision for how different schools would be for the city's predominantly low-income student population if they had art, world language, music, physical education, libraries in elementary schools and sufficient wrap-around services like a reasonable ratio of counselors and social workers for students who suffer from trauma in their daily lives. Union members organized parents to oppose school closings and turnarounds (where the entire staff of a school is fired, including janitors and cafeteria workers) that

destroyed their local communities. Even the contract negotiation process widened participation. Rather than just limit the bargaining team to officers and a labor lawyer, the team was expanded to include more than 35 teachers from across the city. In short, a large contingent of rank-and-file teachers was activated to take part in the process of acting like a union.

Without this organizational development, the CTU would not have been able to pull off the events that led up to the strike. After almost 6 months of negotiations that had produced little movement, more than 10,000 people rallied and marched for a fair contract at the end of May. Soon after, the union took an historic strike authorization vote. Under Illinois Senate Bill 7, CTU was required to get a vote of 75% of the entire active membership of 26,000 to be able to strike. Anyone who did not vote was automatically counted as a "no" vote. The bill's main backer, Stand for Children's Jonah Edelman, boasted at a 2011 Aspen Institute panel that CTU would never be able to reach that threshold. CTU got more than 90% of members to vote yes; 98% of those who voted said they would strike. Even after those showings, however, the Board would not budge from its negotiating positions. No additional wrap-around staff. No recall policy for experienced educators. The longer day and year that the mayor wanted was still on the table. In July, a fact-finding process mandated by SB7 returned a verdict that

continued on next page

Chicago IVAW Stands in Solidarity with Chicago Teachers Union

SABRINA WALLER

Singapore and Denmark are two nations that produce some of the best educational outcomes. In both cases, their teachers are paid as handsomely as their doctors. In short, you get what you pay for. I served in the United States Navy from 1998 to 2003. The Navy's slogan is "A Global Force for Good." We have a Navy of global proportions because we have made it a priority and have spent the requisite funds for such a force. We currently spend annually on our military more than all nations with military budgets combined. We have the biggest and strongest military in the world because we pay for it. We spend around 640 billion dollars on the Pentagon annually, yet the 2013 federal budget only asks for 47 billion dollars for education. That is why the US is ranked 14th out of the 34 most developed countries in

education. What would the US look like if those figures were reversed? What if the Pentagon got 47 billion dollars a year and the Department of Education got 640 billion a year? Our children would be the smartest in the world and our military could achieve parity with everyone else. I have served in the military and I am the mother of a twelve-year-old. I can tell you unequivocally that I would rather see my tax dollars go towards my son's education than to the military I served any day. How many schools are sub-standard because we deemed it more important to buy 187 F-22 Raptors (the most expensive and technologically advanced fighter jet to have never been used in combat)? This strike is not about politics, money, testing, class sizes, benefits, or anything else. It is about American priorities.

Today's America prioritizes militarism, not education. Until our priorities are reversed, we can plan on bequeathing a lesser future to our children than the one we inherited from our parents. In other words, we can kiss the American Dream goodbye.

P.S. Just because I said it, does make it true. If I could reach out to Chicago Public School students, I would encourage them to look up these numbers and determine if they are more or less correct. They have a greater stake in this game than we do. They will be competing against nations that truly invest in their future (nations like Singapore and Denmark). These figures should offend them just as much as us. They should be angry that we invest more in warfare than in them.

Editor's note: The strike by the Chicago Teachers Union was settled and the students in the Chicago Public School system returned to classes on Wednesday 19 September 2012.



SABRINA WALLER IS A MEMBER OF IVAW CHICAGO.



Standing Up

continued from previous page

overwhelmingly supported CTU, and the American Federation of Teachers (of which CTU is Local 1) passed a resolution at its national convention to stand in support of Chicago's teachers. Still, the Board of Education would not move on the contract. In late August, CTU's House of Delegates authorized the leadership to give 10-day notice of a strike, and on Labor Day, almost 20,000 people turned out for a march and rally that supported CTU's efforts at a fair contract. Finally, after nine months of negotiations that produced insufficient movement, the CTU walked out on September 10th, its first strike in 25 years.

The strike was successful because of the support the CTU consciously built with parents and community organizations, the dedication of its members to principles of educational justice, the creativity of teachers' communications (homemade signs, chants, and music videos were amazing), and the union's ability to turn out huge numbers of people. More than 20,000 red-shirted teachers and supporters shut down Chicago's downtown Loop district three out of the strike's first four days. Perhaps more importantly, an equal number of teachers canvassed their school neighborhoods on the strike's

fifth day to talk with parents and community members about why the strike was in the best interests of children. CPS finally cracked and made a fair offer that same day. When members of the union's House of Delegates asked for time to digest the tentative agreement and the opportunity to share key tenets with members, democratically choosing to extend the strike for two additional days, commentators fumed that teachers were unnecessarily harming children. However, Chicago residents supported this show

of democracy, despite the city's conditioned history of accepting whatever dictate comes from a position of power. The time was valuable, as delegates voted overwhelmingly to end the strike once members had an opportunity to see the terms. The mayor was so damaged by the strike that he commissioned and incessantly ran a TV commercial claiming victory (New York hedge funders picked up the \$1 million ad buy tab), and yet parents still back teachers. Clearly, the union's organizing efforts ensured the strike's success.

CTU's push for equitable public education did not end with the strike. Emmanuel and CPS

have already claimed that their goal is to close 80-120 schools in the near future, push out veteran teachers with the new state-mandated evaluation process, and cut teachers' pensions. CTU will therefore continue to organize and agitate. If you're near Chicago, grab a red shirt and join us - we'll be defending equitable public education at every opportunity.



KURT HILGENDORF HAS TAUGHT HISTORY AND COACHED DEBATE FOR 6 YEARS IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND IS CURRENTLY ON LEAVE FROM TEACHING TO WORK FOR THE CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION.



Thank You for Your Service

BILL EHRHART

Over the past decade or so, it's become quite the fashion, when people learn that I once served in the Marines, to say to me, "Thank you for your service." I'm sure they mean well, but I wish they would take just a moment to reflect on what they are saying.

I went halfway around the world to a place called Vietnam, where I killed, maimed, brutalized and made miserable a people who had never done me or my country any harm, nor ever would or could.

I served proud, arrogant, and ultimately ignorant politicians and statesmen who thought they could mold the world into whatever shape they believed it should have. But it was hardly service in the interest of my country or the majority of Americans, let alone in the interest of the majority of the Vietnamese, who wanted little else than for me to stop killing them and go back where I came from.

Do those well-meaning folks who thank me for my service really want to thank me for that? I surely hope not. It is not service I am proud of.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, the stock genuflection to Vietnam War veterans was "Welcome Home." But what makes anyone think I've ever come home? Because I got out of Vietnam with all ten fingers and all ten toes? Because I vote and pay my taxes? Because I keep my shoe laces tied and don't drool? It's hard to feel at home in a country that learned so little from such a destructive and ruinous debacle.

And now I see that the Pentagon has launched a decade-long Vietnam War Commemoration to "thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War." There's even a website that says, "A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You."

Hey, I could use some decent affordable healthcare, or even just a free tank of gas for my car. But what am I supposed to do with that website? Eat it? Take it to the bank? Meanwhile, consider the "service" I performed while in uniform. My nation is grateful for that?

And now "the other one percent" who fill the ranks of our

so-called "volunteer" military today is carrying the entire blood burden of our latest wars, getting sent to Iraq and Afghanistan over and over again, while the rest of us go about our lives as if nothing at all out of the ordinary is going on.

What the military seems to have learned from the Vietnam War is: get rid of the draft and you get rid of domestic opposition to foreign interventions. So far, it's working.

But the cost is steadily mounting. Suicides among active duty military and recent veterans have reached epidemic proportions. The Veterans Administration has a backlog of over 800,000 claims for medical disability. And substantial allegations have been made that the VA and the Department of Defense are falsely diagnosing veterans and soldiers with pre-existing "personality disorders" prior to their military service so that these veterans can be denied benefits for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, though the military was happy enough to sign them up when they first enlisted. Thank

you for your service, indeed.

Frankly, I suspect that this whole Vietnam War Commemoration is less about a grateful nation thanking and honoring us Vietnam War veterans than it is about a frightened and nervous government trying to gloss over the follies and consequences of military adventurism so that the next generation of young Americans remains willing to place their trust in the hands of people who clearly believe that those they send to fight our wars are expendable (rhetoric not withstanding; actions speak louder than words).

Instead of thanking our servicemen and women for their service, perhaps we ought to be asking less service from them and more service from ourselves.



BILL EHRHART IS AN HONORABLY DISCHARGED FORMER MARINE SERGEANT WITH A PURPLE HEART MEDAL, A NAVY COMBAT ACTION RIBBON, AND TWO PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATIONS.

A Heart Felt Thank You

GREGORY ROSS

Three out of five times it is a middle aged woman. One out of the other two will also be a woman; younger or older. The occasional man; well one in the total five, will invade my space; come up to me, like the women; grab my hand, shake it and begin to profusely, effusively, thank me for my "Service." If I hadn't already made a deal with the universe/god/my conscience to always have a pin or patch with Veterans For Peace on my body while in public to help assuage my guilt; survivor's and otherwise; I would think of going out in the World disguised as a "civilian," to avoid these heart felt thank you moments. As it is, part of my guilt is that I was never in direct combat but, anything identifying the wearer as a Veteran implies the worst to most citizens. At first I would try to explain my noncombatant/R.E.M.F. status to them. One more thing about the military experience they could not understand: why had it effected me so strongly if I wasn't in direct combat.

Over the years, I have responded in different ways. At first, I did not know what to think, what to say and would stammer something like, "No, don't thank me," and before I could say more they would insist on the thank you, over and over. Then I tried saying that I had not chosen to do the "Service," I had been drafted but, again, they cut me off. After a while, I got more adamant about getting my say. I tried things like, "You don't owe me anything..." but, before I could get much more out; I was steamrolled with a salvo of heart felt acknowledgements of their gratitude. After a while, I got a thicker skin about it and would say, "You are welcome" and move on as fast as possible. But, then their feelings got hurt. Their intentions were, after all good; mostly. Some were suffering from their own version of survivor's guilt and were thanking me to make themselves feel better.

Then there was a short period where I thought of responding with this line: "You are welcome. You

know I killed that one particular VC just for you." A couple of combat veteran friends laughed at that, but were relived when I told them that I never had done such a thing. But, sometimes I want to shock the World.

I wear the Veterans For Peace button/badge, as I had said to atone, but also to support the cause and then on the least altruistic level because; I can never stop being a Veteran; never let go of War, so, why should civilians have the privilege of forgetting about war. There is a little "In-Your-Face" aspect.

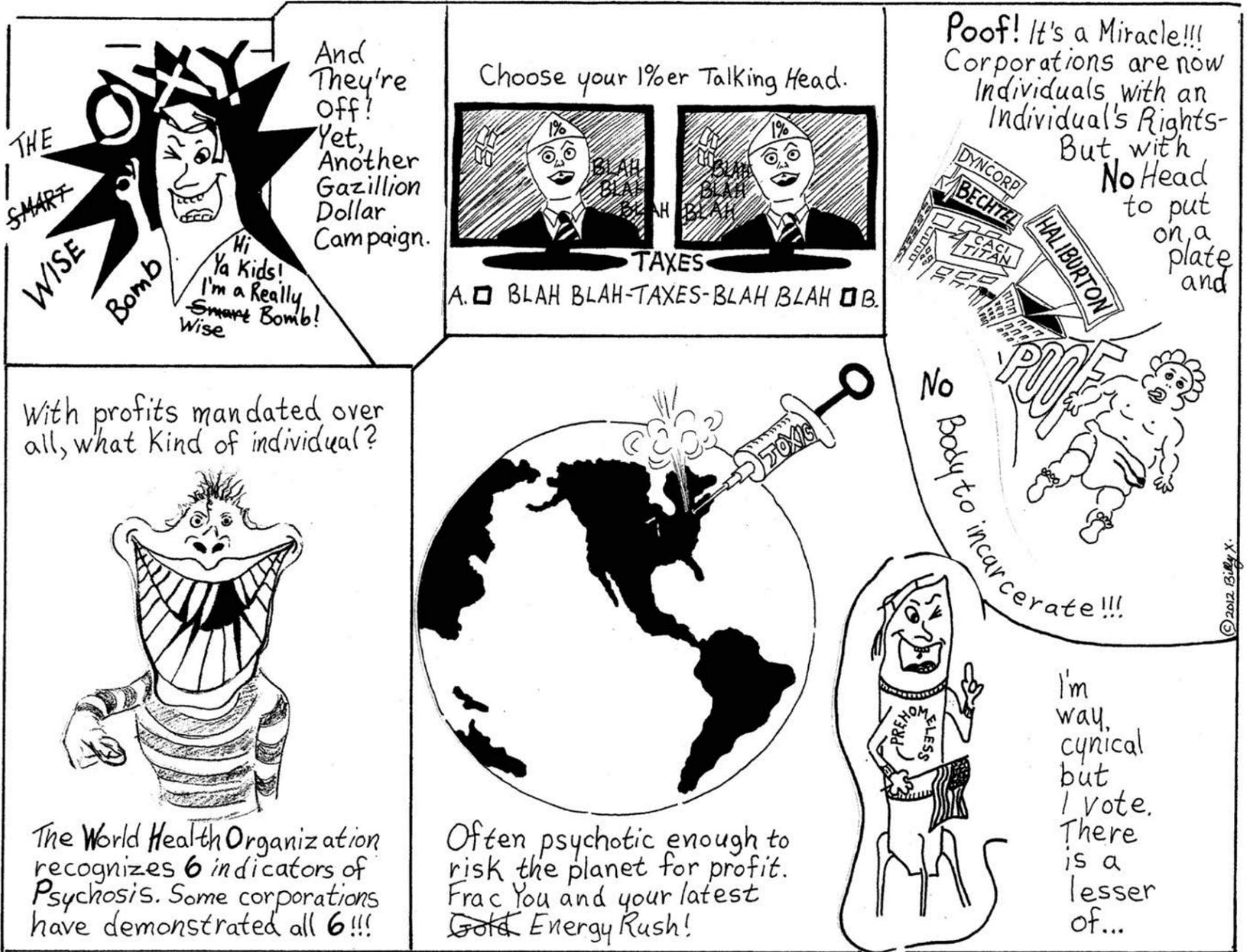
The answer I now offer to people with "Heart Felt Thanks" is to say, "I did not want to go to war and I would hope that no one ever had to go again; as unrealistic as that hope is. If you really want to thank me, work for Peace," and then I hand them a card with the Veterans For Peace and VVAW websites and suggest they get involved or at least donate. I can't tell you how many people push it back into my hand. But, some take

it and a few of those probably do at least make a donation.

The other day, I got another twist. The University of Iowa Department of English, which publishes the Iowa Review put out a request for veteran writers to submit to a special issue. I sent a few things in and waited the six or eight weeks for the polite rejection letter. The last line read: "Thank you for your service to our country..."



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



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



Jacob Crawford, retiring his medals at IVAW anti-NATO protest in Chicago, May 20, 2012.

Againanam

The poets have fallen silent
 what more is there to say
 we've warned you of this next defeat
 but you persist away

Insensed, humiliated parents at
 our broods bent for destruction
 our apoplectic pleading
 our hopes and dreams reduction

When more have chosen suicide
 than all the IUDs
 so reminiscent of the war
 we fought in '70

But wait! We're nation building now
 or chasing terrorism's tail
 but never to conclusion
 our warriors chose to pull the plug
 than live in that confusion

Their leaders' giant sandbox to
 test and build new toys
 the stalwarts of the technocrats
 whose ear Barack enjoys

Yep! "They might come in handy
 to put down strife at home"
 if one should listen closely
 you'll hear hear our founders groan

If this is all our youth are worth
 then damn you everyone
 you'll not only lose the war
 you pollute the hope for freedom

We poets are romantics
 (at least it's true of me)
 my muse would have me write of love
 or spirituality

Instead I seem condemned to dream
 of horrors I know too well
 of body counts and protests
 I find my soul's in hell.

A banner in a headline
 3 languages: "GO HOME"
 ironically it's captured by
 a million dollar drone.

—Rick Harrienger

Speaking Truth to Students

MICHAEL ORANGE

"Did you kill anybody?" This is, no doubt, the most frequently asked question when I give my "Truth in Recruiting" presentations in the schools. It always takes me back to my first time; "Bring a Vet to School Day" back in 1984 in my daughter's 6th grade class. It was my first try peeking out of the veterans' closet and not too pleasant of an experience. I got the first few words out of the seven-word truth, "It was my job to kill people," choked up, spun around, and lost it right there for several minutes. It's gotten better since then after hundreds more presentations, but it still exacts a heavy psychic toll, not just on me, but on all who are willing to expose their participation in our country's wars of aggression.

Since 2008, members of the Minneapolis St. Paul Chapter 27 of Veterans for Peace have worked hard with representatives of Women Against Military Madness and other groups to gain official access for our speakers and tablers

to the local schools. No small task indeed. I'm proud to report that our speakers made twenty-five presentations this school year.

A typical high school class for me begins with shouted-out guesses to my list of ten startling questions about the effects of war, PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma, and the half-truth pitches from recruiters (available upon request). I ask them not to look at the answers that are on the back of the sheet and explain that I will cover them during my presentation. From the students I observe avid interest, tears, and an occasional yawn. I always get a surprise question; like the time a girl last spring, with a look of deep concern, asked, "Are you OK now?"

I keep a folder bursting with the cards and letters I've received. The following excerpts are from two college students who wrote this past year:

"I very much appreciated your visit to our classroom.... It

was so important to hear your stories ... as many are not willing to talk about their experiences or perhaps not around any longer to do so.... I especially appreciate that you are a Veteran for Peace. I feel that it is so important for people who have firsthand experience with participating in war are part of the peace movement, and I feel that you and those like you give a different face to the protesters of war and purveyors of peace."

"During your presentation, I was impressed with your honesty. You were able to share a very personal part of your life; your year at war and after without 'sugar coating' the events or their outcomes. This helped me understand that 'war poisons veterans' just as you had said, but you made me realize how much family members also share the heartbreak and sacrifices of war."

When the sound of the bell signals it's time to rush to the next class (usually in the midst of one of my long-winded answers to

a straightforward question), the smiles, handshakes, and sincere thanks confirm that this is, as my wife, Cynthia, calls it, holy work.



AS A MARINE IN VIETNAM, MICHAEL EXPERIENCED COMBAT IN NUMEROUS SEARCH-AND-DESTROY MISSIONS AND PATROLS DURING HIS ONE-YEAR TOUR OF DUTY (1969-70). AFTERWARDS, HE RETURNED TO HIS FORMER UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, KENT STATE, IN MAY 1970, JUST BEFORE OHIO NATIONAL GUARDSMEN SHOT 13 OF HIS FELLOW STUDENTS, KILLING FOUR. IN 2001, HE PUBLISHED A MEMOIR OF HIS EXPERIENCES, "FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM". MICHAEL TEACHES A CLASS ON THE HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR AT VENUES INCLUDING THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S COMPLETE SCHOLAR PROGRAM. HE JOINED THE VVAW AT THE FAMED APRIL 1971 PROTEST IN DC.

Patrick

He can't get out of his head the horrors he's seen
picking the pieces up and stuffing them back.
Like Lady Macbeth, his hands will never be clean.

But not like her: she murdered a king;
he was only an army medic, but now
he can't get out of his head the violence he's seen.

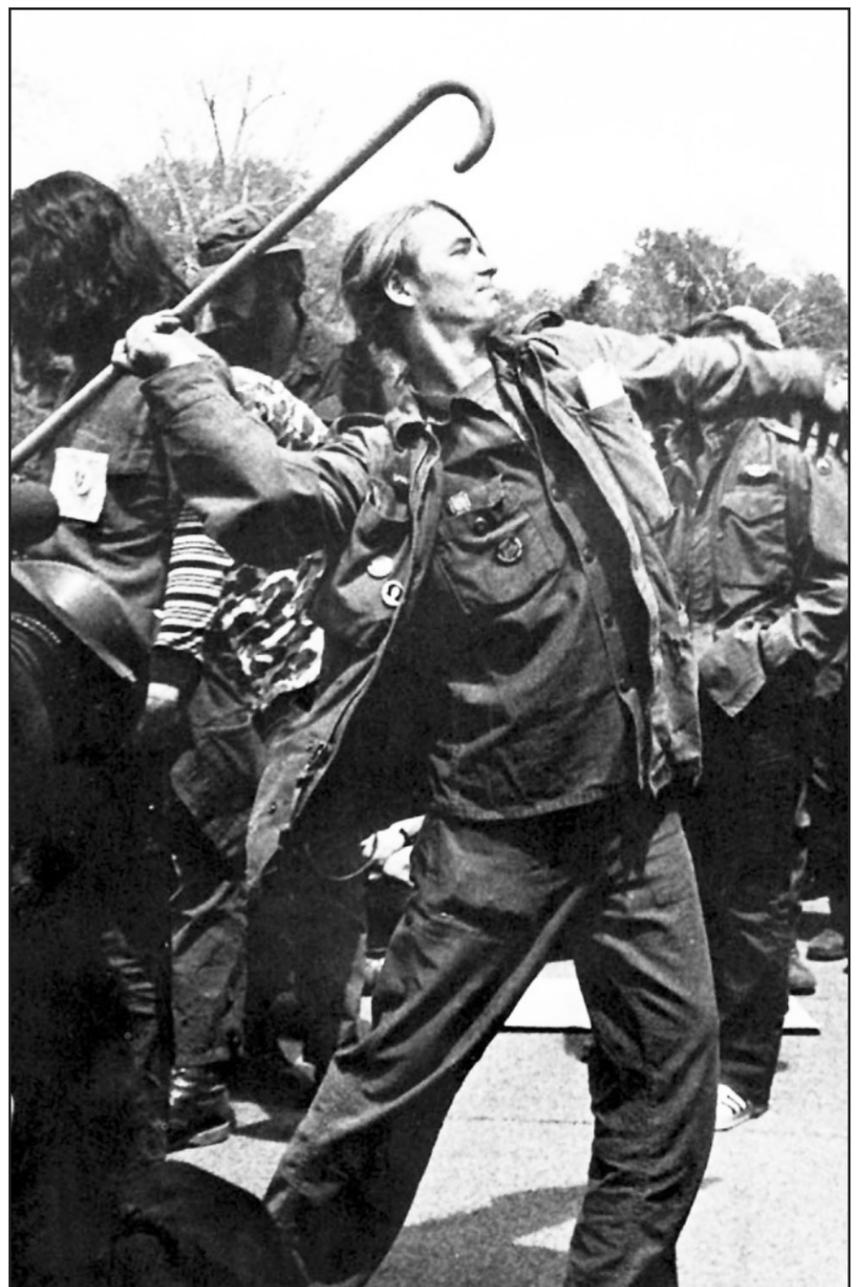
He only tried to put the pieces back
into broken bodies. It wasn't his fault,
but now he thinks his hands will never be clean.

His unit invaded Fallujah;
urban fighting's as ugly as fighting gets.
He can't get out of his head the havoc he's seen.

He can't sit still or even look at his hands.
He tried to save his friends, the dead and the maimed.
Now he's sure his hands will never be clean.

The army said he was fine and sent him home
with so much blood his hands will never be clean.
The VA gives him pills. Frozen in time,
he can't get out of his head the carnage he's seen.

—W.D. Ehrhart



Dewey Canyon III, 1971.

Truth in Recruiting: Questions

MICHAEL ORANGE

This information is adapted from the leaflet I use when speaking to students. This is updated as of 1/11/2012.

General questions:

Jot your answers and I'll provide the answers as I proceed with my presentation.

1. What is the length of military obligation when enlisting: 2, 4, or 8 years?
2. What percentage of veterans made use of the skills they learned in the military on their civilian jobs?
3. How many people died during the Vietnam War?
4. Of the total deaths in modern wars, what percentage are civilian deaths?
5. How many times has the US intervened militarily in a foreign country? How many times since the end of World War II (1945)?
6. How many military bases does the US maintain outside of the US?
7. The US accounts for what percentage of the world's total defense spending?
8. What percentage of the annual federal budget goes to support the country's military operations?
9. What percentage of combat soldiers develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?
10. What percentage of women in the military reported sexual abuse?

Answers to Questions are on the back but please don't peek just yet.

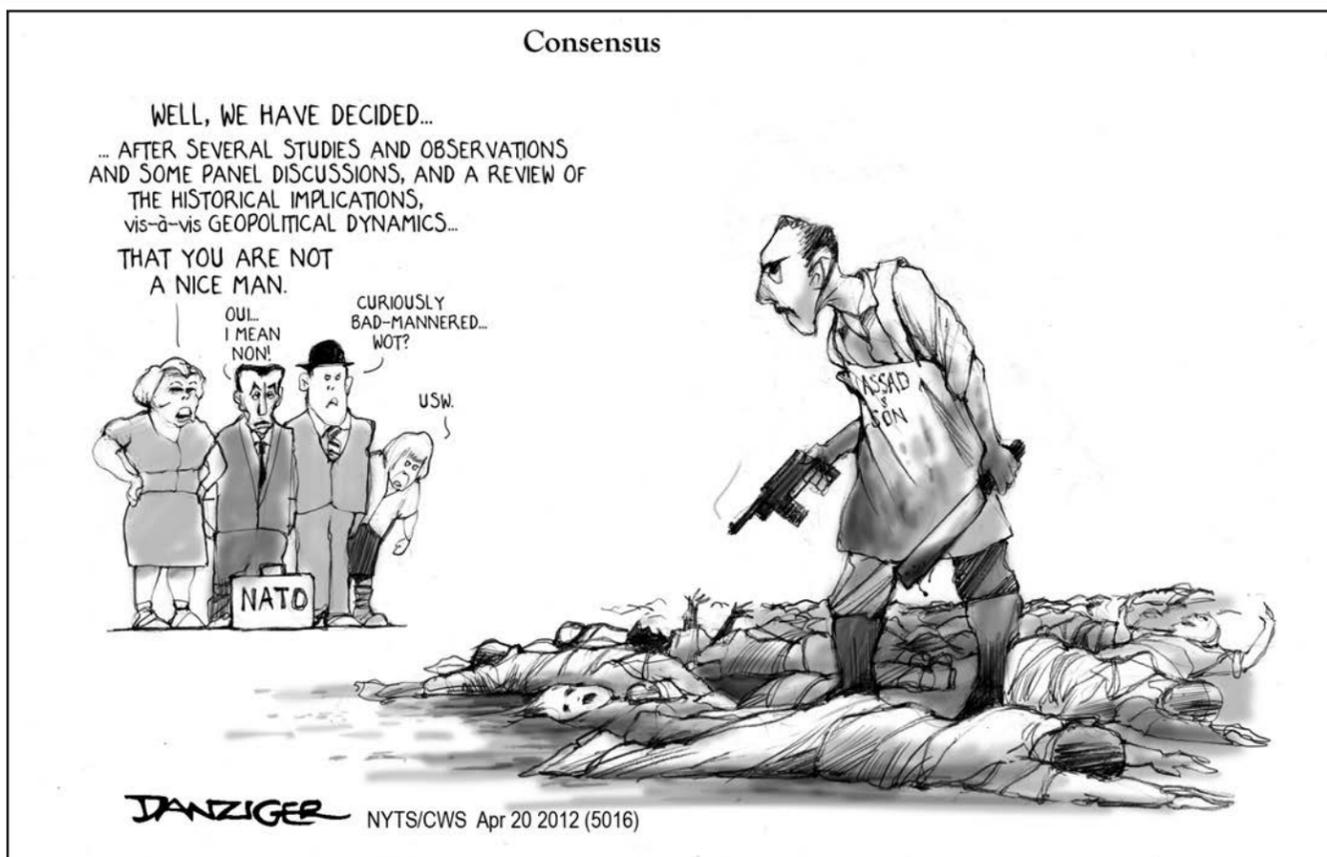
Resources:

- "Addicted to War: Why the US Can't Kick Militarism" by Joel Andreas, 2004. Available to order or read in its entirety on line: www.addictedtowar.com.
- "Advice From Veterans on Military Service and Recruiting Practices: A Resource Guide for Young People Considering Enlistment," free download at <http://www.vfp56.org/VEOP.html>
- Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan, sponsored by the Iraq Veterans Against the War (www.IVAW.org). See also, "This is Where We Take Our Stand" and complete testimony at <http://www.ivaw.org/wintersoldier/testimony>
- Project YANO: Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community organization that provides young people with an alternative point of view about military enlistment and alternative services information. Resources are available at <http://www.projectyano.org/>
- The National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth provides resources about alternative service. See http://www.nnomy.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=62&&Itemid=147

- Additional information on Truth in Recruiting, refer to <http://www.vfpchapter27.org/recruitment.htm>
- "Vietnam", a comic written by Julian Bond and published in 1967, after he was expelled from the Georgia House of Representatives for opposing the war in Viet Nam. Available to read online at: http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Exhibits/Bond/Bond_comic_page_01.html

Answers to Questions:

1. Length of military service obligation: 8 years, typically with a combination of active duty, active reserve duty and inactive reserve duty.
2. Transferability of military skills to civilian careers: 12% of male veterans and 6% of female veterans made use of the skills they learned in the military on their civilian jobs.
3. Vietnam war deaths: 6 million in Southeast Asia. 60,209 US soldiers dead or missing. 305,000 US soldiers wounded. 4.7 million civilian deaths.
4. Civilian deaths as a percent of total deaths:
 - WWI: 15%
 - WWII: 65%
 - Korea: 70%
 - Vietnam: 85%
 - Iraq: 93% Between 800,000 and 1.2 million civilian deaths. 4,384 US soldiers dead or missing. 31,716 US soldiers wounded.
5. US military interventions in foreign countries: 147 total: 44 since the end of World War II.
6. US military bases on foreign soil: 737.
7. US military spending as a percent of the world's total spending: 45%.
8. Military budget: More than 50% of the annual federal budget goes to support the country's military operations. Since the "Black Budget" for the military is secret information, the actual percentage is higher but not public.
9. PTSD and suicides: About 30% of veterans of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan conflicts develop long-term debilitating PTSD. Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts between the ages of 20-24 are between 2 and 4 times as likely to commit suicide as their civilian peers.
10. Sexual abuse of women in the military: 30% of women in the military reported being victims of rape or attempted rape and 75% reported being sexually harassed.



US Children of Vietnam Vets Bring Message of Solidarity to Okinawa

JON MITCHELL

This article originally appeared in The Japan Times, September 2012. Reprinted with permission.

Residents of Okinawa Island have recently been confronted with mounting evidence that their land used to be a major storage site for the toxic US defoliant Agent Orange.

Over the past 18 months, dozens of US veterans have claimed that they were poisoned by the dioxin-tainted chemical while stationed on Okinawa Island during the Vietnam War. At the time, the island was under US jurisdiction and a staging post for the conflict in Southeast Asia in which millions of liters of defoliant were sprayed in an attempt to rob enemy forces of jungle cover and crops. Last month, a US Army document was discovered that seems to prove Okinawa veterans' claims; the report states that 25,000 barrels of Agent Orange were stored on the island prior to 1972.

Despite this apparent confirmation, the US government denies that Agent Orange was ever in Okinawa and Tokyo has refused to conduct environmental tests. The two governments' intransigence has angered Okinawa residents and left many of them seeking answers about the potential impact on their island. Last month, they were given the opportunity to speak firsthand to someone who has dedicated her life to spreading awareness about the dangers of these defoliants.

Heather Bowser, 39, is the daughter of a US soldier exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam during the war. "My father had five bypasses on his heart when he was only 38 years old and at age 40 he developed diabetes. When he was 50, he died of a massive heart attack," Bowser

said during the visit.

The notoriously persistent effects of dioxin, which can even sicken the children and grandchildren of those exposed, did not stop with her father; his first two children died in the womb and when Bowser was born, she was 2 months premature and missing her right leg below the knee, several fingers and the big toe on her left foot.

"My father used to say that if he'd known the effects of Agent Orange on his children, he would have fled to Canada to avoid serving in the war," Bowser said.

During the 1970s and '80s, the US government and the manufacturers of the chemicals strenuously denied the harmful effects of Agent Orange. Bowser's father campaigned to spread awareness and often brought his daughter to rallies — dressing her in a bright T-shirt bearing the message, "Agent Orange Kills."

Although his activities attracted the attention of the authorities, work by activists such as him helped to persuade the US government in the 1990s to offer compensation to American service members directly exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

Today they are eligible for compensation for over a dozen illnesses ranging from cancers and diabetes to heart problems. In addition, the sick children of the estimated 1,800 female veterans of the Vietnam conflict are offered assistance. Yet Washington still refuses to help the tens of thousands of poisoned children of male veterans — second-generation survivors like Bowser who are sick with serious health problems.

After her father died in 1998, Bowser carried on his struggle to seek justice for those exposed. In 2010, she became one of the

first second-generation survivors in the US to travel to Vietnam to meet with some of the country's 3 million dioxin victims. Her trip was featured in a Japanese documentary, "Living the Silent Spring," directed by Masako Sakata.

While in Vietnam, Bowser met a young third-generation survivor whose birth defects mirrored her own. "Meeting him really struck home the legacy of these poisons across generations and borders. On a personal level, it helped me to come to terms with myself," said Bowser.

The visit convinced Bowser of the urgent need to reach out to all of those affected by Agent Orange. In January, she set up the nonprofit organization Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance with a fellow second-generation survivor. Today the group has over 350 members on three continents united by its mission statement to serve "as a voice for the children of Vietnam veterans, including second- and third-generation victims of Agent Orange and

dioxin exposure worldwide. We will fight for justice globally." Last month, Bowser brought the group's message to Okinawa as part of a program organized by Japanese NPO Peace Boat to highlight the international and inter generational legacy of Agent Orange. During her three-day stay on the island, Bowser was shown several of the US bases where the toxic chemical had allegedly been stored and sprayed to clear weeds during the 1960s and '70s. In the northern Okinawa town of Henoko, Bowser met with people living near US Marine Corps' Camp Schwab. According to US veterans, the installation had a cache of hundreds of barrels of Agent Orange that was used to kill vegetation within the base and on the adjacent Jungle Warfare Training Center. While in Henoko, Bowser heard how local residents were apparently poisoned in the 1960s after consuming shellfish contaminated by the toxin. Hiroshi Aritomi, an outspoken critic of

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Heather Bowser



Revisiting Vietnam

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pain, and suffering to thousands of Vietnamese, long after the cessation of fighting. Most striking are the severe birth defects—some of which are recognized as associated with Vietnam service among US veterans, now seen also in Vietnamese children.

Members of the American delegation included: Dr. Franklin Mirer, Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at Hunter College of the City University of New York and former Director of the Health and Safety Department for the United Automobile Workers; Dr. Jean Grassman, Associate Professor at City University of New York and researcher investigating the effect of dioxins on human populations; Dr. Michael McGarvey, whose career includes executive responsibility at the federal, state, and local levels, academic administration and teaching at New York university, and senior executive positions in the private sector; Dr. Carole Baraldi, a professional nurse practitioner and educator on disability and women's health care; Marie Elivert, a health care executive with over 35 years in the private and public sector; Dr. Daniel Robie, Assistant Professor at York College of the City University of New York where he conducts research, has authored a number of scientific papers, and teaches physical, analytical, and inorganic chemistry. Also, myself, Ms. Susan Schnall, Adjunct Assistant Professor at New York University in Health Policy and Planning, worked for 31 years as a senior executive in public hospitals in New York, and is a co coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Respon-

sibility Campaign and a national coordinator of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

The delegation began the trip in Hanoi, meeting with VAVA and members of the Office of the Committee of 33 to discuss the history of the use of defoliants from 1961-1971 and the serious and long lasting impact on the people and land of Vietnam. Priorities of VAVA are: environmental remediation of the hot spots (where the US maintained their bases), prevention of birth defects; survey of foods that are most contaminated, education of people about safe foods, care for victims in the hot spots, research on diseases correlated with AO/dioxin exposure, provide services to women and children exposed, establish rehabilitation services and special schools as needed.

After our meeting, we travel to Thi Binh and visit an occupational school whose students are dealing with birth defects caused by parental exposure to the herbicides. We meet an older man—veteran of the US conflict, who is lying on a bamboo mat, crying silently in pain, tears running down his cheeks. He is curled up, arms and legs rigid, unable to move. His wife sits next to me, speaking quietly in Vietnamese, gently taking my arm. I talk to her through an interpreter to let them know we are Americans who come to help heal the terrible wounds of war our country has inflicted. Some of us weep.

But it is the children, the second and third generation babies and children born with enlarged heads and bulging eyes, or curled up on these raised bamboo mats,



The Science/Public Health Delegation at the DaNang Airport.

their bodies twisted and rigid, extremities bent so they replicate being in the uterus, tremors cursing through their limbs—and they look at you when you reach out a hand and touch them. Though they are not able to speak, they smile and react while siblings and parents stand by on dirt floors, in wooden shacks with no running water or electricity. The village people come to see the strangers. We are all struck by the devotion of the families and the care these children receive.

Our visit the next day, June 7th, takes us to visit the Vietnamese Women's Sanitation Project in Hai Dong, run by the local commune with starter funds from a number of foundations, this is a micro credit project where families borrow money to improve and then pay back the funds which are then used for another family in the district.

We visit A Loui and Hue, areas that were brutalized by fighting during the American War, and sprayed countless times by aircraft with the herbicides designed to destroy farmlands and forests, jungle cover and food supplies. We visit with the remnants of war—the children, disabled and contorted by those chemicals inflicted on

their parents.

There are, as well, official meetings with Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, the main negotiator for the Provisional Revolutionary Government at the Paris Peace Talks in the early 1970's. Today Madame Binh is head of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation. We talk with her about our impressions from our visit and work on behalf of those who have been harmed by the use of herbicides in Vietnam. She speaks about the suffering of the Vietnamese people and the responsibility of the chemical companies and the US government to ease the suffering. She is well aware of the unsuccessful legal suit and our efforts to pass a congressional bill—HR 2634 Relief for the Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011. She asks about our chances for success and we promise we will continue our work until there is justice for the Vietnamese.

Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan meets with our delegation and promises collaboration with us on the Agent Orange/dioxin struggle. He suggests that American scientists conduct additional research to establish the most appropriate methods for environmental detoxification and treatment for Agent Orange victims.

DaNang, once used by the Americans as a Marine base, has become an international city with tall commercial centers, resort areas, modern architecture, bustling with activity. We visit the former air base and learn about the plans for remediation through the use of thermal desorption. The land is brown, with patches of long grass, grey concrete poured over areas to contain the remaining dioxin. There is a chemical odor and overcast present. Residential housing across a road is separated by a wire fence to keep people from



The DaNang Airport.

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Revisiting Vietnam

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fishing in the contaminated Sen Lake. Funds for the remediation of the airfield have been allocated, the contract is about to be let and then work will begin. There are 28 remaining "hotspots" in Vietnam, all of them former US military bases. Studies need to be done on those areas as well to determine continuing risk of exposure to the people who live nearby—and then the clean up will begin.

Our visit to VAVA DaNang and Center 3 for Children engages all of us with music, singing and dancing. A couple of days later Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong greets us in Ho Ch Minh City at Tu Du Hospital where we visit the children's unit. Dr. Phuong was formerly Director of the hospital and Director of Obstetrics. During the American War she delivered many babies who were born so

deformed that she couldn't show them to their mothers. In 1974 she researched a document from the National Academy of Sciences describing the problems. Dr. Phuong did a comparison study in Ho Chi Minh City which was a case comparison between mothers who were and were not exposed to the chemicals. A study with Dr. Zena Stein from Columbia University was presented at the 1987 International Dioxin Conference.

Sixty children live in Tu Du Hospital, suffering from the effects of Agent Orange/dioxin. They have spina bifida, congenital limb deformities, multi-joint stiffness, microcephaly (small brains), hydrocephalus (enlarged brains), cerebral palsy, and heart defects. One of the children was born without arms and writes with her toes.

Tran Thi Hoan is one of those children. She was born December 16, 1986 without two legs and a hand into a farming village in Binh Thuan province in central Vietnam. Her mother was exposed to Agent Orange when farming her land by canisters buried in the soil. Hoan was the first Vietnamese Agent Orange victim to testify before a House committee on the effects of Agent Orange. She noted: "many babies, children and young people my age live lives of quiet agony. They are trapped in bodies that do not work. Their brains remain in infancy even as their bodies grow. I am aware that the children and grandchildren of US veterans exposed to Agent Orange are suffering like us. We hope that they receive the medical care and assistance they need."

And now it is up to us to educate the American public about the deleterious and lasting impact of the use of herbicides in

Vietnam. We can do this by supporting the Relief for the Victims of Agent Orange Act of 2011 (HR 2634) that would provide needed services to the children of American veterans, provide care and services to the Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans harmed by the spraying and their children, and clean up (remediate) the land in southern Vietnam that continues to be contaminated by the dioxin.



SUSAN SCHNALL IS A CO-COORDINATOR 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.

US Children of Vietnam Vets

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the American bases in the area, voiced his anger over the Japanese government's refusal to conduct health tests among people living near Camp Schwab. "Tokyo is only following Washington's orders. They're trying to hide the truth from the people of Okinawa. We need an urgent investigation into medical records of former base workers (who allegedly sprayed Agent Orange)."

Bowser also visited Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, often labeled by locals as the most dangerous US base in the world due to its location in the densely populated central part of the city of Ginowan. In June, *The Japan Times* reported that dozens of barrels of Agent Orange had been secretly buried on the installation and marine corps officers had attempted to conceal the fact when they were accidentally unearthed

in the 1980s.

Bowser expressed her concerns and commented on the geographical similarities between the Futenma base and the former US air base in Da Nang, Vietnam, which today is the scene of a well-publicized dioxin cleanup attempt by the US government. "Both Da Nang and Futenma are located in the middle of residential areas where people have been living alongside contaminated soil for decades. It really makes me worried about the long-term health impact on Okinawa residents," Bowser said.

Bowser's concerns were also heightened by accounts from local residents of elevated rates of autism and cleft palates on the island — both of which are common problems among second- and third-generation Agent Orange survivors.

On her final day on the island, Bowser attended a screening of the documentary "Living the Silent Spring" at Okinawa University in Naha. As a testament to the islanders' worries over dioxin, the rainy weekday screening drew over 100 residents. Also in attendance was Seiryō Arakaki, chairman of the Special Committee of Base Issues, and four municipal assembly members whose constituencies host US bases where Agent Orange had allegedly been sprayed.

Following the screening, Bowser told the audience that she felt an affinity with Okinawa people, whose prefecture had been devastated by fighting during World War II and continues to host the majority of US bases in Japan. "My few days here in Okinawa have made a lasting impression on me. When it comes to the legacy of war, you have suffered so much, but I have been moved by your power to see through the ravages

of loss and find strength in each other," she said.

Following a plea for Washington to award compensation to US veterans exposed to Agent Orange on Okinawa, Bowser ended her visit with reassurances to residents that they were not alone in their struggle.

"I urge you to start organizing with each other and reach out to international Agent Orange communities. Demand full disclosure from the Japanese government as to the storage and use of Agent Orange in Okinawa. Now is not a time to stay silent."

Masami Kawamura, cofounder of Okinawa Outreach, the citizens' group at the forefront of demands for a full inquest into Agent Orange usage on the island, believes Bowser's trip paved the way for the struggle for justice that lies ahead. "By sharing her knowledge and experience, Heather has inspired many people. From now on, we will work together in solidarity with her. She has shown us that we need to not only look back at the past, but also work together for our future."



JON MITCHELL IS A WELSH-BORN WRITER - BASED IN YOKOHAMA. IN 2011, HIS RESEARCH INTO THE AMERICAN MILITARY'S USE OF AGENT ORANGE ON OKINAWA DURING THE VIETNAM WAR PROMPTED JAPAN'S GOVERNMENT TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT WOULD SEEK FULL DISCLOSURE FROM WASHINGTON ON THE ISSUE.



Peace Boat participants.

Justice Denied Again...

SUKIE ALEXANDER WACHTENDONK

It is with trembling hands and tears streaming onto my keyboard, that I regret to inform you, that a devastatingly final blow has been leveled in our three-year struggle, to secure DNA Micro-Array Genetic Testing for our son, Zak, who succumbed to his life-long Agent Orange disabilities in 2009. Zachary had celebrated his 30th Birthday one month before his sudden death.

At 11:58 pm on March 18 an ER Trauma Nurse at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison, called to state that the team was stopping resuscitation on our only son. Falling to my knees on our kitchen floor, I believe I screamed, "No, No, NO!" I must have fainted then, for when I came to, I was in the fetal position, and the telephone on the floor next to me was as dead as our precious and soulful son. I realized in that instant, as I pulled myself up that I now, must ascend the two flights of stairs of our 100-year-old farm house, to wake my husband of 37 years and tell him that our only son, our beloved and cherished Man-Child, was gone forever...ever so quietly and gently, telling him it was me, speaking his name, so as not to startle him in his ever present nightmares of war savagery and pain, reaching in the darkness for his hand and then his face, holding him in my love, trying in vain to somehow cushion the blow.

Thus beginning the newest version of our waking nightmare and its power to suck our very souls into the deep and endless abyss of Agent Orange torment and sorrow. "Zachary has died, Jimmy." "Another dream, Sukie, another bad dream, he uttered." "No, Honey, Please wake up. Zachary has died. We have to drive to the Hospital in Madison, now!" We held each other close for a scarce few moments, sobbing and shaking uncontrollably. Then, as quickly as he had jumped out of bed, Jim rushed downstairs to the kitchen telephone to call the ER where Zak was taken, following what we believe was a Grand Mal seizure due to pesticide exposure. He was dead on arrival. The ER Team halted resuscitation after almost an hour of attempting to get Zak's heart beating again.

"I must drive the 1.5 hours to Zachary immediately, Jim." Obviously in shock, still disbelieving the words of our boy's fate, he dials St. Mary's

ER and the blow is leveled once again, as the ER doc explains. Now in hyper-vigilant mode, Jim dressed immediately, jumped into the van, and took the long drive no parent ever wishes to take, but must endure, to it's ultimately devastating conclusion – to identify your child's body.

Zak was the last of four difficult pregnancies, two Agent Orange miscarriages and two live births. Both of our children were born with multiple birth defects from Agent Orange. At the autopsy, they discovered that Zak had several more, very serious abnormalities that we were totally unaware of until his autopsy results were sent to us on the first anniversary of his death.

When Jim arrived at the ER in Madison, two of his brothers, Bill and John, were there waiting for him, as well as our friend Ron, to stand with him when I could not. Our 12-year-old granddaughter, Morgan, was asleep upstairs. The school bus would arrive at 7am. I couldn't wake our elderly neighbors at 12:35 am, to stay with Morgan, our adopted daughter, so I remained at home, cursing the heavens, wondering why I did not FEEL my son's passing. Immense and crushing sorrow, fear, confusion and dread had taken hold of me. I composed his obituary and sent out death notifications to friends and family, while waiting for Jim to return home.

I now must share this burden of Zachary's death with Morgan, who grew up with "Uncle Bear" as a constant and loving presence in her life, since she came to reside with us at 7-months-old. She adored him, and he adored her. Zak told me once that Morgan was the child he could never have. I must also find a way to tell our daughter Ree. I must tell my only surviving child, that her brother is dead, in a telephone call. She and her family are 3 hours away with no transportation. I also have to explain this horror to our 9-year-old grandson, Chuck, as well as son-in-law, Jason.

Jim, in Madison, had been alone with Zachary, had said his farewells and prayers for his safe journey into his next incarnation - as a whole, undamaged and carefree spirit, on a new adventure into the unknown. Blessing our son's coming and going, he closed Zachary's eyes, kissed him for me



Zak Wachtendonk

and once more for himself. He covered him, one last time, and walked away, as he knew he must.

Upon meeting with the Assistant Coroner at the Hospital, Jim informed him of Zachary's Agent Orange birth abnormalities and disabilities, his multiple chemical sensitivities, his seizures since birth, following pesticide exposures, where he consistently and chronically became a pulseless non-breather, and needed to be revived by us, at least three times a month for most of his 30 years. Jim requested Pesticide Residue testing, which must be collected and analyzed within 24 hours of possible pesticide exposure, along with the usual drug analysis performed at autopsy. We suspected that the scenario of cascading symptoms, that were so prevalent through out his life, had occurred and we were not there at his apartment to help him. We were 65 miles away from Madison, unaware that this had occurred. And yet the guilt remains.

I did receive a phone call earlier that night, about 10:45 from Zak's roommate that Zak had a minor seizure incident, and the ambulance was taking him to a hospital. I asked if I needed to come to the hospital. He told me he didn't think so, but would call me when he got to the hospital. He never called back.

We now know that Zak was already dead at 10:45, that his roommate didn't call an ambulance for almost an hour, and then refused to move his trash from the hallway leading to Zak's room, so the EMTs and the Crash Cart

could reach Zak in his bedroom at the end of the hall. The EMT report claims that he said he had better things to do! Two female EMT's had to drag our dying son, naked, on a tarp, down that fucking hallway, through the trashed apartment, to the landing outside the apartment door. That is where our son expired, on the landing of his 2nd story walk-up.

The waste of skin that was Zak's roommate, knew that Zak was dead when he called me, at 10:45 but didn't have the balls to tell me. Jim and I could have been there with Zak earlier that night. He is very fortunate that we actively practice principles of non-violence.

Unbeknownst to us, our son was then transferred to the VA Hospital in Madison for his autopsy. Zak was not a veteran. Jim and I were blindsided again. WHY was he taken to the VA we asked? WHY were we not told this before he was sent there? We would NEVER have allowed the VA to perform his autopsy, had we known, because of EXACTLY what has happened.

The VA Pathologist, who performed the autopsy, ruled that Zak's death was due to obesity, not a seizure death, though he states that that could be argued. Not heart failure, even though Zak's heart was found to be very small when he died. It wasn't the heterotopia of the brain, a rare condition in which brain cells normally on the interior of the brain, are clustered in groups on the outside of the brain tissue. His sudden death

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Justice Denied Again...

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was not due to the finding, at the autopsy, that his cerebral cortex was severely malformed and sections of his brain tissue were missing. Did this finding indicate that Zak may have had cerebral palsy, AND muscular dystrophy, which twisted the bones his legs, atrophied his muscles, and rendered him unable to walk unaided until he was three? Is this why he was so severely limited in his range of motion, balance and mobility all of his life? Is this why he was legally blind, and neurologically impaired since his conception? All of these questions and no response to any of them.

Obesity is listed as cause of death and cannot be changed with out an expensive lawyer, a court order and a ton of money. We requested and received upon Zak's death, three "permanent holds" on Zak's remaining blood samples, and began the three-year search for a toxicology lab to perform the necessary pesticide residue tests that we were told could not be performed in the state of Wisconsin. I contacted Congressional Representatives, Zak's various doctors, genetics clinics and hospitals looking for some assistance in securing a lab and testing for Zak. The Coroner's office, to my knowledge, did not.

The EPA, after two years of haranguing, finally replied, via my Congressman. Not even they could undertake this testing that we have requested. The letter

also stated that I should have had this testing done while my son was alive. Apparently, my paragraph regarding Zak's various health issues, and our repeated attempts to have the VA or his own physicians perform these needed tests were not read or were not considered relevant for thirty years. All requests were denied either by VA administrators, clinics and insurance companies. Even CHAMPVA to this day refuses to authorize any AO testing, diagnosis or blood analysis of Jim or our dependents.

Almost four years have come and gone since Zak's death, and we continue the search for the answers and the meaningful assistance we need to survive out here in the world, as Agent Orange Families. There had been little movement on Zak's case until recently, when our grandson's physician at University of Wisconsin's Childrens Hospital became involved in Chuck's long-term care. Ironically, this is the same center we brought Ree and Zak, to for evaluation in 1979. Jim and I convinced the center to begin evaluations and offer clinical services to other AO Children and Families, at an accredited University Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. We began sending vets and children there and it continued through 1981.

The program ended abruptly after Dow entered the scene to threaten and intimidate our physicians or anyone else in

the scientific community who opposed the misrepresentation of the facts regarding their claims of safety for these products. The Agent Orange class action suit had just been filed in federal Court, and multi-nationals were on the offensive. They became an ever-present disruptive force in our lives thereafter, with disastrous results for veterans and their children. They were able to shut down the Research Lab and decades of work, by one of the foremost most experienced dioxin researchers at the time, Dr. James Allen, a tenured professor and Director of University of Wisconsin's Primate Research Lab in Madison. He made the discovery that dioxin is toxic and possibly lethal, in the environment at 2 ppt., much lower than EPA and Chemical Co. standards for acceptable exposure levels. We met at a state hearing on our first Agent Orange bill, in early 1980. I had openly testified regarding my AO research as well as my suspicions and concerns about the present and future dangers of domestic re-exposures to veterans and their children. Dow and Monsanto reps followed and openly attacked my credibility, my life experiences, my research, and my Agent Orange and VVAW work.

Then Professor James Allen stepped up and into the hearing box. He testified that he had documented in his experiments with Rhesus monkeys, the same birth abnormalities that I had described in my children. He went on to urge the committee to do all it could to address and remediate Veteran's Agent Orange health issues. Credibility, personified!

Unfortunately, this action set the multi-nationals to the task of destroying this man, and decades of his research. They attempted to obtain the results of his stated research before it was published. Victor Yaneconne (our Class Action Attorney), Professor Van Miller (also of the Research Lab), Jim and myself filed suit to defended Dr. Allen's invaluable research in federal court, and to keep them from acquisition of his research before publication and peer review.

We won that case, however, Dr. Allen's research study was shut down, along with the Waisman Center Project, when Dow threatened to cut ALL funding for research at the University of Wisconsin.

Fast forward to 2011. The Waisman Center (the Genetics

Department of University of Wisconsin Hospital) began seeing our grandson, Chuck. Startling information regarding genetic deletions was found in his DNA micro-array. He is missing genetic material. This was our goal in 1978, to have these studies performed for all AO descendants. Now it was possible to discover and confirm through genome technology what we had suspected and reported for years, that Dioxin-based substances have the ability to alter human DNA.

We made the request through our geneticist to have a micro array performed on Zak's DNA, since we could not find a lab to do the Pesticide Residue testing. His remaining samples would be used to determine if he had the same deletions of genetic material. Late in 2011, I spoke with the Assistant Coroner, asking if any lab was found. I was curtly informed that Zak's autopsy samples would not be held after December 2012. In an attempt to save Zak's samples from destruction, I sent out letters asking for help in stopping the destruction of evidence, which we consider these autopsy samples to be. Several replies arrived. They would destroy the samples.

Then we privately raised the considerable funds, thanks to VVAW friends and family. I made arrangements for Genetics Clinic personnel to pick up Zak's samples from the Coroner's Office, to begin the DNA Micro Array Analysis. Three weeks ago, our hopes were once again dashed, when the Genetics Department informed me that "Zachary's Autopsy Samples were NOT Properly Preserved," for DNA Micro Analysis. The only remaining samples of our son are useless for technical analysis.

The BIG question remains: WHO DID NOT PRESERVE THEM CORRECTLY? The VA Pathologist, performing the Autopsy? The Coroner's Office? No one is responding.

If any one has contacts to Civil Rights or Constitutional Attorneys who may be interested in assisting us pro bono, we would welcome any assistance to gain justice for Zachary and other Agent Orange children and grandchildren. Please Contact: sukies_stuff@yahoo.com.



SUKIE WACHTENDONK IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER AND AGENT ORANGE ACTIVIST FROM WISCONSIN.



Ree, Zak, Jim & Sukie Wachtendonk in 1981.

Statement on Madison's Pesticide Policy 6/23/03

ZACHARY JAMES WACHTENDONK

Twenty three years ago an eight-month-old child was exposed to Illegal Drift from Madison Park's Department spraying of Pesticide 2,4-D in his home adjacent to Warner Park, and his life was dramatically changed. I was that eight month old child, and since that day my life has been full of pain, suffering, and a never ending struggle with disabilities and conditions associated with Pesticide Exposures. It is a daily, often hourly struggle, which will undoubtedly be my lifelong struggle.

I remember as a child, feeling frightened and disoriented, following pesticide exposures and subsequent seizures in Parks, in the Lakes, on the buses, and in my regular and special education classrooms. It was difficult to remain balanced and happy while my family was forced to move, repeatedly over the years, in the vain attempt to avoid pesticide exposures, and ensuing illnesses. There is no way that we can escape this - and we suffer because of it. The twenty plus years of work to educate City and County officials, school teachers and District Administration officials, as well as citizens of this community was

hard on our family, as it took our parents time, energy and funds for many years, and left my sister and I feeling unsafe, traumatized and sometimes captives in our home, due to the relentless pesticide usage all around us. There were then, and still are, many places that we cannot venture in this city. Our lives are terribly restricted and become more so - as Pesticide usage increases in our environment.

Epilepsy, Blindness, Chemical Sensitivity, Brain, Neurological and Muscle Disorders are just a few of my disabilities exacerbated by this initial exposure when I was eight months old. Virtually every morning I have clonic-tonic or petit mal seizures and regularly through out the spring, summer and autumn spraying season, I experience violent grand mal seizures, and must be revived and recovered by one or both of my parents - it has been this way all of my life.

It is EXTREMELY UNNERVING to lose COMPLETE control over my entire body to these violent convulsions. It can take from hours to days to weeks to recover my memory, my speech, my balance, my sense of SELF.

Medications help to calm the seizures, but having to take high doses of the medications takes a heavy toll on my body.

Due to my blindness, I am unable to drive, so I must rely daily on the bus system. It is difficult for me to get on a bus knowing that they have been sprayed with chemicals that I am allergic to. I don't know when they have been sprayed or with which chemical or combination of chemicals! There is no public notification, no posting of treated buses.

It is impossible to avoid the buses altogether, as the necessity of travel from point A to B cannot always be provided by family and friends. The buses should be accessible to chemically sensitive individuals, without hesitation.

Twenty two years ago I was a defenseless child, caught up in a politically and economically charged series of events, when the Contamination and Loss of our family's home occurred in October of 1980. I and my sister, were innocents in the unlawful spraying by the Parks Department, resulting in seizures, hospitalization, and confusion and fear for two small children aged eight months and

two years. Our lives had been forever changed by that event.

I have stayed in the shadows for many years dealing with these struggles, these disabilities, these illnesses. I am no longer in the shadows - I am no longer that helpless child. I am now an adult, with a powerful voice, and life experiences well beyond my 24 years. I am a citizen of this community, and a productive member of this society. I am a gainfully employed, college graduate and I vehemently resent my tax dollars being used to sicken me, my family and others in Madison with Pesticides.

Save money, and lives - stop purchasing and applying pesticides!

Madison's once progressive and protective Pesticide Policy MUST be restored to it's original 1991 intent and form with strict oversight and compliance by all agencies and departments, including fines and accountability for violations, for the safety of my community, my family, and myself.

Sincerely,
Zak Wachtendonk



The Peace Boat

The Peace Boat is a Japan-based international non-governmental and non-profit organization that works to promote peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment. The Peace Boat's 77th Global Voyage - the 50th time for Peace Boat to circumnavigate the globe - departed from Yokohama on 24 August, 2012, and returned to Japan 85 days later on 16 November, 2012.

Heather Bowser of Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance (COVVHA) shared her personal story with the Peace Boat participants, describing the ways in which her father's exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam resulted in her multiple birth defects. For the first in a series of lectures covering the topic of Agent Orange, Heather Bowser appeared on stage to discuss her personal connection to the virulent wartime herbicide. Filling the entire auditorium, participants gathered to hear her testimony. "Agent Orange is the code name for a chemical herbicide

developed for the US military, the purpose of which was to deny the enemy cover and concealment by defoliating the trees where the Vietnamese enemy could hide," Heather explained. She went on to tell the audience that her father Bill Morris was drafted to Long Binh, Vietnam in 1968, where he was forced to work in conditions where Agent Orange was transported and stored. Heather's father even recalled servicemen using the barrels for BBQs and collecting drinking water. The US government assured servicemen and the world that Agent Orange was proven to be harmless to humans and would only destroy one crop cycle.

Heather has been incredibly active and vocal on the topic, particularly in relation to the innocent second and third generation victims. As a co-founder of Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance (COVVHA), Heather offers a network of support for people living with Agent Orange-related problems. "Despite the fact that

we were victimized, we prefer to be called Agent Orange survivors, not victims." This empowering twist is the type of fuel that powers Heather's movement, which aims to create a sense of solidarity and strength among the generations affected.

The survivors worked closely with Peace Boat volunteers who together helped raise awareness of the ongoing generational effects of Agent Orange. They collaborated to create posters, banners and messages of support for Agent Orange victims, additionally assisting Heather with lectures and workshops. Heather also works towards seeking support from the US government, which up until this point has taken minimal responsibility for the generational effects associated with Agent Orange. While some compensation is available, it is primarily for survivors born to female veterans who were exposed and only in very rare cases for males. Heather's condition is invalid under US government designations. She explained that

it is not only the sense of neglect from her own government that is immoral but the financial burden left to those in need of medical assistance. "Every morning when I put on my artificial leg, I wonder if the people who decided to dump 20 million gallons of a toxic chemical on Vietnam think of the people they harmed."

The participants joined the 77th Peace Boat voyage, sailing with Guest Educators from Yokohama to Da Nang, Vietnam. COVVHA's argument and cause are not confined to the US. They have shown incredible empathy for the estimated 4.5 million Agent Orange victims in Vietnam, making visits to the care centers around hot spots such as Da Nang. COVVHA aims to create an international support network that connects the innocent survivors still bearing the burden of a war they were not responsible for.

Peace Boat participants piled onto the stage showing

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Army Suicides

JOHN KETWIG

The following op-ed article appeared in the New Jersey Star-Ledger, Wednesday, May 30th.

I was appalled, but not surprised by your Memorial Day article "Rutgers genetics center to study Army suicides." This \$2.4 million grant will fund the university's collection of 55,000 blood samples taken from active-duty soldiers, to be studied by Rutgers' Human Genetics Institute in a joint effort with the National Institute of Mental Health and the Army to determine beforehand individuals who might be "biologically" predisposed to commit suicide due to a genetic inability to cope with intense stress. Also, the study will determine whether the experience of combat or stress actually changes the soldier's

genetic make-up.

How fitting that this news should appear on Memorial Day. As pointed out in the article, the current rate of suicides among active-duty personnel is about 18 per month, and your Memorial Day Editorial "Our War Dead" (on a different page from the Rutgers article) adds that the Department of Veterans Affairs states that 18 military veterans commit suicide every day. In fact, more victims of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have died by suicide than have died from enemy fire.

I am a Vietnam veteran, and I cannot escape my memories of the genocidal ("The only good Gook is a dead Gook") training we received, nor the barbarity and cruelty we witnessed. That war, like the present ones, was born of lies and misrepresentations, and

prolonged far too long while the military establishment garnered its ribbons and promotions, and the defense contractors wallowed in obscene profits. In the years since the Vietnam tragedy, we have seen our country abandon its manufacturing and moral foundations. Today we spend more on militarism than all the other countries in the world combined, and our chief exports are death and destruction. Our brave young soldiers join, often because it is the only employment available to them, for all the best reasons. However, when they see modern combat, the horrible effects of modern weapons, and the brutality encouraged by today's American way of waging war, many are mentally and emotionally scarred for life. In most of these cases, PTSD is not a post-traumatic

stress DISORDER. It is the soldier's humanity, respect for other human beings, and distress at the collateral damage, or atrocities that our country is unleashing upon the innocent peasants and poor who get in the way of the carnage. It is outrage at the actions of our "leaders," from politicians down to the officers and NCOs, that cause so many unnecessary wounds and deaths among their peers. What is so disturbing about this article is the continuing strategy of our military to blame the soldier for his or her very normal reactions to the horrors of war. That \$2.4 million could be better spent, perhaps on a study of how to avoid wars.



JOHN KETWIG IS AN AUTHOR, VIETNAM VET AND MEMBER OF VVAW.



The Peace Boat

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their support for Agent Orange survivors. The Peace Boat participants drew connections between Agent Orange and the

Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster. Visiting Fukushima last year, Heather established ties with those affected, sharing her

knowledge around safety myths and the importance of international solidarity. "The unseen danger is what we have in common. The effects of Agent Orange slowly crept up on the victims and you never know where it will end in your family."

After docking in Da Nang, the group visited one of the Agent Orange victim support centers, a partner organization of Peace Boat. There, they connected with second and third generation child victims still living with the effects of Agent Orange. COVVHA workshops left a huge impression on Peace Boat participants, inspiring them to create their own events in areas that they are passionate about, both on board and on land. After her journey on board the ship, Heather spent a week in Vietnam visiting some of the areas most heavily effected by Agent Orange in a rare opportunity allowing first, second and third generation non-Vietnamese Agent Orange survivors to connect with Vietnamese survivors. The

trip began with a visit to the Da Nang Center for Supporting Agent Orange and Disadvantaged Children, a center supported by Peace Boat that offers second generation Agent Orange survivors support and training. "People put greed in front of human life. Governments will go to war without thinking of the people who live there. We all suffer because of war and my future intent is to continue to bring peace and try to promote a future where we can live together, no longer harming each other and no longer harming each other's children."

Children of Vietnam Veteran Health Alliance, Inc (COVVHA) has recently been incorporated as a nonprofit organization. VVAW national coordinators Susan Schnall and Marty Webster are assisting this dedicated group of activists in the early stages of their development.



(l-r) Jenna Mack (18-year old third generation survivor and Miss Teen California), Heather Bowser (second generation Agent Orange survivor, US); Jon Mitchell, (Japan-based journalist at the forefront of investigations into Agent Orange in Okinawa); Kenneth H. Young (Canadian veteran).

Carrying the Torch

MATT HOWARD

"My name is Iris Feliciano. I served in the Marine Corps and in January of 2002 I deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. I want to tell the folks behind us in these enclosed walls, where they build more policies based on lies and fear that we no longer stand for...their failed policies and these unjust wars. Bring our troops home and end the war now."

As the former Staff Sergeant spoke I watched her hold up her medals and announce to the sea of thousands of protestors "they can have these back!" Iris began a procession of almost fifty Post-9/11 veterans who symbolically launched their medals into the sky aimed at the summit where NATO's decision makers met. These veterans came from all walks of life and various experiences in the wars.

As Alejandro Villatoro an Army veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan announced to the crowd:

"Nowhere else will you hear from so many that have fought these wars-about their journey from fighting a war to demanding peace. Some of us killed innocents. Some of us helped in continuing these wars from home. Some of us watched our friends die. Some of us are not here because we took our own lives."

I had the honor of marching side-by-side with my fellow global war on terror vets that day leading an estimated ten thousand strong contingent of protestors. Even though our experiences were different we were all united in our commitment to end the war in Afghanistan. We knew the importance of putting faces on these wars and not just veterans faces but the faces of civilians forever impacted by occupation.

We stood with Afghans for Peace (AFP), who was represented by three women who spoke powerfully about the impact of the war on their homeland. One member, Suriaia Sahar announced to NATO, "for what you have done to my home country, I'm enraged. For what you have done to my people, I'm disgusted. For what you have done to these veterans, I am heartbroken."

Thousands of people from all over the world converged on Chicago to denounce NATO that weekend. In the wake of Occupy Wall Street and the resurgence in collective action it inspired, it was clear that Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel had bitten off more than he could chew in attempting to hold the G8 and NATO in one city. We all felt a slight victory (and a bit of disappointment) when the G8 meeting was moved to Camp David. But we also knew that this would be NATO's largest summit in its 63 year history. An organization that had lost its mandate decades ago with the fall of the Iron Curtain, was now providing legitimacy for American occupation in Afghanistan. Now they were in our backyard planning more destruction of human life.

Chicago members and allies of Iraq Veterans Against the War went into overdrive and planned an action worthy of the event. The Coalition Against NATO-G8 (CAN-G8) invited us to lead the march to the site of the NATO Summit at McCormick Place and to hold a ceremony of our choosing. The weekend leading up to the Sunday action was a blur: two press conferences, a debate between Chicago Chapter President Iris Feliciano and representatives of NATO, a Counter Summit, and lots of preparation. During the whole

weekend one thing remained consistent: our brother and sisters in VVAW and VFP were there to provide us support. More than once I was stopped and told by my fellow vets of a different generation "thanks for what your doing, this is important." Each time I felt a chill go down my spine and a sense of the history that we were extending from Operation Dewey Canyon III. Three-tour OEF vet Jacob George summed it up best by saying "I had this feeling that we had a safe space around us literally [with VVAW and VFP providing security] and figuratively by our elders. They were creating the space for us to step forward and carry the torch. That doesn't happen too often in our country."

Casting our medals out onto the pavement in front of the summit was cathartic for many of us. However, those individual acts didn't compare to marching and speaking out alongside the three powerful Afghan women that represented AFP's global organization. The overwhelming consensus of the day amongst my fellow veterans and I was how profound it felt to be joining forces with AFP. Unifying the two most impacted communities of this war was a much needed step in the direction of peace and the creation of a community of resistance to war.

The following day the coverage of the action was mostly the familiar story of protestors and police clashing. Except for coverage by *Democracy Now!*, very little was mentioned about our ceremony. To those of us that stood up on that stage and for those that bore witness in the crowd, news coverage held little importance. For a moment veterans, Afghans and civilians of



this country were bonded by a true sense of the costs of these wars:

The pain that is wrought on civilians in countries in far off lands. The trauma that we as veterans bring back home into our communities. And the deafening silence we hear from a nation that has been at war for almost 11 tired years.

The war didn't end after that ceremony. NATO didn't decide to pull out forces the next day. What did happen was thousands brought back to their families and friends a story of resistance. A story of Afghans and veterans uniting to end the war. It was a wake-up call. A reminder that civilians of occupation bear unbelievable hardships and that the servicemen and women that head overseas in deployment after grinding deployment have faces, stories and regrets.



MATT HOWARD SERVED IN THE MARINE CORPS AS A HELICOPTER MECHANIC FROM 2001-2006 AND DEPLOYED IN SERVICE OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM TWICE. ORIGINALLY FROM PORTLAND, OR HE NOW RESIDES IN NEW YORK CITY HELPING FELLOW MEMBERS OF IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR TELL THEIR STORIES.



illuminating the Way: Anti-War Veterans Organize at Largest Military Base in US

SARAH LAZARE

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As the war in Afghanistan drags through its eleventh year, discussion of US occupation has been forgotten in election cycle discourse.

Yet in Fort Hood, Texas, a community of military veterans, soldiers, and allies who are unable to forget are organizing their community in response to the widespread trauma that underlies US policies of endless war. Calling their campaign Operation Recovery, members of Iraq Veterans Against the War and the Civilian-Soldier Alliance are working with Under the Hood Cafe and Outreach Center to demand service members' right to heal.

Even as the US military claims to draw down its forces, suicide rates among active duty service members and veterans continue to climb. According to the Army's own studies, the year 2011 set a record for the highest number of Army suicides in military history. That same year also marked a spike in sexual assaults within the ranks of the military. While comparable studies of trauma in occupied populations do not exist, the

death count in the "Global War on Terror" continues to rise, with over 12,000 Afghan civilians killed since 2006 and more than 185,000 Afghan civilians displaced in 2011 alone, marking a 45 percent jump from 2010.

War trauma is acutely felt at Fort Hood, the largest military base in the country that houses many soldiers on their way to and from war zones. The Army reported in 2010 that the base's suicide rate was double the national average, and today the base's sexual assault counselors and healthcare providers cannot meet the swelling need for help. Military communities have decided to take matters into their own hands by organizing within this sprawling military installation for the right to heal from war's trauma and an end to the dehumanization and abuse that underwrites US-led occupation.

Maggie Martin is a two-time Iraq War veteran and a Field Organizer for Iraq Veterans Against the War, currently based at Fort Hood. In this interview, Maggie discusses campaign strategy, talks about Fort Hood military communities, and explains how healing is a force against war.

Can you tell me what you and

other IVAW members are doing at Fort Hood?

We're here organizing an active duty outreach drive for Operation Recovery. We're trying to get the word out about the work we're doing at Fort Hood around the right to heal. We're also collecting stories and information from soldiers here about the situation on the ground, particularly around issues of access to mental and physical healthcare.

People are experiencing things like stigma for trying to seek care. People are having profiles violated. Medical profiles are from doctors and healthcare workers to put restrictions on certain kinds of work for service members related to what they're capable of due to their mental health status. Violating a profile means assigning service members work that is unsafe for them.

What kind of response have you been getting from active duty service members?

Most people who have experience with traumatic injuries are able to tell us some of the things that have been difficult for them around getting treatment. A lot of people are still afraid to get help because of stigma. There are also issues of unofficial punishment where there is not necessarily a paperwork trail but people are getting disrespected and treated badly for seeking care. This is not necessarily across the board - we've heard from some folks that their command and leadership are doing the right thing and really encouraging soldiers to get care and help. It is important that everyone get the care they need and deserve, and we are trying to figure out how to ensure that.

What is the focus of the campaign right now?

We're trying to set up interviews, do house visits, and have one-on-one conversations with new members at the Under the Hood Cafe and Outreach Center, both IVAW members and potential members. This includes people who come to our Ribs and Rights events, as well as different training

sessions we put on, including Warrior Writers and G.I. rights training. We are trying to solidify people's roles in the community and understand more about why they came into the community and why they're interested in Operation Recovery as well as what they want to see for the future. Next Saturday, before I leave, we're going to have a larger IVAW chapter meeting for the Fort Hood chapter and the Austin chapter that's forming. We'll invite potential members as well, both active duty and veterans. That should help us get a sense of where the community here wants to take the campaign and how they see themselves continuing as an area of operation for the campaign.

Have you found that talking about trauma is an effective starting place to relate to service members?

Yeah, it is. I think that our one-on-one conversations with people show us that the reason they came to Under the Hood is because of the injustices that are happening around service-members' care, and they feel really betrayed that they have given so much and their comrades have given so much but can't even get decent healthcare. It is an important issue to people. It is something that can be seen as a really blatant disregard for the dignity and respect of soldiers. With the reduction of the military, we are seeing so many more folks being forced out and not allowed to re-enlist. Many of them are people who have been deployed repeatedly and are now struggling with their own physical and mental health issues and are now being disregarded and discarded.

As a veteran, how does it feel to be organizing active duty service members at a massive military base like Fort Hood?

I think one thing that's really interesting for me about going back to a military base is remembering where I was when I was in the military, what was important to me, what issues I thought about, and what power and control over

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IVAW member returning her medals at IVAW anti-NATO protest in Chicago, May 20, 2012.

Illuminating the Way

continued from previous page

my own life I thought I had, which was pretty much none when I was in. Going back, I feel like I know a lot more about how widespread the issues are that service members are facing. I know more about service members' rights. I think it is really helpful to remember back to where I was and try to be a bridge for people to understand more or to explore their own ideas just by inviting them to Under the Hood Cafe and Outreach Center, asking questions, and making space. It's also cool being able to organize around service members' rights while not being in the military anymore because there is a lot more freedom and less fear of the military legal system.

How is Operation Recovery an anti-militarist campaign?

Militarism and dehumanization go hand in hand and really work off of each other. Operation Recovery is predicated on reclaiming our humanity through talking about human rights. I think that if people and soldiers see themselves as people worthy of dignity and respect and healthcare, then that's a step in the direction away from the dehumanization that happens to soldiers in their training that is carried on to the work they do overseas.

That reminds me of this quote we used as a prompt for our Warrior Writers workshop yesterday from Thich Nhat Hahn, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk: "Veterans are the light at the tip of the candle, illuminating the way for the whole nation. If veterans can achieve awareness, transformation, understanding, and peace, they can share with the rest of society the realities of war. And they can teach us how to make peace with ourselves and each other, so we never have to use violence to resolve conflicts again." I think that the military is so separated from the rest of American culture, and people believe that the military is happy to participate in these things and that everything we engage in is for this greater just cause. The reason I joined IVAW is because I believe that it is powerful for people who have been immersed and participated in the military to counter the popular belief that the military is a separate group of heroic people carrying out the

needs of our country. I think that soldiers speaking out creates a shift in the American consciousness.

How does the trauma that service members face relate to the trauma faced by those living under occupation?

I think that we see cycles of trauma repeat themselves within families and communities with service members here in the States. We know a lot less about this trauma in occupied countries because we are so separated from what is happening in occupied countries. People in the military aren't getting care, they're struggling with drugs and alcohol and prescription drug abuse, they can't sleep at night, they're having nightmares and flashbacks, they have a hard time distinguishing when they're safe and in danger. You add some hardcore weaponry to that equation, and it is pretty obvious this is a recipe for disaster.

What was Ft. Hood like under Fort Hood Commanding General Donal Campbell? General Campbell has been tapped for the role of new commander of US Army Europe, which amounts to a promotion. Can you tell us a little about his track record so far?

General Campbell was a target of Operation Recovery because he was in control of such a large military installation that had been repeatedly deploying many soldiers since the early stages of the war. Soldiers at Fort Hood have been through a lot of serious combat, a lot of multiple deployments, and a lot of traumatic injuries. In 2010, this base had the highest suicide rate of any military installation. It is important for us to identify and hold accountable the military leaders who are responsible.

General Campbell recently held a Facebook "town hall" meeting that purportedly aimed to get feedback about base policy from the Fort Hood community. In reality, it seemed to be more about public relations than about how to help service members. We got a lot of political non-answers to tough questions we were asking. In response to questions highlighting lack of access to care for service members, General Campbell responded by telling people to



IVAW members at IVAW anti-NATO protest in Chicago, May 20, 2012.

contact his office if they are having problems. We really think that's ridiculous. If someone gets turned down from help from their supervisor, if they get told they are weak and need to suck it up, they are not going to feel comfortable going to the post commander to ask for help. The town hall responses were disingenuous and lacked any concrete solutions or steps for improvements. We also know that one of the active duty service members we have been working with is being targeted and penalized by his command for demanding his right to heal at that Facebook town hall meeting.

What does General Campbell's promotion say about the values of the US military?

I think it shows that they want these tough leaders who are going to carry out orders and make hard decisions and be willing to put soldiers' welfare second to the needs of the military. It shows that the military has no accountability to the community or even to the soldiers under their command, and the only way we're going to be able to make a difference is to go to the people who control their promotions and cash flow.

What's next for Operation Recovery?

We're going to release an Appeal for Redress for service members' and veterans' right to heal. IVAW members and other veterans and service members across the country will be invited to sign on to the Appeal for Redress and engage with their congressional representatives. An Appeal for Redress is a protected form of communication for active duty service members to resolve an issue and seek redress through their congressional representatives. It is protected under the Military

Whistle-Blower Protection Act that is supposed to keep service members safe from reprisals from command and leadership that they're trying to address. We're in the process of figuring out what we want to come out of this and what local campaigns will be happening under the larger umbrella of Operation Recovery. I think there will be specific demands for specific local targets. Our overall goal will be to put pressure on congressional representatives and build up to open hearings for service members and veterans to be able to share their stories about dealing with traumatic injuries in the military and VA system. The hope is that congress will put pressure or force military and VA to give proper care.

Why is this organizing relevant now?

I think it is crazy that we're in the eleventh year of the war in Afghanistan, in a presidential election year, and the war is not even an issue in the presidential campaigns: it's not even being discussed. Soldiers coming home from Afghanistan, and soldiers who have come home from Iraq, are starting to see mental health issues surface in their lives. More and more service members and veterans are dealing with the consequences of traumatic injuries, yet this issue is getting less and less coverage and spotlight in the political arena. We think it is really important to keep standing up for service members and let people know that the wars are not over for those who participated and for those who were and are occupied. We need to remember these things and learn from mistakes as we move into the future.



SARAH LAZARE IS A MEMBER OF THE CIVILIAN-SOLDIER ALLIANCE.

Vietnam Savagery

DANIEL LAVERY

My opposition to the slaughter grew more intense as I read reports that revealed baseless reasons we became involved and the atrocities our men in uniform had been encouraged to perpetrate. Emphasizing the "virtue" of achieving a high body count seemed to these "leaders" a way to demonstrate to the American people and the world we were winning. To verify kills, soldiers cut off ears of the Vietnamese dead. Some wore a necklace of ears. Only the soldier knew whether they came from combatants or villagers of any age or sex, caught up in the war. The "enemy," was amorphous but included insurgent Viet Cong, North Vietnamese regulars, and anyone who supported them. The authorities abused the term "insurgent." They characterized the VC as an armed force of communists supplied by North Vietnam, opposed to the South Vietnamese regime. However, our troops repeatedly attacked villages with, or without verification of their affiliation with the VC. The madness of this theory maintains that as long as fish swim in the sea of insurgency, you must kill as many of them as you can. That the soldiers counted so many children's ears, speaks to the insanity of this theory.

On March 16, 1968, helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson, door gunner Lawrence Colburn and crew chief Glenn Andreotta landed their helicopter between American troops rampaging through My Lai village and the local people. The My Lai massacre was a watershed in the moral history of modern

American combat, and a turning point in the public perception of the Vietnam War.

Charlie Company was down to one hundred and five men by mid-March of that year. It had suffered twenty eight casualties, including five dead. Some of its soldiers had already begun to drift towards brutal tactics for which they appeared to enjoy impunity. The brief for its March sixteenth mission was to flush out the Viet Cong, whose elusive troops supposedly hid in My Lai - a hamlet of Son My village. Two platoons moved in shortly after 8:00am, while a third held back for "mopping up" duties. Both platoons splintered and once the shooting started, it seemed to spark a chain reaction.

Soldiers went berserk, gunning down unarmed men, women, children, and babies. They showed no mercy to families that huddled together for safety in huts or bunkers. They even murdered those who emerged with hands held high. Some lucky villagers, including a few children, survived the massacre. Some of the soldiers did not join in the killing spree, but that did not include troop commander Lt. William Calley. In one incident, Lt. Calley ordered two of his men to fire on a group of sixty civilians they had rounded up. When one refused, Calley took over and, standing ten feet from the crowd, emptied his gun into them. Elsewhere in the village, other atrocities progressed. Soldiers gang raped many women, and beat and tortured hundreds of Vietnamese. They had merely bowed to greet the Americans

who clubbed them with rifle butts and stabbed them with bayonets. Army members of one company mutilated some victims by carving into their chest the signature "C Company." By late morning, word had got back to higher authorities who ordered a cease-fire. By then My Lai was carnage with dead bodies strewn through the village. The death toll totaled five hundred and four. One American soldier suffered an injury when he shot himself in the foot clearing his pistol.

Army helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson approached the apparently peaceful My Lai hamlet from the air in his scout helicopter but did not realize what was going on until he saw a US Army captain nudge a wounded Vietnamese girl with his boot, then kill her. He, door gunner Lawrence Colburn and crew chief Glenn Andreotta were witnesses. The copter landed between American troops rampaging through My Lai village and the local people in the line of fire to prevent further murders. Colburn and Andreotta provided cover for their pilot as he went to confront American forces and coax civilians out of a bunker to enable their evacuation. He ordered his men to shoot any US soldiers if they shot at civilians, confronted the senior US officer present, and persuaded terrified civilians to leave their shelter. Thompson radioed for another helicopter to evacuate the survivors and rescued a boy from a ditch. As his helo was lifting, they spotted movement in a ditch filled with bodies south of My Lai. They landed again and retrieved

a single wounded child from the hellish scene. They flew him to a hospital.

The military authorities concealed the My Lai massacre for one year before a participant talked about it leading to the court martial of platoon leader Lieutenant William Calley. A court martial convicted him of three counts of premeditated murder of not less than twenty two Vietnamese, and sentenced him to life in jail. Three years later President Richard Nixon intervened, releasing him. Many participants resigned to avoid prosecution. The Peers report told a comprehensive story of what had happened on March 16, 1968. The crimes had included murders by individuals and groups and assault, rape, torture, sodomy, and maiming of civilians. The report concluded that both Col. Henderson, the brigade commander, and Lt. Col. Frank Barker, the commanding officer of the task force, had knowledge of the war crime, but did nothing about it. The Peers inquiry recommended charges against twenty eight officers and two non-commissioned officers involved in the concealment of the massacre, but the prospect of successful prosecution crumbled. Army lawyers decided to charge only fourteen officers, and those cases ended in acquittal. A similar pattern emerged in the prosecution of the ground troops who had done the killing. The CID report said there was evidence to charge thirty soldiers with major crimes. Sixteen had criminal charges brought against them. A court-martial convened against five. The authorities quietly dropped charges against seventeen who left the army. Elsewhere prosecutors dropped all charges, or not guilty verdicts resulted.



DANIEL C. LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, AND A SHIP TO VIETNAM, FELL IN LOVE, TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST, AND A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW. HIS MEMOIR, "ALL THE DIFFERENCE," DESCRIBES THE EXPERIENCES THAT CHANGED HIS CONSCIOUSNESS TO AN ADVOCATE CRUSADING FOR JUSTICE. WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM.



Afghans for Peace members at IVAW's anti-NATO protest in Chicago, May 20, 2012.

Nagasaki

FRANCIS ANTHONY BOYLE, JR.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, my father, Francis Anthony Boyle, after whom I am named (being the oldest of my parents' eight children), applied for admission to Officer Candidate School for the United States Marine Corps. After an extended period of investigation, he was eventually rejected—telling me it was the most disappointing day of his entire life. He was not given the reason for this rejection. But as a child he had rheumatic fever, meningitis, and polio. As a boy he had to walk around with crutches and only gradually managed to wean himself from them. The rejection by the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School undoubtedly saved my father's life and thus made mine possible. The chances of survival for a young Marine Corps Officer in the Pacific Campaign were infinitesimal. They were expected to lead their troops into battle from in front of their men.

Despite his deep disappointment and his physical limitations, my father then enlisted in the US Marine Corps on 14 July 1943 at the age of 22 and agreed to serve for the "Duration" of the war. By contrast, I entered the Harvard Law School on about 7 September 1971 at the age of 21. I thought of my father a lot during that first year of law school. At about my age, he was fighting for his life in the jungles of the Pacific. But my father would have wanted it that way for me.

According to his Honorable Discharge papers (A108534, Series A, NAVMC70-PD), Marine Corps Records, and war stories, my father invaded Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. According to my father, after the battle for Okinawa, all but two Marines from his original Company were either killed or seriously wounded. The Marine Corps then ordered my father and his buddy to begin training for the invasion of mainland Japan with a new unit where they were scheduled to be among the first Marines ashore because of their combat experience.

Instead of being among the first US troops ashore to invade Mainland Japan, my father was among the first US troops ashore to occupy Mainland Japan. According to his Marine Corps records, my Father "arrived [by ship] and disembarked at Nagasaki, Kyushu, Japan" on

September 24, 1945—just after that City and its civilian inhabitants had been obliterated by an atomic bomb on August 9, 1945. It must have been a truly horrific sight for a young man from the Irish Southside of Chicago to have witnessed and dealt with psychologically.

By the end of the war I suspect my father had become inured to inflicting death and destruction upon the Japanese Army and all of its accoutrements. But this scene was existentially different: a devastated City where approximately 80,000 civilians had just been exterminated. At the time my Father must have contemplated what damage one atom bomb could inflict upon his native City of Chicago and its beloved inhabitants.

After his Honorable Discharge from the Marine Corps on 16 January 1946 as a Corporal with his "Character of service" rated as "excellent," my father attended Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois and graduated from their Law School in the Class of 1950, shortly after I was born. He went to work as a plaintiff's litigator for a law firm in downtown Chicago where, his hiring partner told me, he was very aggressive in court and otherwise. Eventually, my father opened his own law firm as a plaintiff's litigator in downtown Chicago in 1959. On the night he transferred his files from the old office to his new firm, my father put me into our 1955 Chevy, the first car he ever bought, and brought me along for the ride and the opening of his new law firm.

Soon thereafter, he designated me as the Clerk for his law firm, and promptly put me to work at the age of nine running messages, filing documents in court, taking money to and from the LaSalle National Bank, etc. all over downtown Chicago on school holidays and during summer vacations. It was not easy being the oldest child and namesake of a World War II US Marine Corps combat veteran of invading Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa.

I continued to serve as his Clerk until he died of a heart attack on 10 January 1968 at the age of 46. Because I worked for him at his law firm for all those years, I was fortunate to have spent an enormous amount of time with my father. I learned a lot about life from my father. Two of his

favorites were: "Son, there is nothing fair about life." And: "Just remember, son, no one owes you anything." Of course he proved right on both counts—and many others as well.

At first glance it appeared that my father had survived the war relatively unscathed. He had picked up a fungus on his leg that stayed with him for the rest of his life, which he called his "jungle rot." Also, his hearing had been impaired by the big naval guns bombarding the coasts while he and his comrades waited on ship to board the landing transports in order to storm the beaches, as well as by artillery, grenades, bombs, machine guns, flame throwers, and other ordnance that he endured, advancing under withering enemy fire during the day, repulsing bonzai charges at night, repeatedly volunteering for what looked like suicide missions behind enemy lines, etc. It was Hell on Earth.

Only years later, long after he had died, and as a result of medical research on veterans of the Vietnam War, did I realize that my father came back with a severe case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), something that was undiagnosed at the time. Combat veterans of World War II were simply expected to go home and resume their civilian lives without further adieu. As my father's Marine Corps Honorable Discharge papers state: "Requires neither treatment nor hospitalization." In retrospect, my father should have had medical treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder if it had been available then.

My father never told anyone in our family that he had been at Nagasaki. Perhaps he did not want to recount the human horrors he had seen there to his wife and eight children. In fact, my father told my mother almost nothing about the war—unlike me, his oldest child and namesake. But he never uttered even one word about Nagasaki to me. He might have concluded that Nagasaki was nothing for America to be proud of—unlike the evident pride he displayed when recounting his numerous war stories to me. There was no war story about Nagasaki. Just a deafening silence.

In any event, I grew up to believe that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had saved my father's life and thus had made my life possible. Curiously,



my father never told me that Hiroshima and Nagasaki had saved his life. Another Deafening Silence. I just bought into this commonly accepted myth while growing up in post-World War II America.

But when I later studied international relations in college with the late, great Hans Morgenthau starting in January of 1970, I gradually came to realize that the standard narrative of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ending the war against Japan in order to avoid an invasion was elaborately constructed, self-justifying government propaganda from the get-go. The Japanese government was desperately trying to surrender. The Truman administration knew full well that Japan would have surrendered (1) without the need to demolish Hiroshima and Nagasaki together with their inhabitants and (2) without the invasion of Mainland Japan by my father and his comrades-in-arms. The Truman administration dropped these two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their inhabitants in order to make it crystal clear to the Soviet Union and everyone else around the globe that the United States of America would be in charge of running the World in the post-World War II era. So it has been until today. 67 years of Pax Americana.

I doubt very seriously that is what my father was fighting for at Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa. R.I.P.



FRANCIS BOYLE IS A PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN.

The Living and The "Disappeared" (formally Seven by Nine)

STEPHEN SINSLEY

Seven by nine was the approximate size of the living room I was sitting in. I don't remember why I was so fixated on the size of the room, the layout, and the people... people nervously hanging out. I had been living in Montevideo, Uruguay for over a month, and had been invited to the party, if you could call it that. I was the one and only gringo in the room, possibly the first one to enter this home. My girlfriend Rosa and her best friend Magu had invited me, and vouched for me. I was honored. Americans were not the most popular people in Uruguay in 1972.

In that room I was surrounded by university and high school students nervously laughing, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, and occasionally playing the guitar. A few days before, Rosa and Magu were taking me on a tour of their university when we came across a large group of "so-called protesters" of a strange stripe. There were maybe fifteen or twenty of them, all men, wearing suits and ties and holding up what appeared to be medieval banners with gold lions on them and the letters "TFP." Rosa explained that they were members of "Tradition, Family, and Property," an ultra right wing paramilitary Catholic cult exported by Brazil to this and many other countries including

the States. When I started to photograph them, they ran over and angrily surrounded us. Rosa explained that I was an American, and suddenly they smiled, patted me on the back and said "Nixon, Vietnam, good, good." As an anti-war veteran I wanted to barf, but I smiled and in my worst Spanish I replied "yes Nixon, good, good. Can I photograph your demonstration?" They grouped up, banners and all, and the only thing missing was Seig Heil. I could see what was coming. They were the only students permitted to demonstrate... against divorce, abortion, and anything to the left of Atilla The Hun.

The country which had once been known as the Switzerland of South America, had veered to the right when the military, with full US support "unofficially" took over the reins of the government. Within twelve months the hobnailed boot would come crashing down upon what semblance of democracy was left.

At the party we were all sitting against the walls of that small living room, with a radio playing in the the background. No lovers romping in the bedrooms, or making out in the kitchen. Why was the radio on at all if no one was listening to it? Suddenly martial music started playing

on the radio. Everybody and everything stopped. Someone got up and turned up the volume. It was the daily broadcast of the "Fuerzas Conjuntas." that is to say "United Armed Forces," the powers unofficially running the country. They started reading the names of people in their custody that week. Nobody at the party uttered a word, we all sat in rapt silence, punctuated by gasps, or sighs. The names were of student leaders or activists, union leaders, religious activists. My eyes scanned the faces in the room for signs of recognition, a wince, anything. What I discovered was that when someone was picked up, they were immediately tortured for information real or imagined. Those that didn't survive the torture were unceremoniously loaded into helicopters and dropped into the South Atlantic together with some live prisoners, never to be seen again.

Today, in a free Uruguay, with free elections and a progressive government, the victim's names and photographs adorn the walls of memorials in Montevideo dedicated to the "disappeared" during that dark period in Uruguay's history. "Never Again" is a national and regional motto.

At the party, I noticed some tears of joy, following the reading

of a name. I was confused, but Rosa explained to me that if the military read a name, it signified that the person who had been taken was still alive and in prison. If a person had been "disappeared" say two weeks before, and his/her name was not read it signified they were dead. It is hard, very hard to explain the feelings I felt that night to someone who has never lived under a military dictatorship. I felt as if my soul was being ripped out and stomped upon, as the pain in that room - which had hitherto been for me an intellectual abstraction - became so real. Rosa, Magu, and I hugged and cried for what seemed forever. This was my baptism of fire, my first personal experience, with the pain and anguish wrought by brutal dictatorships. Little did I know that this may have been my first, but it would not be my last brush with our "good neighbor policy."

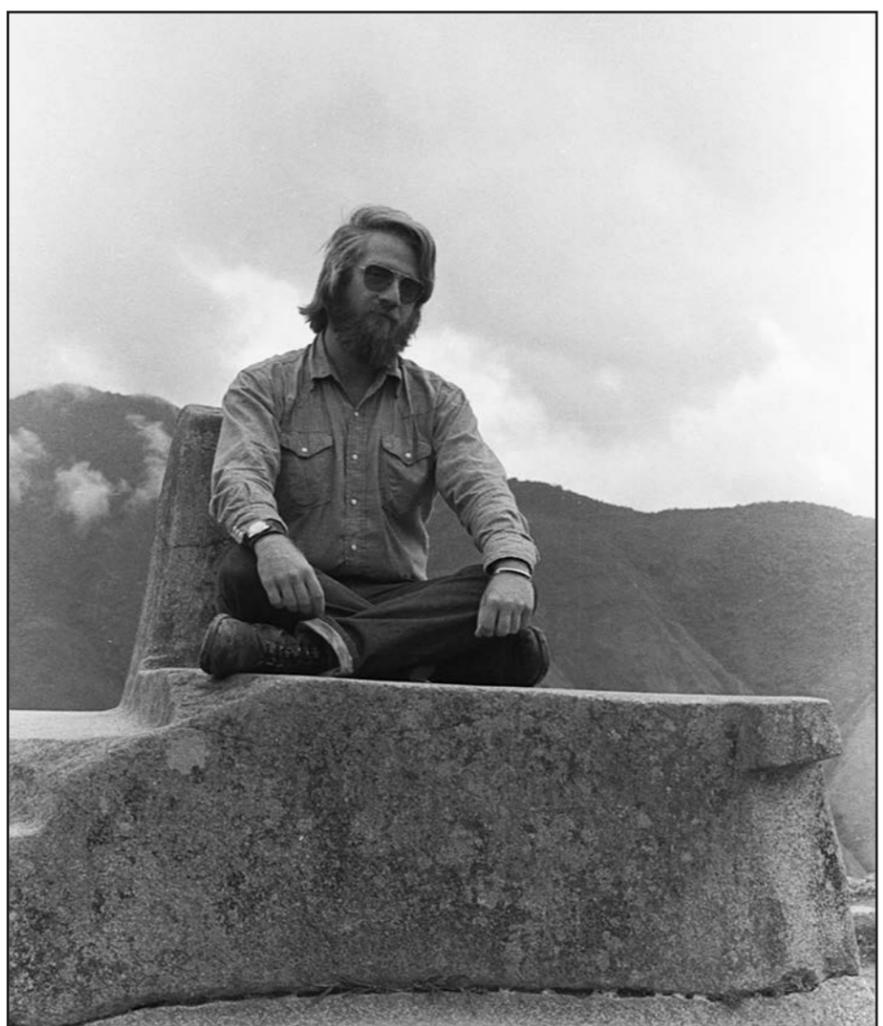


STEVE SINSLEY CAN BE REACHED AT SJS113@GMAIL.COM FOR COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS. THIS VIGNETTE IS PART OF A FORTHCOMING AUTOBIOGRAPHY/SORTA BIOGRAPHY COMING OUT NEXT YEAR, TENTATIVELY TITLED "FROM THE CANEFIELDS OF CUBA TO THE BEACHES OF RIO".

Internalize, Prioritize, Organize

Senators Boozman, Johanns, Burr, and Toomey,
May in fact all be looney.
The bipartisan veterans jobs corps bill,
Thanks to them has been rendered nil.
Excuse after excuse after excuse,
Eventually turns obstructionism into abuse.
With November quickly looming,
Voter's rights are experiencing pruning.
The choice seems to be clear,
For our veterans whom we hold so dear.
The longest war in our nation's history,
Origin still a mystery.
Weapons of mass destruction,
Or a tool of corruption?
Our president has a plan,
To end this dyspeptic war's span.
In Afghanistan it is conceivable,
But is peace truly achievable?

—Lura Stephanie Gaiek
(daughter of deceased Vietnam Veteran,
Grayson, GA)



Steve Sinsley in Machu Picchu 1971.

The Price of Admission

MARC LEVY

A converted airplane hanger, admission fifty cents, outside the Hanoi Air Force Museum thick vines creep up the skeletal remains of deactivated SAM missiles forever frozen in the act of launch. Inside, directly past the entrance, a jet fighter canopy, the name PARKER stenciled in red paint, lies mute on the smooth cement floor. The walls are dotted with framed black and white war photos. M16s are shackled to the walls by thick iron nails. Large wood exhibit cabinets hold typed documents and war regalia. Not far from the fighter canopy lay rows of upright vacant ejection seats, as if the pilots had just bailed out. A half dozen green flight helmets, visors up, sit like impatient skulls waiting to tell their stories. A half dozen silk parachutes splay across the floor like giant squid risen from the deep.

I'm sitting in the cockpit of a MIG 21. After Seth snaps the photo a young American enters the museum. While the two of them talk I wander away.

In a dark corner on the far side of the museum I spot a stack of M16s. Kneeling, I pick one up, wipe away years of dust, sit down cross-legged, cradle the weapon, go back in time. How long before Seth arrives I don't recall. He listens patiently while I jabber:

"You see this button? You push it to split the rifle in half. Push here to release the ammo clip. This thing is the retractor rod. Pull it backward, let it fly, you're locked and loaded." I turned the rifle sideways, exposing the belly of the barrel. "Here, right here, the grill, you keep a tooth brush to clean the breach. Only problem, they melt in fire fights. Now watch this." I push open the stock latch.



Marc Levy "flying" MIG 21 at the Hanoi Air Force Museum, 1995.

Out slides a metal cleaning rod, a plastic bottle of lubricant. "That's LSA. You put it on cotton patches to clean the bore. You do that once a week."

I keep chattering. The words rocketing inside my head. Twice, three times someone calls my name. "Put the gun down. You

need to put it down." Childlike, I look at Seth, set the abandoned weapon on the cold floor, sob for quite some time.



MARC LEVY WAS A MEDIC IN DELTA 1/7 FIRST CAV IN '69-'70. HE LIVES IN SALEM, MA. YOU CAN REACH HIM AT MEDICINTHEGREENTIME.COM.

Chestnut Magic Makes The Tears Go and Come

GREGORY ROSS

November in Lancaster, New York, near Buffalo, is bleak. Gray skies, bone bare trees that just a few weeks before were majestic in their spectrum of colors: gold, red, yellow, magenta and even a royal purple. But, by November, the trees are skeletal. The one last bit of flesh on the bones of these trees is on the Chestnut, which bears a bitter fruit nicknamed the horsechestnut. In November of 1970, three months out of the Navy, the weather, the landscape and my emotional state were in discordant harmony.

As a child these chestnuts were prized for a game we called "Cracking". You drilled a hole in the biggest chestnut you could find and hung it from an old shoelace. If your dad's work boots were worn enough, you got a leather shoelace - sweet. The game went like this: you held your chestnut out at arm's length. Your opponent swung his chestnut and hit yours as hard as he could making a cracking sound. Winning the game was delineated by the cracking or breaking of a chestnut. It did not matter if yours was on the dangle or the swing, it was the cracking that lost you the game.

Walking to the unemployment office, two large chestnuts I found brought a smile as, like prayer

beads, I caressed them. It was early morning. Cold. Gray. Not many people about, when I saw the boy sitting on the steps of Saints Peter and Paul elementary school. He was clutching a book bag half his size and suffering racking sobs. He looked to be about six. No one was around - no students, teachers, priests or nuns. Just this little guy sitting on the school steps, crying. I walked up and asked what was wrong. He looked at me with "Don't Talk To Strangers" terror in his eyes and stammered unintelligible sounds. I sat on a lower step, made eye contact and asked again. He stammered between sobs, "My mommy...there is...no one...my mommy." The school was closed and dark. I asked his name. He replied: Stanley Dombrowski. I said, "Well, Stanley, lets see if we can find out what is going on." I offered him my hand and his sobbing slowed as he took it and we walked towards the Rectory, where the priests live. Passing the front of the school, I noticed a sign that it was closed for repairs before winter break. Mom must have forgotten.

As we approached the Rectory, Stanley's fear of abandonment was superseded by a much more immediate fear shared by

most Catholic children at the sight of the Rectory - Priests and Nuns in their secret lair, of which there were many myths and tales, all scary. It was a rare child who had been inside the Rectory. I felt a slight trepidation myself. The long sidewalk to the front door of the Rectory was populated on both sides by barren trees reaching skeletal appendages to the gray sky. Stanley's sobbing turned to a resigned whimpering. This was a deeper level of fear. He could understand his Mom had made a mistake but still loved him. The Rectory however, who knew?

Holding Stanley's hand, I realized there were two chestnuts in my other hand. I took out the largest one and silently, handed it to Stanley. His eyes got big, he even smiled for a moment, took it and put it in his coat pocket with his hand tightly wrapped around it. A talisman, a good luck charm, a weapon. I smiled at him, he smiled back, then whimpered.

The housekeeper grabbed Stanley and slammed the door before I could say anything. I gave her the finger and moved on. I had to get to the Unemployment Office before my time slot was gone and I lost my \$22.50. I felt an odd sense of wellbeing. I had helped Stanley. I was a productive

member of society. The day brightened a little. The woman behind the Unemployment Office counter gave me crap about one of the jobs on the interview form. Quickly, the day again became bleak, cold, gray, skeletal.

In the first dark, cold, hours of the next morning, the war wouldn't leave me alone. I bolted out of my parents' door and wandered the streets of my childhood until I found myself by a creek and cement levees, a favorite childhood shelter. I curled into a fetal position on the levee as my hand found the other chestnut in my pocket. I thought of Stanley. For the first time since my discharge, in a childhood safe haven from a past impossible to reclaim tears started to flow until I was sobbing - alone.



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](mailto:GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM)

A Letter to Coffee Joe (A Strategic Analysis of Drone Warfare)

JIM WILLINGHAM

Sunday, August 27, 2012

Dear Joe,

The Secretary of the Air Force, Michael Donley, was a guest on Coffee Joe, Monday, August 19. I have written a letter, also for the Secretary, in a non-partisan, non-judgmental way, going below the particulars to a deeper grounding, cross-training. We're at an impasse. There's a rational way through this. This is a strategic analysis of the current situation.

Secretary Donley talked about drones and said they are not un-manned aircraft; they are manned aircraft, with a pilot, a weapons officer, and an operations officer and they are supported by many more people. He then praised the airmen and listed the aging fleet of tankers, bombers and fighters. No one said a responsible word about it. As a former Air Force pilot, I know that drones are ground-controlled un-manned aircraft, the same as the Mars Rover is an earth-controlled, un-manned research vehicle. It's a stretch to say that they are manned.

The Secretary presented drones as a metamorphosis of warfare. They are a transmogrification of war. Throughout the history of aviation, pilots have always been desensitized to warfare. Drones are a further desensitization of that.

Speaking as a nation, though not in our name, we are creating more anger and grief than any amount of somehow suspected and identified individuals can be killed by our drones, because of the gross collateral damage, horror and despair. This is propelled by a

stubborn inertia, with no foresight, none. Don't show weakness or restraint.

Massive invasions are no longer possible, so the tactic was shifted to assassinations, targeted enemies. That has now become the predominant strategy against Al-Qaeda and affiliates. The Taliban are not Al-Qaeda.

There will be an eventual decentralization of geo-political power. This is self-evident. They are no longer submissive, as when the colonial powers dealt with kings, by supporting them, and then built up their colonial administrations. They resist. Neo-colonialism will end.

Post-neocolonialism can come relatively peacefully, or it can arrive within our own realm to haunt us. We are perpetuating a climate of fear that is disproportionate and unfocused, displaced. We are stubborn because we have been scared, and hurt, but that new awakening into vigilance became a hyper-vengeance and that is what nobody at the table understood well enough to make a non-judgmental response. It was an obvious presentation, with an unexpressed consent.

Drones don't work. They are not a tactic nor a strategy. Al-Qaeda has two advantages over the US. They know us, but we don't know them (Sun Tzu). We won't allow ourselves to know them, because they are aberrant to us. When Jesus said, "Love your enemies," he was not making a naïve platitude. He is a strong, reasoned mind. Our mutual alienation with Al-Qaeda will become worse, unless we can find a way through this morass. We are

afraid to face our fears with trust in that man's rational knowing. We cannot love Al-Qaeda, but we can realize the value in understanding their motivations. We only look at their suspected immediate intentions and take them out, plus many more others, who we should love!

These "others" are what drone crews are purposefully emotionally shielded from, by dislocation. It is not only the risk of aircrews in combat. It is their eventual combat fatigue, and America's.

Drone crews are now showing signs of PTSD. They have to observe their targets, kill them, and then observe and report the air strike damage, in graphic detail. We are immunized to their impact. Drone crews become as intimate with their targets as ground military assassins do, with multiple kills. These men, and now women, have done what before they would have thought unthinkable and they become burdened by that, because killing is not "mettle." Killing is not natural to our psyche. They follow orders based upon "likely" appearance and location, association, "preaching" from despair, and "information" from the Saudi and Yemeni Kings, who are taking out their political opponents. The drone crews have become judge, jury, and executioner, pre-emptive assassins. We think that, since we are shielded from this, we are safe. It's an illusion.

We cannot make fighter air strikes in Pakistan or in Yemen, because this would bring on, catalyze, spawn an unchangeable, fixed, hard-and-fast, hyperbolic furor, as though that has not already been done. Attack drones can stray into foreign airspace without immediate detection from the ground and have a "parsed"



local impact. "Parsing" warfare by "legitimizing" killing with drones is like "parsing" rape into "legitimate" rape and "not really" rape. The world knows this, but we do not.

Tankers are necessary for the rapid geo-political extension of air power. They can ferry bombers and fighters worldwide. We do not need another fleet of them, any more than we need hyper-sonic drones. The world knows this, but we do not. We are paranoid.

The cost is not irrelevant and it is money spent on obsolete posturing. China is not imperialist. They are territorial and are peacefully investing in the third world, while we owe them immense debt.... "500,000" little Iraqi children were not "worth it!" Our fighters terror-bombed the Baghdad water purification plants, cultivated water-borne bactericidal diseases. There were no battlefield advancements in armored personnel carriers from Desert Storm until 2010, long after the Operation Iraqi Freedom was kicked off. Ask a Marine! We will strangle Iran until there is war. Don't tell me UNESCO is for wimps and cowards!

President Eisenhower knew warfare and he was a professional diplomat. His exposure to war made him grow into the relative understanding that we, as a nation, need today. We cannot have a relative peace without restraint.

One more thing: We do know as much as those at the helm of the Ship of State. "Democracy is coming to the USA. Sail on. Sail on, oh Ship of State! Sail on, sail on," Toward a relative peace.



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



Of Sports, Poverty, and Militarism in Haiti's Poorest Neighborhood

GEOFF MILLARD

When I went to Haiti with a delegation from Veterans For Peace to work on demilitarizing the relief effort, I never expected to get swept up by kids playing soccer and basketball, but that's exactly what happened. In the middle of Cite Soleil, the poorest slum in Haiti's capital of Port Au Prince, there is a colorful oasis called Inyon Espotif Kleb, Sakala (Union Sports Club, Sakala). Sakala focuses on peace building through sports and a gardening program.

Human beings have been playing games with balls and sticks as long as we have been interacting in communities. It is so basic to our existence that we seem to find these games in the most extreme poverty. A simple ball even without much space will spur children to chase and play. This is just the case for the children of Sakala who have found the joy and pride of playing games with balls in the midst of crippling poverty and the worst humanitarian crisis to hit the western hemisphere in at least a hundred years.

Sakala's philosophy of building peace into everything they do flies in the face of the common image of children with guns populated by the few images of Haitian children which make it into American media. We seem to think of slums in general as a dangerous place. In many ways it

is an unstable place, but Sakala is providing a day camp for children with very little money and none of the millions of American dollars that go unseen by many Haitians especially in Cite Soleil. Even the foreign NGOs which now flood Port Au Prince will not venture deep into Cite Soleil.

UN trucks, military and civilian, are rarely seen here despite over 10,000 troops from MINUSTAH (the UN mission) which now stand as another occupying army in Haiti, no matter how much they call themselves a stabilizing force. MINUSTAH is made up of more than 7,000 military personnel on a peace keeping mission that every poor Haitian I talked to agreed was a massive failure. There are also just under 3,000 police who are supposed to have trained the Haitian National Police (HNP) but have not even trained half of the number set out in their mission.

One saving grace for the UN police is that they have been a little responsive to gender based violence although they have a very poor relationship with HNP. The HNP themselves have historically been unresponsive to victims of gender based violence but this is changing with training by victims rights groups like KOFAVIV (the commission of women victims for victims). KOFAVIV even has a member up for the CNN Heroes



awards this year. The mission set out by the UN for MINUSTAH seems a poor fit for a military force with even Commander Kevin Klein of the US Navy admitting as much to our delegation. He reluctantly admitted that while the military is not the best fit they at least have the troops which is not the case for a force of police.

The garden at Sakala is just as colorful and inspirational as the field of play. Old tires are painted and filled with useful soil both because Cite Soleil was formerly a landfill and because the tires can be used throughout Port Au Prince in urban gardening. Food shortages are a huge issue after the earthquake and urban gardens could well be part of the solution to many of these issues. Food seems to be an issue on a much smaller scale than the issue of clean water which has killed over 7,000 and left over 500,000 infected (thanks

to the UN forces bringing cholera to Haiti). MINUSTAH does have water projects within its program for reconstruction, but all these reconstruction efforts add up to about 1% of its budget. The fact is that the military force is a sponge soaking up very limited resources.

So needless to say that a combat vet looking to do demilitarization work got blindsided by kids playing ball even my fandom in hockey could not keep basketball and soccer from melting my heart just this once. If you are interested in getting involved with Sakala please visit their page at Pax Christi. <http://www.popsspot.com/2012/08/sports-poverty-and-militarism-in-haitis-poorest-neighborhood/>



GEOFF MILLARD IS A MEMBER OF IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



About Face, Bloody Hell

DAVID SWANSON

"About Face: Military Resisters Turn Against War," is a book that should be stacked up on a table in every high school cafeteria, next to the vultures. Sorry, I mean the war pushers. Sorry, I mean the good recruiters for the services of the profiteers of death. Sorry, you know the people I mean. That is, unless useful books can make it into classrooms, which would be even better.

Most G.I. resistance in Vietnam, this book points out, came from those who had willingly signed up, not from draftees. It is often those who believe the hype, who are trying to benefit the world by going to war, who find the will try to benefit the world when their blinders have been removed and they've seen what war is and what war is used for.

"About Face" collects stories of recent resistance within the volunteer US military. These are young people with few job options who choose military service but discover it isn't a service. They all have stories, many of them highlighting particular moments of conversion. The reality is usually more complex and gradual, but the stories make the point.

Benji Lewis was a Marine in Iraq. After two tours he gave some thought to things that had happened on his first tour, including this:

"They were shooting at this lady who was walking up to our posts waving her arms and asking for help in Arabic. So I came up close and talked to her, and her face looked like death itself. She had salt crusted all over her face. It was obvious that she had been crying for quite a bit. I kind of got the story that she had a family. We were like, 'Go back home, go to your family.' And then it came out that she was asking for help. Three days ago, her entire family, her children, had been pretty much buried in the rubble of their house, and she was asking for help. I asked my staff sergeant, 'Can we help her?' He said to tell her to walk to the Red Cross aid station, which was a few miles away. We couldn't leave our posts to help her, so we gave her a couple of bottles of water and wished her luck, you know. It dawned on me later on that me being the adjusting gunner for the mortar section, there was a good probability that I was the one that put those rounds on her house."

Lewis refused orders for his Individual Ready Reserve recall and was discharged with no penalties. While some resisters are punished, that does not seem to be the norm. Often the resistance takes the form of going AWOL, and in some cases later turning oneself in. Andre Shepherd sought refugee status in Germany:

"I made a decision during [a] two-week period that I would have to walk away from the service rather than either get myself killed or get somebody else killed in a war that was based on a pack of lies."

Some resisters don't believe they should request conscientious objector status, because that requires opposing all wars. Having come to see through the lies and horror of one war, they still fantasize that some other war might be a good idea. Those who do apply for conscientious objector status don't always receive it, but many do. Hart Vigas joined up in 2001, gung ho for the war on terror. He was honorably discharged as a conscientious objector three years later. "I am opposed to all wars," he says. "When anybody picks up a tool to violently fight their brother or sister, I am opposed to it and do not support it. I finally found my fight, my good fight. It's the path that I am most comfortable with, more comfortable with myself than I have ever been in the rest of my life." Telling the truth about war turns out to be great therapy for veterans and for our whole society.

But the stories should perhaps be taken in small doses. Reading through these books without pause can make you understand why it is sometimes the counselors who hear all the soldiers' stories who end up losing their own minds. "About Face" informs potential recruits and those already recruited that they have options, as well as informing aging peace activists where the young ones are: they're among the veterans. Many other books and videos can add to the reality that needs to be communicated to a culture increasingly viewing war as a harmless sport. Probably the most powerful collection of veterans' stories I've read is "Bloody Hell" by Dan Hallock. This is essentially an uncensored view of what can become of you if you don't resist.

"Bloody Hell" shows us homeless men, men mad with

nightmares, in prison, on death row, drunk, weeping, drugged, screaming, suicidal, and unable to prevent themselves from harming those they love. A Vietnam veteran identified as Lee married and had a little girl with a Vietnamese woman while stationed in Vietnam during the war. That wife and daughter, plus drug use, were what carried him through the hell he was a part of, the killing and the dying all around him. But the Army denied the legitimacy of his marriage and made clear he would have to leave his wife and daughter behind or desert:

"Chi and I met one last time before I was supposed to leave. We both cried our eyes out. It was so bad, so much pain. We trembled in each other's arms. I left her and went back to my unit. Then she sent me a note saying to meet her at a cliff above the South China Sea, a very beautiful place where we had gone a lot. I went. I was leaving tomorrow, so I had to see her today. I took an officer's jeep and drove to the cliff. There they were, waiting, crying. We didn't talk, we just held each other, with Le in between us. We cried so much. I reached into my pocket and took out my pistol, put it to Chi's head and pulled the trigger. There was a splatter - then her blood gushed out - all over me. I held her tightly - with Le screaming still between us. I held her as long as I could - then let her go - over the cliff and into the sea they both fell. I pounded the earth as hard as I could - I screamed till I had no voice. I had nothing left inside me when I drove back. I should have died in Vietnam instead of living the thousands of deaths that I have. Back at the hooch no one said a word to me. I had walked in covered with blood and looked pretty bad - no one said a word."

Lee recounts his life back in the United States as a veteran, with a new wife, and a new child. You can imagine. But you should read it. Everyone should. Especially everyone who's 17 and not the child of a billionaire.

Veterans' stories often depict war differently from what the television told us. Drones won't talk, of course, but human warriors tell us how early the 2003 invasion of Iraq began, how the Gulf of Tonkin incident didn't happen, and how countless families have been murdered rather than liberated.

"Bloody Hell" includes an account from a veteran named Doug of the 1989 US attack on Panama. I had known that the war plans had been in place months before an incident that was used to justify this "intervention" against long-time US-backed dictator Manuel Noriega. Some drunk Panamanian soldiers had beaten up a US navy officer and threatened his wife. But listen to this account from Doug:

"At Fort Bragg I was ordered to go on a mission against a group of people I had never dreamed of - our own soldiers. I was assembled along with Michael and four other men whom I never had met before. We were among the few soldiers in the US Army at the time with combat experience, with confirmed sniper kills; we were also the best of the best. The thinking at the Pentagon was that to get the soldiers stationed in Panama to fight, they had to have very good reasons. We're talking here about soldiers who have never experienced combat before. And the best way to get them riled up was to attack them. When Michael asked what the other four men in our mission were doing, we were told it was none of our business. You see, American soldiers, especially infantry soldiers, stick together. If one of them gets into a predicament in a bar - I mean a fight - the others don't walk away, they join in. You don't fight one of them, you fight all of them. Their training has taught them to be a team; they depend on each other, and it doesn't matter if it's a barroom brawl or not. They depend on each other to get home. So what better way to get them all worked up than to take pot shots at them? We were told that we would be saving lives by doing this. For weeks leading up to the invasion of Panama, Michael and I took pot shots at soldiers during the night."

There's wrong.

And then there's Army wrong.



DAVID SWANSON'S BOOKS INCLUDE "WAR IS A LIE." HE BLOGS AT [HTTP://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG](http://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG) AND [HTTP://WARISACRIME.ORG](http://WARISACRIME.ORG) AND WORKS AS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR FOR THE ONLINE ACTIVIST ORGANIZATION [HTTP://ROOTSACTION.ORG](http://ROOTSACTION.ORG).

Joshua Eric Casteel: 1979-2012

Joshua was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to Rick and Kristi Casteel, and grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. From an early age, Joshua enjoyed sports, music, drama, writing and eventually, academics – in particular philosophy and theology. Joshua enlisted in the US Army in high school to help prepare him for the US Military Academy at West Point, which he attended for a short time his freshman year. When he realized his desires and philosophies were changing, he left West Point to finish his college education at the University of Iowa.

In order to fulfill his military commitment Joshua re-enlisted, and after graduation, he was trained as an Arabic linguist and interrogator, serving at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Joshua acquired lung cancer as a result of living near and manning the open burn pits in Iraq. He had hoped to work towards the elimination of these pits, as well as bring aid to the Iraqi people, who are also suffering as a result. Joshua's cancer ultimately prevented him from carrying out this personal and important work.

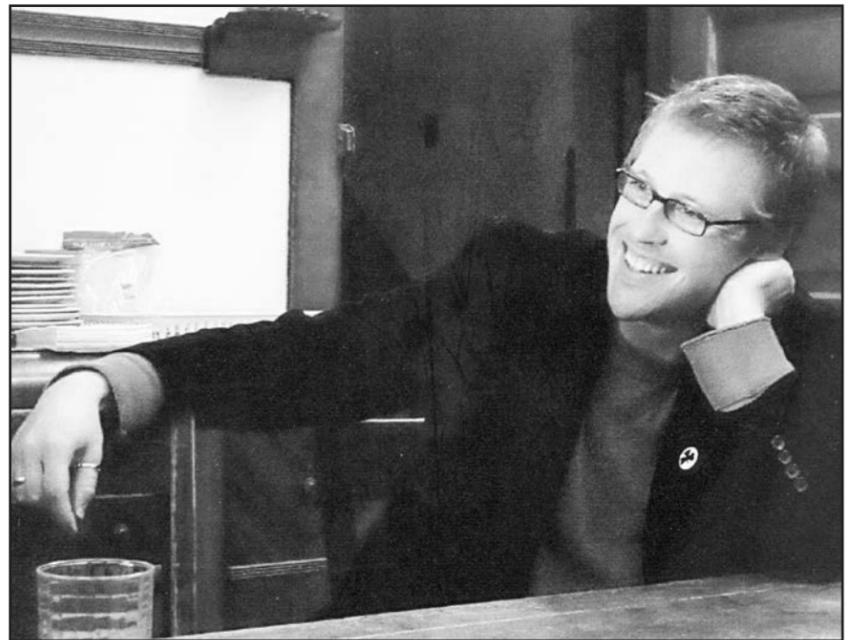
Upon his return from Iraq, Joshua came to an important decision regarding his beliefs and values pertaining to his role in

the military. He applied for and received a Conscientious Objector status in 2005 and was honorably discharged. At this point he forged a new path and began to participate in organizations and activities promoting non-violence, including Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Catholic Peace Fellowship and Pax Christi USA. Joshua was asked by Catholic Peace Fellowship to be part of a delegation invited to the Vatican to discuss issues of non-violence and Catholicism.

Joshua served on the Board of Directors of IVAW, lead a panel on Racism and Dehumanization at Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan, and in 2010, he testified at the Truth Commission on Conscience and War.

Joshua was invited to speak about peace and non-violence all over the world. In 2006, Joshua appeared on the stage of the Royal Court Theatre in London for Human Rights Watch's Cries From the Heart performing a monologue from his play Returns, which premiered at the University of Iowa in February 2007, and then at Columbia College in Chicago, Princeton and other venues nationally and internationally.

Some of Joshua's essays on war and Christian ethics have become part of course curricula at



high schools and colleges across the country. His story is featured in the documentary films *Soldiers of Conscience* and *Iraq for Sale*. In 2008 Joshua published a book of letters he sent home while deployed entitled *Letters from Abu Ghraib*, excerpts of which were also published in *Harper's Magazine*. In 2009 he authored a booklet of Lenten reflections for Pax Christi USA. In 2010 he wrote "Call of Duty" an article for *The Point* magazine.

Joshua earned a dual M.F.A. in Playwriting and Non-Fiction Writing from the University of Iowa in 2008 and was studying literature and religion at the University of Chicago and working

as an editor for the Lumen Christi Institute before he was diagnosed with cancer. In March of this year, Joshua was awarded the Catholic Peace Ministry's Bishop Dingman Peace Award, becoming the youngest person to receive this honor.

Joshua was a young man with purpose and a passion to help change the World for the better. And he did so because of his deep faith and dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to live out God's command to Love.



Enlightenment Breaks Out on the USS Grand Canyon

KEN DALTON

By the Fall of 73, the wheels were falling off the Navy just like the other branches of the US Armed Forces. To deal with morale problems and outright revolt in the fleet, the Chief of Naval Operations or CNO gave a directive to commanding officers to hold rap sessions with their crews. So late in 1973, this enlightenment finally made its way to the USS Grand Canyon AR-28, aka the Grande Commode. Just a little background on the Grand Canyon. The GC was a former destroyer tender turned repair ship (no weapons department) with a crew of about one thousand men.

Anyway, at that time there was a lot of chickenshit being directed at enlisted crew members in regards to haircuts and civilian attire when leaving the ship. Also at the same time living conditions were deplorable with the worst

thing being a constant shortage of toilet paper.

The day finally arrived for R-2 Division to have it's turn to meet with the "Old Man" and to discuss what was on our minds. Many of the roughly fifty members of R-2 Division were all geared up to tell the old man this and that now that it was our turn. We assembled on the mess decks to meet with Captain Crane and all those guys who were going to be brave with the CO sat there like little puppy dogs. That infuriated me more than all the chickenshit we were living with. So I raised my hand and respectfully identified myself as engine man third class Dalton from the diesel engine repair shop. I then went on with basically as follows; "Captain, I noticed lately there's been a lot of attention focused on our civilian attire and haircuts when leaving

the ship but I hope we can get the same attention directed towards living conditions aboard the ship. First, the compartments are not up to par, the food down in the galley is deplorable and most of all, there's an ongoing shortage of toilet paper in the heads."

Well, Master Chief Danny McGuirl and Lieutenant Commander Kirwin almost fell out of their chairs, Captain Crane was tongue tied and everybody else was happy that somebody stood up and said what they were too afraid to say. But I was a short timer and didn't really care since I would be getting out soon.

As a result of this action on my part, the harassment when leaving the ship died down to acceptable levels, there was a commissioned officer eating with the enlisted men at every meal and there was an ample supply of toilet

paper in each and every head. In addition, EN3 Dalton was soon kicked out of R-2 Div and given the job of repair department driver, which meant the commanding officer and I were the only two members of the crew who were not in any in port duty sections, worked 0800 to 1600 and had no in port or underway watches.

I guess the most important lesson of this experience is never underestimate the power of one individual to stand up and speak truth to power and make positive changes for everybody.



KEN DALTON IS A VVAW MEMBER FROM NEW JERSEY. HE SERVED IN THE US NAVY FROM 1970-74 AS AN EN2.

Vietnam Stevedores 1968

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stopped for any reason, except for mortars and/or 122mm rockets. There were some benefits such as: real flush toilets on the ship, lots of steel to hug when mortars and rockets rained down on us, better food some nights eating with the ships' mates, endless pallets of hot beer, and once in a while a shipment of Chivas Regal for the generals who always wanted us to share a bottle or two with them, and so we did! We had some battle deaths and many injuries but mostly we suffered bad backs, bad knees, damaged shins, crushed fingers and toes, various head injuries, and later a number of us ended up with Agent Orange poisoning.

When Agent Orange/White and about five other colors came in we had special hooks that would pick up 5 barrels at a time. We would climb onto the barrels stacked in the hole and hook up five of them at a time and then sling them onto the pier where the long shore men would stack them up on the pier for future truck and/or barge delivery. There was never a time that broken and dripping barrels weren't a problem. At the time we did not know how powerful the stuff was so took no extra precautions. We were also right on the Saigon River and were sprayed regularly by C-130's who flew up

and down the River banks killing everything that was green!

Interestingly enough when I arrived at the 71st Trans Bn in November of 1967 enlisted men were not issued weapons or ammo and convoyed 25 miles down Highway 1A each day to Newport with not much firepower. It seems "fragging" had been a problem in the Saigon area and only officers were allowed to carry their weapons. That changed pretty quick as the 1968 TET offensive began one morning just as we were about to leave to go to the port. I walked out of the mess hall and a shock wave from a blown ammo dump nearby knocked me to the ground. We were issued our dirty M-14's and two clips of dirty ammo. Driving down highway 1-A with only two clips of ammo still leaves a sickening feeling in my gut! We just happened to be working under the huge Newport Bridge that crossed the Saigon River which the NVA had planned on taking as one of the bridges they would need to cross to get into Saigon. Well remember I said we never stopped working. . .that night we did! Interestingly also, the 720th MP's and our stevedore guards had been delivered several new 50 caliber machine guns, several new APC's, and a couple of M-48 tanks a few weeks earlier that

helped us mow down the bonsai charges the NVA made trying to cross our bridge that night. By early morning the NVA ended up attempting to blow up the bridge as we kicked their butts and kept them from crossing. As the bridge blew it turned out they only got half of it and our infantry used it to chase after them later in the day.

While I'm at it, we stopped work several other nights including what we called another mini TET in March when another huge attack included a whole lot of 122mm rockets rained down on us. I must say that to this day I do not care for 122mm rockets they were #10! I imagine to this

day one dropping into the hole of a ship I'm working in and chasing me around to rip off my arms.

My fondest memories were when you were selected as the hatch crew to travel down the Saigon River with the Victory Ship to complete tying down back loaded damaged vehicles on there way back for repairs to wherever. The Ship would leave Newport and travel down the Saigon River to the ocean at Vung Tau which was an in-country R&R site where we would jump ship and hang out for a spell in Vung Tau. We would then have to find a way back to Long Binh which sometimes would take us a day or so. Most times it was with Army stake truck drivers who were glad to have extra guards on their trip back towards Saigon.

Much of the Vietnam history of the 71st Transportation Bn is located on a web site maintained by Alan Furtado with lots of pictures and some pretty good war stories especially during the 68 TET Offensive. So now I hope you know a bit more about how the Armed Forces of the United States can survive in a foreign land during wartime and who provides them their supplies and equipment for survival. Our Campaign Participation in Vietnam included the Counter Offensives Phase II through VII, the TET Counteroffensive, the Vietnam Summer through Fall 1969 and the Winter through Spring 1970, and the Sanctuary Counteroffensive. We earned the Meritorious Unit Commendation Streamer Embroidered Victim July 68 – March 69.



Victory Ship at Newport unloading wood to awaiting trucks.

What is Mr. Putin Doing?

WHAT AM I DOING?
OH, JUST HELPING A FRIEND
KILL SOME CHILDREN...



DANZIGER NYTS/CWS May 28 2012 (5153)



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

Vietnam Stevedores 1968

MARK FOOKS

When was the last time you read a story about US Army Stevedores in Vietnam? Never you say. Well then read on, I was one by chance. In November 1968 I was flown into Vietnam to the 90th Replacement Camp when an E-6 SSgt stuck his arm into our group and yelled: "You 20 men get your asses on that deuce and a half the United States Army needs Stevedores today!" I had thought I was going to MACV HQ's to work with data processing equipment which was what I had been doing at Pier 91 in Seattle, Washington prior to getting my orders to Vietnam. Few of us had Stevedore Military Occupational Specialities "MOS's" but that was what we were about to become.

For those of you who don't know what an Army Stevedore is, it is a person who humps at least 12 hours a day or until the job is done, seven days a week, rain or shine, unloading everything from Agent Orange to M-48 Tanks and whatever else that was needed to fight the War in Vietnam. "No sweat" was a double entendre term for Stevedores. We worked unloading and back loading the big Victory ships, Container ships, barges, LST's, LCM8's and other military craft coming and going on the rivers of Vietnam.

We were the 71st Transportation Battalion with 5 companies, (154th, 368th, 551st, 561st, and the 567th) my Company was the 368th called the "Deck Devils" and our motto was "full speed ahead." We were activated in May 1966 and deployed to Long Binh in October 1966. We also operated the Army Air Cargo facility at Tan Son Nhut Air Base on the outskirts of Saigon. We set a record US Army tonnage in a 24 hour period of 6006 short tons (over 12 million pounds of cargo) on the 8th and 9th of Dec 1969! We convoyed every day down Highway 1A from Long Binh to the outskirts of Saigon to a place called Newport on the Saigon River. It was a hot sweaty physical labor intensive job every day and we worked in deck crews of 5 to 6 men.

The Deep Draft ships (Victory ships) that I worked on included three tweens or levels in each of their five hatches with the first hatch having only one tween. We would unload a level then have to remove the hatch covers and I-beams to get into the next level to unload whatever the war effort had requested. Our hatch crews consisted of a winch operator operating the ships equipment to unload the cargo on to the pier for



Barge full of Agent Orange and Agent White.

longshoremen to load on trucks or stack for future loading. There was one man, who, depending on the tide levels of the river and how high the ship was riding to the pier, would direct unloading by hand signals for the winch operator (best job)! There would be two cable men in the hole who hooked up cargo to be unloaded on the pier, and there would be a 4000lb fork lift man (when needed) who would bring cargo to the loading area down in the ships hold for unloading.

On the dock there would

be one or two men to unhook the cargo and one man who sat and documented what was being unloaded (second best job). Depending on the cargo, a larger RT fork lift operator moved the cargo around the pier or loaded it directly onto trucks. We also had a very large crane (called Papa San) located on a special barge that would come along side of the ship to unload extra heavy cargo. It was a 24/7 operation that rarely

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Defense Secretary Panetta Seeks Deal for US in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam



NYTS/CWS June 6 2012 (5061) DANZIGER