



# THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Volume 45, Number 1

Spring 2015

## 50th Anniversary Commemoration vs. the Truth

JOHN KETWIG

Today there are 58,262 names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. The government didn't used to keep records, but it is generally acknowledged that a far greater number, probably something over 150,000 Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since returning from the war. And while we debate government spending cuts to health care, Social Security, and education to ease the 18 trillion-dollar national debt, few Americans are aware that our government is beginning a \$65 million campaign to alter America's image of the Vietnam War and paint it as an honorable, even noble experience.

The history of PTSD resulting from the Vietnam War is tragic. By the time the big numbers of Americans were deployed to Southeast Asia, the Pentagon, CIA, General Westmoreland, and MACV had developed a modern-day concept of a war of attrition that incorporated tactics, strategies and weapons so horribly effective, so cruel, and so deadly that the warfare we witnessed turned our stomachs. Clearly, the Pentagon will not direct its patriotic spotlights toward the veterans suffering from PTSD forty and fifty years after returning from



Southeast Asia, or the thousands who have taken their own lives. "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it," George Santayana wrote, and as the Pentagon celebrates the war in Vietnam and simultaneously drags out the current conflicts in the Middle East indefinitely, we must strive to learn from the past and be realistic as we plan for the future.

Since World War II, America's laboratories, think tanks and war colleges have developed the science of brutality, killing, destruction, and terror to levels of sophistication and brute force that are unprecedented in the history of the world. General Westmoreland spoke of the war in Vietnam as

an "opportunity to test our latest weapons and tactics," and in that respect, and only in that respect the war was an overwhelming success. Three million Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian peasants died, along with approximately 58,262 Americans, and hundreds of allied troops from Australia, Korea, and Thailand. The efficiency of our state-of-the-art weaponry was proven beyond question, along with the terrible toll wrought by the strategy of "search and destroy." We dropped more tons of explosives on Vietnam than were used in all of World War II, against both the Nazis and the Japanese. The damage to a poor agricultural country approximately the size of Connecticut cannot be imagined

unless you were there to see it for yourself. Similar destruction of Laos and large areas of Cambodia provided the American military-industrial complex with enormous quantities of "test" results even as it devastated the powerless peoples of those lands.

Today it is estimated that more than 150,000 of America's veterans have committed suicide since returning from Vietnam. The Department of Veterans Affairs does not keep reliable statistics about veteran suicides, and the Pentagon claims it has not kept records. As a result, while we recognize that suicide has become

*continued on page 2*

## A Tragic Anniversary: Reflections on Iraq, Activism, and Commitment

VINCENT EMANUELE

Every year around this time, I reflect on my experiences in Iraq and those as an activist. It's been twelve years since the US' criminal invasion and occupation, but as most people now know, and as the

people of Iraq have always known, the tragedy didn't begin in 2003.

We could go back to the 1990s, and properly recall the Clinton Administration's murderous and insane sanctions inflicted

on the country. Remember, as Madeline Albright infamously said, "we think the price [500,000 dead Iraqi children] is worth it." In the US, those in charge of the Empire don't fret over the deaths of Iraqi children. Hell, they don't shed a tear for poor or dying US children, so why should we expect the managers of Empire to offer any mercy to the enemy?

Others would argue that we should look back to the eight year Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s in order to better understand today's geopolitical reality in Iraq. Remember, the US supported Saddam's invasion of Iran back in September of 1980. Horrifically enough, that war was the longest conventional

war of the 20th century. Hundreds of thousands were killed on both sides, with hundreds of thousands more injured, displaced or permanently traumatized. Some estimate that more than a million people were killed from both nations. One person is too many. All life matters.

Perhaps, we should listen more closely to western commentators such as Robert Fisk and Patrick Cockburn, who remind us that western imperial policies have played a significant role in destroying Arab and Muslim nations for many decades. The significance of the colonial legacy can't be overstated. Here, I'm grateful for

*continued on page 8*

Non Profit ORG  
US Postage  
Paid  
Permit 880  
Champaign, IL

PO Box 355  
Champaign, IL 61824-0355  
www.vvaaw.org  
vvaaw@vvaaw.org



# 50th Anniversary Commemoration vs. the Truth

*continued from page 1*

far more prevalent among veterans since the Vietnam War, the statistics that would clearly define the scope of the problem simply don't exist. It seems obvious that hard numbers will probably never become available, especially from the government or military, because of the negative impact they might have on the military's recruiting efforts.

We have become aware of the military suicide problem through a torrent of media attention. Newspaper and magazine articles and TV news have all recognized the

disastrous statistics, the President recently signed a "Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act" into law, but the real question is whether we are actually addressing the causes of the epidemic, or simply putting a band-aid on a hemorrhage?

The military has long sought to portray the veterans afflicted by PTSD as somehow predisposed, weak or susceptible. There has been no scientific verification of these suggestions, but they are widely accepted among Pentagon spokesmen. The simple fact re-

mains that a great many American soldiers are very understandably troubled by what they saw in Vietnam, or what they are seeing in today's war zones, and the emotional and moral dilemmas they feel are the mental roots that flower as PTSD. Post-Traumatic Stress Damage is, at the bottom line, just a word-managed term for conscience. Try as they might, the Pentagon planners cannot hide the fact that we are testing weapons on people, and our military incursions have not really been good for the people of Vietnam,

Iraq, or Afghanistan. In fact, they have done tremendous harm to our veterans who have witnessed the carnage.



*JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFE MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM" WHICH WILL MARK ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY IN PRINT THIS MAY. JOHN IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON A NEW BOOK WHICH IS INTENDED TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION.*

## RIP Dave Curry

Just as we are getting ready to go to press, we have been hit with horrible news. Our brother Dave Curry has passed.

Dave had a life-long commitment to VVAW. He served for many years in the National Office and then as a National Coordinator.

Dave contributed much to the life of VVAW, through his writings, activism, good nature, and friendship. Dave will be sorely

missed.

The Veterans Day issue of *The Veteran* will feature remembrances and photos of Dave.

Until then, you can share your memories of Dave at his guestbook at [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org).

As Joan Davis said, "When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure. Dave, you will always be in our memories."



Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Aaron Hughes and IVAW for the illustrations. Thanks to Bill Branson, Jack Klein, Joe Miller, Ben Chitty, Ann Bailey, Brian Matarrese and others for contributing photos.

### Veteran Staff

Charlie Branson	Bill Branson
Jeff Machota	Jen Tayabji
Ellie Shunas	

## VVAW Merchandise

**HONOR THE WARRIOR,  
NOT THE WAR**

**Vietnam Veterans Against the War**  
Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967  
[www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org)



Mail order and check to:  
VVAW Merchandise  
c/o Dave Kettenhofen  
3550 East Lunham Avenue  
Saint Francis, WI 53235

- VVAW T-Shirt
  - White (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Sand (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Black (white logo) (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_

- Winter Soldier DVD - \$24.95 \_\_\_\_\_

• Shipping for above items  
\$6.00 for first item, \$2.00 for each item after \_\_\_\_\_

- VVAW Embroidered Patch - \$6.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- VVAW Button - \$1.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- VVAW Enamel Pin - \$3.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- VVAW Bumper Sticker - \$3.00 \_\_\_\_\_

• Shipping for above items  
\$2.00 for first item \_\_\_\_\_

- VVAW Grey Crewneck Sweatshirt (M, L) - \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_

• Shipping for above items  
\$9.00 for first item, \$4.00 for each item after \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

Ship to:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

National Office  
P.O. Box 355  
Champaign, IL 61824-0355  
(773) 569-3520  
vvaw@vvaw.org

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

## VVAW

### National Coordinators:

Bill Branson	Joe Miller
Annie Hirschman	Susan Schnell
Brian Matarrese	Marty Webster

## VVAW

### National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

## From the National Office

BILL BRANSON

Fifty years ago, in 1965, the US began the ground war in Vietnam, and forty years ago, Saigon was taken and the US under President Ford declared the Vietnam War over. In VVAW's forty-eight years, we have used what we have experienced and learned from Vietnam to fight against unjust warfare, whether carried out directly or by proxy.

We have organized under the mission of peace, justice and the rights of all veterans. Our work has become more challenging in the past fifteen years as the global war on terror has turned into US incursions and bombings in multiple countries, on multiple fronts, simultaneously. Remember the first Gulf War? Many of us, and millions across the country, watched the air assault on Iraq begin on CNN, stuck to our TVs, engrossed in what we were watching before we hit the streets. Now, we are lucky to get a passing byline about the US dropping bombs on the new country of choice of the week.

This change in US warfare has made our role in fighting back against these injustices more difficult. Our country now has a nonchalant attitude towards dropping bombs and unleashing violence on civilian populations. Our government imposes its moral superiority and its idea of borders on the rest of the world. This is why we find our government trying to bomb ISIS back into the Stone Age (which only perpetuates the problems that gave ISIS its foothold) and our "Foreign Policy" producing chaos in Syria and the entire Middle East.

Now with the hopeful June finalization of the Iran Nuclear Deal, Iran is a renewed focus of US foreign policy. The outlined deal has the potential to make great strides forward in curbing

nuclear proliferation. The barbaric, outlandish and even traitorous sabotage, led by the Republican Party, aided by Netanyahu, and even joined by some Democrats, has attempted to insert one "deal breaker" after another.

If a deal is not reached to implement real international-led inspections of the facilities and/or Iran does not allow for a transparent process, we may end up going ten steps backwards, or even with another war. We have sanctioned the hell out of Iran and that will be the crucial compensation Iran is demanding. And it's only fair.

At home, we are fighting our own battles, from an overzealous militarized police state to a broken VA system. How many unarmed citizens, especially young men and women of color have to die at the hands of the police before we change our justice system? Ferguson, South Carolina, Baltimore—where next? This is by no means an attack on police officers by and large. There are many well-intentioned law enforcement officers out there. However, when our country focuses funding for militarizing the police, and departments spend more time training in combat scenarios instead of conflict resolution and de-escalation tactics, we will only create a police system focused on creating safety through violence.

Remember when we warned that the evil the US has done abroad would eventually come home to roost? This plan tastes and smells very similar to the CIA and NSA worldwide program of spying and the rampage of secretly sanctioned murders by drone, disappearances and torture. You know, the program that is working so well for us in the Middle East?

GIs and veterans like us

are fighting our own war to get access to the health care services that we have earned and need. In the year since the VA scandal in Phoenix became headline news, not enough has changed for the VA. National attention and scrutiny has been brought to the issues. And while system reform takes time, more must be done. The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 is not enough! The Veterans Health Administration has to be completely reformed and rebuilt, from the bottom up and our country has to raise the standards for our health care and the consequences for when the system fails to provide that. Whistleblowers must be protected. Employees must have a voice in administrator's reviews. We vets, the "clients," must have a seat at the table.

We must work hard to prevent the incompetence and corruption that was fostered by the politicians and their rich, austerity-for-the-poor, masters, being used as an excuse to privatize the VA. OUR VA, is not a pie to be divided by the Medical Conglomerates!

We—veterans and our families—are paying, and continue to pay, for the results of the wars our country has created. Some scars do not heal. Nationally, veterans make up at least 20% of the suicide deaths. And veterans, especially younger veterans, are 2-3 times more likely to commit suicide than a civilian. At a time when the VA is overwhelmed and fractured, the need for real and comprehensive mental health services couldn't be greater.

The Security State dogs have been urged on by our draft dodging Congress to focus on so-called "traitors" like Bowe Bergdahl and Chelsea Manning. When will we prosecute the real criminals

(actual traitors) like Nixon, Bush, Reagan and Cheney? Bush and Cheney took us to war with no evidence and their actions created a new generation of veterans. They created the circumstances for Bergdahl and Manning to take the actions that they did. They did nothing to put into place an infrastructure to help returning soldiers, like bolstering and growing the VA system.

This is why Vietnam Veterans Against the War is still here. Our work is not done. Our war may have officially ended forty years ago, but our mission for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans has just as much importance today as it did when we first started. The legacy of chemical poisoning and mental trauma is very apparent. The current conditions, as well as our circumstances, may not be conducive for the same sort of organized mass demonstrations, but there is still so much we can still do.

We can be vocal and share our experiences. When the Department of Defense's 50th commemoration of the Vietnam War seeks to gloss over and whitewash the war, we must be there to challenge that re-writing of history.

We must also keep speaking out. Contact your legislators to make sure that they are working to protect veterans' rights and prioritizing strengthening the VA. Share your experiences about the VA and what you would like to see improved on.

Lastly, we must fight against any new wars in whatever way we can.



*BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW BOARD MEMBER.*

# Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Back in the day when US leaders were often poking our nose into the affairs of other countries and the war was hot and heavy in Vietnam, many would say that it was not our job to be the world's policeman. I was appreciative to have those who thought so as allies against the war. However, the idea that the US was the police would imply that all the countries we messed with were deserving of being messed with. That wasn't the case. but be that as it may, fast forward to 2015. We have ISIS which certainly needs policing. The question is if it should be policed by the US of A. Nope. Not in this century.

Back in the day many also said that Vietnam was somebody else's civil war in which we should not be involved. What's currently going on in Iraq and other Middle East countries is sort of like a civil war. There is a big difference which is that there aren't only two sides. There's Shia versus Sunni and Sunni versus Sunni. There is the state of Iraq, and there is the Islamist State. And then mix in the Kurds and various tribes. And don't forget the regional powers like Iran and Turkey. Even with all the various threads, you can say it is, in a sense, a civil war. That is because they are sorting out who's going to live and govern where. And by the way, we shouldn't be involved in someone else's troubles.

We are involved, however. That's because the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 precipitated the last twelve years of fighting. We have leftover troops and advisers there, stationed in this non-strategic country. And, of course, we have those who take this to mean we should send more to finish the job or make sure their predecessors didn't die in vain. And we have those who say we owe it to the Iraqis, and there are those who say we have to fight them there, or we'll have to fight them here. Remember that? I went to Vietnam to save San Francisco. We should help in the fight against the brutal ISIS, but only with intelligence gathering and supplies. The rest has to be sorted out by those who live there.

The main thrust of US foreign policy is to pursue American interests around the world. Most of the time this means pursuing the interest of American Capital. This does not preclude the idea of American leaders pursuing stupid

foreign policy when it has nothing to do with advancing Capital. Take Afghanistan for example. Al Qaeda conducted the 9-11 attacks, and its leadership was stationed in eastern Afghanistan. It was reasonable to send operational troops in to take out bin Laden and company. Then most of Al Qaeda moved into Pakistan, but the US stayed to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan. Why the Afghan Taliban? Not nice people, but war for fifteen years? And no more attacking of the US being plotted inside Afghanistan? We sacrifice for this?

When Mikhail Gorbachev came into leadership in the Soviet Union in the mid-eighties he put into motion a plan to withdraw Soviet troops from their Afghan war. He realized that it was an impossible situation where tribal areas and tribal loyalties prevented any sort of lasting regime change. Nobody in US leadership seemed to learn that lesson from Gorby. Stupid is as stupid does.

And take Iraq for another example of Yankee stupidity. In the book "Hunting in the Shadows," author Seth G. Jones tells of a terrorist cell headed by al Zarqawi which later affiliated with Al Qaeda and became Al Qaeda in Iraq. This group was expressing the hope that the US would invade Iraq a second time, long before the invasion happened. They figured that it would aid in their recruitment, and they were right. Evidently other terrorist groups were of the same opinion. And they were right. Recruitment soared. Members of these groups may have been vicious and brutal people, but they understood the situation better than Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld. Al Zarqawi and the others were also talking about establishing a caliphate so one wonders if these people were the ones who eventually formed the Islamic State and whether it would have come into existence if there had been no Iraq invasion by the US.

Mindless acts of war are also committed on a smaller scale. One such act was our helping to eliminate Ghadaffi in Libya. That turned into a disaster. Chaos came to Libya. New jihadists emerged. The US ambassador was killed. Terrorist training camps were established in Libya. Refugees with terrorists hidden among them made their way to Europe.

All because hawks and vengeance seekers had it in for Gadaffi.

Physicians are given the advice "first do no harm." Foreign policy makers should take the advice, "first do no stupid." We seem to have been doing a lot of stupid in the last couple of decades. I suppose Bush felt it necessary for American oil interests to control the flow of oil in the Middle East by going to war in Iraq, but that wasn't a major problem as we see now that we are supposedly energy independent. That invasion was a huge mistake. And we don't need to be the world's policeman. Sometimes you get the impression from Washington that it is some sort of duty that the US undertakes. We have the military and the equipment so we should be intervening everywhere. This shouldn't be the case. ISIS will not be going away for awhile. There are military plans to take this or that city or territory from ISIS. This could happen if regional forces cooperate which is a question in and of itself. Winning back land on the battlefield is not easy, but simple attrition won't

work. ISIS seems to be alluring to young people, and they have little trouble recruiting cannon fodder. We need to let the regional forces take care of matters.

Foreign policy decisions should have some sort of rationale, some sort of framework. We don't have to like the decisions, and we often correctly protest them. And sometimes these decisions are plain outside-the-box stupid. Much that we have done in Iraq and Afghanistan has been outside-the-box stupid. Aside from some natural resources, American Capital hasn't a whole lot to gain there, and any gains that are made would pale compared to what was lost in national treasure, world opinion and that illusive peace in the Middle East. It's a sorrowful thing. For now, aid to those fighting ISIS would be okay. More boots on the ground would be stupid - again.



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



## McFarland

"[Ehrhart is] one of the great poets and writers of nonfiction produced by the Vietnam War" — *The Nation*

### Dead on a High Hill

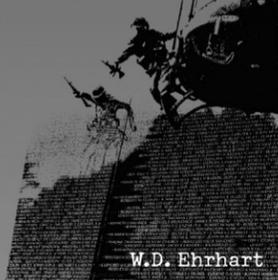
Essays on War, Literature and Living,  
2002 - 2012



W.D. Ehrhart

### The Madness of It All

Essays on War, Literature  
and American Life



W.D. Ehrhart

### IN THE SHADOW OF VIETNAM

ESSAYS, 1977-1991

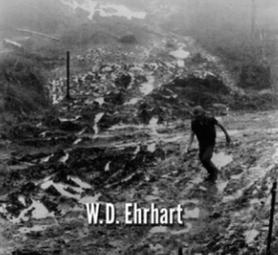


W. D. EHRHART

"Unrelenting, authentic...the most vivid exploration of a soldier's conscience we've ever read." — *Sentinel*  
"Compassion, wit, and a poet's eye for detail...profoundly moving"  
— *Natalie L.M. Pritch, author of Duncan's Colony*  
"Brutal, honest, funny and tragic." — *Philadelphia Inquirer*

### VIETNAM—PERKASIE

A Combat Marine Memoir



W.D. Ehrhart

Orders 800-253-2187 • [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com)

# A Tale of Two Veterans' Day Events

MEG MINER

A local high school (population 1,700) planned a Veterans' Day assembly followed by a lunchtime Q&A with an anti-war veteran (that was my part). Veterans from the community were speaking and attending as honored guests. The principal greeted everyone warmly on arrival and pointed to a room adjacent to the gym where we were to wait and enter as a group. I declined and found my way to the back of the gym where I could take it all in as anonymously as a post-middle-aged woman can in a sea of youth.

My focus was on the student body filling the gym's bleachers and I found it amazing that they were attentive for most of the hour-long program. I was moved by the effort it took to pull together an event with speakers, chorus, band and even opportunities for students to signal their familial connections to veterans.

Stories of veterans' suicides filled the news that week, and even with the cheerful martial music I couldn't keep away thoughts of how many times it would take to fill and empty the bleachers with all the killed and wounded during these students' lives. It's crazy to know that that criminal act, 9/11, is hardly more than a date-stamp on the world's psyche now.

I left the gym full of these thoughts and moved to the Q&A location. Later, I compiled these notes from conversations with about eight students.

The first one said timidly, "Thank you." "What are you thanking me for?" "For going to war for us." "My war was air

conditioned," and then I told him about the no-fly war, ca.1993, and how it wasn't in our interest to help the Kurds then. When we needed reasons for a 21st century involvement in Iraq, our concern for their human rights was a marvel! He'd heard of Kurds but thought we were fighting against them.

"What is it like to be a veteran?" I said I would answer what it was like to be an anti-war veteran.

"What is it like to shoot someone?" I never have, but I live with the uncertainty of numerous Cold War bombings, including Libyan children in the 1980s.

"Will we end this war?" We have too much invested in war-making weapons to stop using them.

The last question of the day, asked shyly by a boy: "What was it like to be a girl in the military?" I denied that question was relevant during my career but it comes to mind often now.

A few times I tried to figure out what was on their minds about our current wars.

Once I asked, "Why are we at war?" The first student's answer: "For what they did to the twin towers." Another's: "To stop those beheadings, get those people in line." Me: "Which people?" Student: "The people trying to take our oil." Me: "Whose oil?"

I questioned some about military connections in their families. Most of them knew of someone even if no one was in now. Me: "If your [military] relative was here, what would you

ask?" Two wanted to know if they were afraid.

Several mentioned an interest in going into the military. One girl in a group of three that came in together had no interest in going into the military. She asked about depression and if there was a buddy system to help people on active duty. Her two friends each wanted to go in the military, one in the Air Force and one in the Marines. When asked why, one cited a family member's time in the Marines and an interest in trying to push herself "to be strong." She wanted a career; the future Airman wanted a way to get an education.

Three students thanked me for my service as they were leaving. I think a lot about the meaning of "service" and followed up by asking about their community activities. One mentioned volunteer work and I thanked him for his service. I explained that the anti-war people I know, vets or not, are also serving.

Clearly, we have much work to do. That reality was brought home to me by Illinois Senator Dick Durbin at the 2014 Chicago Standdown ten days later.

I love working Standdown. It's a drop in the bucket of meeting basic human needs but needs are met. Standdown also brings back that feeling of comraderie that is present in high-energy, high-emotion communal experiences where everyone understands the mission and their role.

With the high school event still on my mind, I watched the teenage volunteers as they

worked. A group of them were near the kitchen hauling bags and helping the vets get their meals to the tables. I lost count of how many times I saw one boy go by with bags bigger than he was. I wondered which war would put him on the receiving end of a meal at Standdown. Had any of our guests done this kind of service while in school?

In the middle of these thoughts, a group of people with cameras passed the kitchen window. Senator Durbin came next, smiling to the vets and volunteers, shaking hands but moving at a quick pace. I slipped out of the kitchen and followed the group to the dining area where he'd stopped. I got his attention and asked what he was doing to stop the wars and end the cycle that created this soup line. "One war," he said with index finger raised for emphasis, "We're only in one war." Can he truly believe that?

As of this writing, with the official troop withdrawal from both Afghanistan and Iraq complete, he'd probably say we aren't in any. People in Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and wherever drones roam might question that.

I was honored to work through some hard questions from teenagers this Veterans' Day. It'd be nice to think our elected officials would do a little questioning, too.



MEG MINER IS A GULF-ERA VETERAN, MEMBER OF VVAW AND VFP.



# 1965: A Sailor Recalls The First Year of the "American War"

JOE MILLER

Yep, I was there – but not really "there." As a US sailor during the 1965 build-up and increased intensity of action against Vietnam, this was a year of change for me – for many of us, inside and outside the military.

Nineteen-sixty-four ended with our ship's return to the States from the Western Pacific (West-Pac) in mid-December, and I was doing some serious rethinking about my place in this "place" – that is, as a crew member on the USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14).

In 1964, I lost my top secret clearance and got kicked out of the Naval Security Group on Taiwan, got married to Hui-fang, and was transferred to sea duty on board the Ticonderoga in June. Then there were the Tonkin Gulf "incidents," which, if I had not thought about war in Vietnam before, certainly provoked more thought and introspection. We lost three pilots and two enlisted crew members, one of which just disappeared while we were at sea. The crew searched the ship for a couple of days, but we never found him. Oh, and I cast my first ballot (absentee) in a presidential election – for Barry Goldwater.

My shipboard duties had also changed. I no longer worked in the Weapons Department Office. The ship's chaplains required a petty officer (I was E-4) to help run their office and the ship's library, as well as to take responsibility for setting up religious services. So, I was transferred to that office, which also meant that I was to supervise three other enlisted men.

After we reached San Diego, I took leave to fly back to the Chicago area, where my Hui-fang was living with my parents. She had arrived in the States back in November of 1964. We spent Christmas and New Years together.

Our ship would be sailing up to San Francisco for an extended (six months) dry dock period before our next cruise to Westpac and offshore operations in Vietnam waters. So, Hui-fang and I made plans for her to fly out to San Francisco, where I would find us an apartment for that period.

Once the ship got to Hunter's Point shipyard in late January, I found a small studio apartment just outside of Chinatown. Hui-fang arrived a few days later, and we began our first real time together

as a married couple.

Each day I took the bus to Hunter's Point to carry out my shipboard duties, strolling through the unknown mix of chemical dust kicked up by the construction crews (perhaps a little less toxic than the aviation fuel fumes we all breathed in during operations at sea). Then I would catch the bus back to our apartment each evening (except for the occasional duty night). It was almost a normal situation.

Since we lived within walking distance to Chinatown, we would often shop there. Hui-fang kept herself busy with English lessons. We would go to movies together and take long walks around the city. Sometime in March, we learned that she was pregnant with our first child — the child would be born sometime in late October or early November, the doctor said. Our ship was due to return to Vietnam duty sometime in the fall.

This period in a semi-civilian state, not spending twenty-four hours a day captive on board the ship, also gave me the opportunity to seek answers to some of the questions that had arisen since the 1964 "incidents." Of course, everything else that was going on around us during this period — the Free Speech Movement, the civil rights struggle, the early sprouts of the counterculture movement — also provoked thought and deeper questions. It all seemed connected, at least in my mind.

We were bombing the shit out of North Vietnam with "Rolling Thunder"; the first official combat troops had been sent to Danang; students and civil rights marchers were being attacked here at home; teach-ins about Vietnam were now being held on campuses all over the country. What was going on? So, I began to read everything.

There was this great bookstore just off Union Square where one could buy books and magazines on any subject. One of the first books in this effort was William A. Williams' "Tragedy of American Diplomacy." This opened my eyes to another perspective on the US role in the world, something other than the usual American celebration.

What about our deepening involvement in Vietnam and US policy in Asia? Bernard Fall's "The Two Viet-nams" helped to answer

many questions and raise more. I found books by the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett of great value in getting a view of the "other side," especially his "Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War." I also read everything I could on the civil rights struggle and the student movement. I regularly shocked the hell out of the Nation of Islam folks when I would buy their paper on the street while in uniform. *Ramparts* magazine became a main staple of mine; my subscription was mailed to me on the ship. I wanted anything that would counter what the official political and media line was at the time.

Since I was solely responsible for ordering books for the ship's library, a fairly large space on a carrier, I combed through the US Navy supply catalogs for any books on Vietnam. As a result, the Ticonderoga probably had the best collection on Vietnam of any ship in the Seventh Fleet. If the ship's crew and the air crews were going to rest and relax in our air-conditioned space, they would at least have the opportunity to perhaps pick up a book about the war in which they/we were involved.

In June, the ship was scheduled to leave dry dock and return to San Diego. My time with Hui-fang was ending; she would return to my parents' place. I took leave, we packed up our stuff, and we got on a train back to Chicago. We spent our first anniversary on that train, June 9. We arrived in Chicago three days later. I had to report back to the ship in San Diego by June 30, so we had a couple of weeks away from the Navy completely.

The day I had to fly from O'Hare Airport to San Diego is burned in my memory. My dad



Cardinal being greeted aboard Tico by Capt. Miller (Commanding Officer) and LCDR Zemites, Catholic Chaplain.

drove Hui-fang and me to the airport. She was in tears and sobbed that she did not want to see me go. Of course, I felt the same, but there was no option. She stayed in the car while dad walked me to the gate. We had no idea when I might be back, no idea when the next Westpac cruise would start.

Once back in San Diego, the crew learned that the ship would head back toward the war earlier than many of us hoped. LBJ announced increases in combat troop deployment to more than 100,000. Many of us sat in the ship's lounge and watched the riots in Watts. What was happening? On August 19, I wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Navy Retention Task Force, explaining why I would never re-enlist.

We finally left San Diego on September 28, heading for operational readiness inspections (ORI) off Hawaii (a little over a week, as I recall). We were in port at Pearl Harbor for a week or so; I would leave the ship to just walk around Oahu. We were just filling time until the inevitable departure for the war zone.

By October 25, the ship had officially entered the operational zone of Westpac. By this time, it was very clear that I would not be around for the birth of our first child.

By November 5, we were officially "on-line" (in the combat zone) carrying out air operations against the "enemy." The heavy bombing of North Vietnam as part of "Rolling Thunder" was now a part of our duty whenever we were on "Yankee Station" (in the North). Support operations were part of our duty when we were on "Dixie Station" in the South. Three carriers at a time shared

*continued on next page*

# Worth Fighting For

AARON DAVIS (REVIEWER)

***Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America by Rory Fanning***  
(Haymarket Books, 2014)

Rory Fanning met Pat and Kevin Tillman in Ranger Training. They served in the same Ranger unit in Afghanistan. We remember what happened April 22, 2004, the day Pat Tillman was killed. The memorial service and subsequent cover-up of his death by friendly fire brought a firestorm of criticism of the Military Chain of Command and the Bush Administration.

As an infantryman in Afghanistan (MOS 11B), Rory Fanning had an epiphany. "When it came down to it, I realized I didn't

have it in me to kill. I knew I would be destroyed forever, if I did." As the War in Iraq began, he realized that it was "illegal according to the US Constitution" and he could no longer be an "imperialist storm trooper."

The day Pat Tillman was killed, Rory had already applied for, and was awaiting the decision on his Conscientious Objector (CO) discharge request. Six days later it was approved.

The book is Rory's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual journey from Warrior to Objector, Republican to Socialist and Christian to Atheist. He decided to walk across the country for his friend Pat Tillman in 2008, and raise money for the Pat

Tillman Foundation. His journey started at Virginia Beach, Virginia and finished 9 months later in Oceanside, California (near Camp Pendleton where I received Marine Corps Infantry training).

Rory's experiences meeting people along the way and passing through states in cold, rainy and snowy weather attest to his inner convictions and strength. Living in a small one man tent (GP Tiny), and walking up to 38 miles a day is a little more than I could handle now, but Rory does it with class.

He spoke to a class in Roby, Texas and was asked the question, which military service to join. Rory emphatically replied, "I don't think you should join any of them."

Near Mesa AZ, Rory was

given a book written by Dan Millman called "The Way of The Peaceful Warrior." This is Rory's journey of discovery, connection and life purpose. He did travel through Show Low, Arizona where 4 of my kids and 8 of my grand kids lived at that time.

Rory Fanning lives in Chicago, is a housing activist and works for Haymarket books.



AARON DAVIS WAS A FORMER MARINE AND ARMY OFFICER, FOUNDED VFP 118 IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, WAS VVAW CONTACT IN UTAH AND IS NOW RETIRED LIVING IN GOLD CANYON ARIZONA.

## A Sailor Recalls

*continued from previous page*

this responsibility off the coast of Vietnam. Those not "on-line" were able to go to liberty ports in the Philippines or Japan. The pilots and the air and deck crews were doing most of the heavy lifting in this process. We were all a part of it, however, no matter what our jobs might be.

My job left me with lots of time to think and worry. What was going on back home? How was Hui-fang doing with the pregnancy? I got letters from her and from others in my family trying to keep me up to date. In the so-called "war zone" mail did not always get to the ship on a timely basis. I did not want to be there. I did not see any purpose to being there — I did not see any purpose to any of us, Army, Navy, Air Force or Marines, being there. My feelings were personal, sure. They were also political as a direct result of my experiences and my reading about the origins of this war. There was no turning back for me in 1965.

As I have written elsewhere, operations during this first "on-line" period prevented me from even learning of the birth of our daughter Lisa Ellen Hui-mei until a week had passed. The telegram was dated November 12, but I did not get it until November 19. I was happy and pissed off at the same time. I should have been with my wife and baby daughter.

Another significant event from this first period of "on-line" operations in 1965 is the accidental loss of one of our fighter planes and the pilot on November 30.

Of course, we had lost planes and pilots before, from other accidents and from combat. This time, the F-8 Crusader that went overboard not far from Japan, was carrying nuclear weapons. None but very few of the officers and crew knew this at the time. [See "US-Japan Ties Worsen on News That Warhead Was Lost in 1965," *New York Times*, May 9, 1989].

When this first "on-line" period ended on December 2nd, we headed for some in-port time in Yokosuka, Japan. I went on a tour and bought souvenirs for my wife and other family members. This is another difference I must point up with those in more direct combat-related operations. We had these breaks from war operations somewhat regularly, while those in the field might only get one R&R period during their tour of duty, if they lived that long.

We were back "on-line" by December 21. We would end the year engaged in flight operations, mainly in the South, since LBJ announced a temporary bombing halt in northern Vietnam as part of his so-called "peace offensive." This meant that our time on "Dixie Station" might be relatively calm.

So, we were treated to some special visitors. No, it wasn't the Beatles, or the Beach Boys, not even the Kinks. You would have thought it was World War II or Korea.

On December 22, we were entertained by fifty-year-old Martha Raye, the famous comic actress and singer. She had been entertaining the troops in-country,



and decided to fly out to us for a show. It was great; she was well-received. This was entertainment from our fathers' generation. It was a nice distraction in any case.

Four days later, the ship was visited by another "entertainer," Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York, the mentor and sponsor of the late Ngo Dinh Diem and opponent of the liberalization inside the Catholic Church. He held a late Christmas mass on the hangar deck, surrounded by the machines of war, a war he certainly supported. The Chaplains' Office crew had to make sure the set-up was ready, and I had some small part in the service. Our Catholic Chaplain, LCDR Zemites, was a proponent of the changes made by Pope John XXIII, so I often wondered what they talked about in private. Following the service, the Cardinal left, and our next visitors flew right in behind him.

For the first time in his career, Bob Hope brought his Christmas Tour out to a ship at sea. Again, kind of a World War II feel

here, but, with younger female entertainers. Movie star Carroll Baker and singer-dancer Joey Heatherton were the big draws for this crew of nearly 4,000 men. There were the usual Hope jokes, with efforts to make them current by attacking "draft-dodgers" and making fun of the Beatles. A lot of that fell flat with this younger generation of rock 'n rollers who were not sure they wanted to be out here either.

As the year came to a close, we were headed for another port visit in Subic Bay. I would celebrate the New Year knowing that I already had orders stateside for my final duty station in the Navy. By February 18, 1966, I would be back with my wife and be able to meet my three-month-old daughter for the very first time.

However, the war was just heating up. It would be with us all for years to come. 

JOE MILLER, US NAVY, 1961-1968, NAVAL SECURITY GROUP, 1961-1964, USS TICONDEROGA, 1964-1966.

## A Tragic Anniversary

*continued from page 1*

the specialized knowledge and intellectual commitment of people like Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Norman Finkelstein, among many others.

In the past, I've heard Finkelstein tell interviewers who ask why he doesn't comment on other topics, "How could I just drop this issue and move on? The Palestinian people can't move on, so I'll continue fighting until there's justice." That sort of commitment is hard to come by in the modern world, for it seems all of us occasionally succumb to the forces of detachment. It's hard to remain focused, no doubt. Yet, we must, as those on the receiving end of the Empire's stick have no other choice.

Sometimes, it seems as though even the most astute commentators gloss over utterly unacceptable and insane facts. Now, I'm not saying people do this on purpose, I simply think we've all become a bit cynical and desensitized as time has worn on. I feel we've all fallen short when attempting to account for the death and destruction we've inflicted around the world. On the other hand, at this stage, we should be talking about these issues as one global community. After all, the European nations didn't break ranks with the US over the war in Iraq, and the Chinese continued to produce our consumer products and absorb our debt, so why should they feel innocent as ISIS ravages Mesopotamia?

To be clear, I'm not trying to cast blame, or misdirect responsibility. I agree that the US is primarily responsible for the destruction of Iraq and the broader Middle East. There's no doubt about it. However, who else is responsible? That's an important question to ask. It's not just US oil companies who are making out like bandits in Iraq and Afghanistan, to name just two nations the US has attacked while its allies (and enemies) have benefited from Uncle Sam's plunder.

Yet, today, if you were to read the major headlines in newspapers across the continents, you would be hard-pressed to find many stories about the collective responsibility we should feel for the ongoing devastation taking place in Iraq. According to the mainstream press around the world, it's Islam's fault. People, and nations, are concerned with

other things: Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, etc. As always, little historical context is given by the major media outlets, so most people see virtually no connection between these various crises.

Most people are not viewing the events in Ukraine as "Cold War 2.0." Most people don't even understand the first Cold War, let alone the complexities involved in the current conflict in Ukraine. People know it's bad. For older folks, it's reminiscent of the 20th century, and that's not a good thing. That century, unlike preceding centuries, unleashed a form of mechanized war that the Zeus himself couldn't possibly fathom: chemical weapons, nuclear weapons, machine

guns, rockets, missiles, tanks, submarines, drones, and that's only the beginning.

Again, what can we do? Last week, there were scattered protests around the country, but more people in the US are talking about affordable housing and living wages than issues surrounding US foreign policy. After fifteen years of non-stop war, torture, spying and assassinations, somehow liberals and progressives have still failed to make the connection between Empire and Austerity.

To be fair, the failure of the anti-war movement to build lasting relationships with liberal groups is also my fault, our fault, the movement's fault. How have we failed so miserably in even somewhat achieving our stated goals? Let's say the anti-war movement re-kick-started itself in 2002. If that's the date we can reasonably use, then we've been at it for thirteen years. Personally, I've been involved on a full-time basis for the last eight years, and politically conscious for about ten. In that time, there's been more torture, more wars, more spying, more drones, more weapons being manufactured, more assassinations, more coups, and so on.

Why do we not talk about these facts openly, critically and honestly? It does the movement no good to reject serious criticism. Obviously, whatever we're doing isn't working. And that needs to

be said regularly because a lot of activists seem too complacent and willing to repeat the failed actions of previous movements, without critically examining whether or not we're actually making progress and meaningful gains. What's more than clear is that there is no longer an anti-war/anti-Empire/anti-militarist/anti-imperialist movement in the US. There are sporadic groups and individuals operating throughout the country (mostly on the East Coast, West Coast and in the Beltway), but few of their actions or events are connected to broader community struggles. Hence, the movement has not grown in the past decade, but, rather, dwindled.

What does a vibrant anti-Empire movement look like on a local level? What does it look like on a national scale? What shape

**I simply think we've all become a bit cynical and desensitized as time has worn on.**

does it take on the international stage? Should we approach state power? Should we have functioning chapters and regular meetings? What groups can people participate in that aren't connected with sectarian organizations or toxic politics?

Unfortunately, in the US, I think any meaningful discussions or organizing prospects around the issue of Empire will be postponed until Obama is out of office and a new President is elected. I've watched the anti-war movement utterly disappear during my short time as an activist, and it's been heartbreaking. Those experiences have made me realize that many people were more interested with party affiliations and personality politics than principled opposition to Empire.

All that being said, I don't write this essay with sour grapes. I'm happy to be involved and I've dedicated my life to doing work for multiple movements, but particularly the anti-Empire movement. For better or worse, that's what I know best. But, I want to be a part of a growing, vibrant and most importantly, successful movement. For some people being involved is good enough. I've had plenty of my activist friends tell me so. They say, "Vince, we're doing the best we can and that's all we can do." On some level, they are correct. But from a different angle, I think that retort is a sort of cop-out, a way to diffuse criticism

or meaningful debate.

I want to win. And winning for me is stopping wars, not mitigating the number of those who will undoubtedly get killed because we have no chance at actually stopping the bombing, coup, etc. Winning for me is completely dismantling the US Empire, every single base of the over 1,000 now operating world-wide. Winning for me is not allowing the US Empire to fight proxy wars, conduct torture campaigns or assassinations.

We need to be clear that holding the moral high-ground does not inherently mean we're going to win the long fight. We need people to start writing articles and producing documentaries about strategy, tactics and vision. What do we want? How are we going to accomplish our objectives? What are we willing to do to achieve our goals?

Undoubtedly, symbolic protests, street theatre, speaking-out, writing articles and making documentary films is not going to stop the Empire. Stopping the Empire is going to require that people sacrifice their time in order to build mass-movements that are willing to put their lives on the line. I don't say that in a hyperbolic fashion. I say it with complete awareness of what it means.

After witnessing firsthand what the Empire is willing to do to achieve its ends, I have a difficult time believing that it will be stopped without activists and organizers possibly losing their lives. For some reason, movements in the US do not talk in these terms. We talk about narratives and messaging, but not discipline or sacrifice.

Finally, I'm not prescribing martyrdom for the movement. I'm simply wondering what sort of sacrifices, discipline and commitment it will take to stop the most powerful military machine in the world? Are we personally and collectively prepared to undertake such a task?

I hope others are asking similar questions on this somber anniversary.

*This article first appeared on ZNet.*



VINCENT EMANUELE IS A WRITER, ACTIVIST AND RADIO JOURNALIST WHO LIVES AND WORKS IN THE RUST BELT. HE CAN BE REACHED AT VINCE.EMANUELE@JVAW.ORG

# They Still Suffer: The Children of Iraq

JENNIFER COLE

Recently I have seen an increase in news reports on Iraqi children being murdered, abused, or enslaved by ISIS members. I do not read these articles, because the titles alone tear at my heart. The children I saw in Iraq are still a part of my most vivid memories, and it pains me deeply to think of them being hurt again. I rationalize that the children I saw while I was in Iraq are now eleven years older, they are no longer children and may be the parents of the very children being harmed today. I guess I still think of those children as children today, and they are the faces I see ISIS abusing and killing. I guess that is how trauma works, time seems to stop and the

people, places, and events that you experienced stay timeless in your mind while the world ages around you.

I've thought so much about the children I heard being killed, how their mothers' screams could not save their lives. I think of the beautiful children that ran along my convoy, their faces gleaming with hope for change. We brought them change, but not the change they had probably expected. Some might say that we should go back to Iraq, to protect the children that ISIS is harming now, but we are part of the reason that ISIS is so horrible. You cannot fight terrorism with terrorism, and that is what we did in the Iraq

War, we bombed them and shot them, then we droned them, and then we abandoned them and allowed another to take control, and then we shamed the groups that were created from war. I am not insinuating that ISIS is not to be blamed for their crimes, as they should be held accountable, but we cannot insist we use the same measures against them. It did not help the children of Iraq in the past and it will not help them now.

I feel helpless, because there was nothing I could do then to help them and there is nothing I can do now, except write about them and hope others learn about them. Writing is my weapon of choice, as the old adage goes, the

pen is mightier than the sword. My hope for the people of Iraq, especially the children, is that the US can partner with other nations to create safe zones for refuged Iraqis. We can provide food and medical for less than it costs to make weapons, combat gear, and the training and shipping of troops. I know, without a doubt, that there are answers other than war and invasion, because that answer was wrong the first two times.



JENNIFER COLE WAS DEPLOYED TO BAGHDAD IN 2003. SHE UTILIZES WRITING AND ART TO COPE WITH COMBAT PTSD AND TO DENOUNCE THE WARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN.

## Praying at the Altar

I like pagodas.

There's something—I don't know—  
secretive about them,  
soul-soothing, mind-easing.  
Inside, if only for a moment,  
life's clutter disappears.

Once, long ago, we destroyed one:  
collapsed the walls  
'til the roof caved in.  
Just a small one, all by itself  
in the middle of nowhere,  
and we were young. And bored.  
And armed to the teeth.  
And too much time on our hands.

Now whenever I see a pagoda,  
I always go in.  
I'm not a religious man,  
but I light three joss sticks,  
bow three times to the Buddha,  
and pray for my wife and daughter.  
I place the burning sticks  
in the vase before the altar.

In Vung Tau, I was praying  
at the Temple of the Sleeping Buddha  
when an old monk appeared.  
He struck a large bronze bell  
with a wooden mallet.  
He was waking up the spirits  
to receive my prayers.

—W. D. Ehrhart



Milwaukee VA Demo, September 8, 1975.

# One Monk's Journey

JACK KLEIN

February 17, 2015

I returned to Vietnam 45 years after having fought there all of 1969. Job description, infantry 0341, mortarman, nickname, Monk. My first four months I was stationed on hill # 190 northwest of Da Nang approximately 15 miles. Our location was the base of a mountain ridge that divided Elephant Valley and Happy Valley. The Song Cu De River was over our northern most operating area, some two miles from our base. We also manned Namu bridge, the northern bridge on route 1 in and out of Da Nang.

Our unit, Delta Co. 1st BN 26th Marine Regiment, was in such a position as to be the 1st line of defense from attacks from north and west of Da Nang. Elephant Valley was where Marie Corps sniper Carlos Hathcock spent 5 days picking off members of an NVA BN. Everything north of the river and west of us was owned by the NVA. We put out multiple nightly ambushes. As those of us who have experienced combat know, 99% is waiting, 1% is an adrenalin filled hell. Most of our ambushes resulted in the killing of Viet Cong. I remember one was an old man (probably my present age, 64) with a British 1905 Enfield with 3 bullets and 2 teenage girls, approximately 14-16 years old carrying baskets of rice towards the NVA.

In February one of our ambushes was hastily set up in a bad position in the bottom of a gully with paths above on both sides. The NVA walked along the paths and easily turned the hunters into the hunted, pitching chicom grenades down into the gully and shooting, killing 4, wounding 7. Against our Captain's explicit orders, my gun team leader



*Clinic in Quang Tri where Jack has been donating money for years. This was the first time he visited in person.*

immediately had us fire flares over the ambush position. At that point the squad was in a circle, back to back, running low on ammunition. One of the wounded later said when the sky lit up he was looking directly at several NVA soldiers and was able to keep them back. Puff was in the area and within 5 to 10 minutes had filled the sky with its sun-like illumination. We could see them a half mile away. 75 to 150 enemy soldiers scattered in all directions and Puff's ominous sound and tracer fire cut them down.

On another occasion a squad going out at dusk took fire from the closest village. My gun team was given coordinates and I dropped rounds so quickly that the firing of an outgoing mortar round brushed my fingers as I was about to place the next round in the tube. Years later at a reunion a member of that squad congratulated me on my accuracy and speed. He told me an old woman who was trying to escape the raining death by running through the main square was hit directly on top of her head

by one of my rounds. Hearing this horrified me. Our regiment was named The Professionals and we were good at what we did.

In the first week of May 1969, our unit went afloat on the USS Iwo Jima and Okinawa. We were to participate in the largest allied invasion since World War II. Korean, Australian, ARVN and American troops were going to assault Barrier Island in Operation Daring Rebel. Long known as a rest and relaxation area for the Viet Cong, the island had been swept many times before, but as in many of the battles in Vietnam the enemy escaped to fight another day.

Mother's Day 1969 our company came across a leaf and palm covered hiding space. In someone's best Vietnamese they were told to come out. It was obvious that it was a group of very frightened women and children wailing and crying. After a few minutes, 2 grenades were thrown in and all was quiet.

I had a conversation with my granddaughter before going back to Vietnam about war. I tried

to explain as best I could about the horrors and the mistakes. She point blank asked me if I killed little girls like her. While I hadn't thrown the grenades, I said, "yes, I did." Thirty years later I began the "would have should have." I should have done something! Pull back the palms and try to "talk" face to face.

A week or so later we were in a huge fire fight, pinned down from a tree line 200 feet away. While a mortar is very accurate at a quarter mile or more, you must have an excellent working knowledge of your weapon, ammunition and location at close distances. I had fired a number of rounds directly in to the tree line when one of the rounds I dropped made a disgusting thud, it was a bad round. Our furthest Marine was about 150 feet away and it landed on top of him, killing him instantly. In the heat of the battle, with deafening sounds, muzzle flashes and yelling, no one, least of all the man farthest away, could have heard my pleading voice, "DUD!"

I carried his death with me until I returned to Vietnam. We had a reunion 15 years ago and the Marine's sisters were to be given the flag during a eulogy that weekend. A few days before this we were in the hospitality room having a good time. One of the guys said, "who was that asshole that dropped the round killing (anonymous)?" I said I was that asshole and the round was a dud. You could have heard a pin drop.

The night before the flag was



*Da Nang Dragon Bridge during Tet 2015.*

*continued on next page*

## One Monk's Journey

*continued from previous page*

to be presented I was with some of my fellow mortar men and through my tears told them I thought I should tell the sisters what really happened. They told me that it wouldn't change the facts. He was dead. I did not manufacture that round and it was not my fault. They had been told he was killed by enemy fire, awarded another medal to the many he had already received and had long accepted his death.

As I got closer to going back to Vietnam I was more frightened the 2nd time than the 1st. I had come home in December 1969, with a full sea bag. I knew the ONLY way to lighten my load was to go back.

I was struck by many things upon my return. One of my first aha moments was how much the country has changed. A metaphor for how much I had changed. I had long known I wasn't the same person I was 45 years before, but I had to walk through my fears. I had to literally re-trace my steps. It was the only way I was ever going to care about the reflection in the mirror.

While I had traveled there on my own I wasn't on my own. I had met a fellow Marine who had served at the same time, same area, on a military Facebook site the year before and we agreed to meet up in Saigon. While there we met an expat who I would see 2 more times during my 30 days in country. My Facebook Marine had a family emergency and had to leave after 8 days. But before leaving I had a large group, a huge group, of friends that understood what I was embarking on and I felt were all around me the entire trip. More importantly I have come to believe in a power greater than



*Jack making amends to local woman.*

myself. That power was in front of me, cutting the trail, covering the exits and entrances, guiding me to the inevitable.

I spent a few days in Saigon, a few days in Nhe Trang, and then my destination, Da Nang. I had unknowingly booked my flight so I was to arrive in country 2 hours before the beginning of Tet. So for the first 10 days there were great celebrations and everyone I met was helpful and kind and in festive spirits.

When I reached Da Nang I went to a woman, Tam, I had heard about in guidebooks, and my new expat friend knew and highly recommended. She has a small restaurant, rents surfboards and motor scooters. Tam works with an American in his mid 30s who served in the army stateside, Jeremy. He owns 3 war era jeeps and gives tours. He has lived there 2 or 3 years and is a walking

encyclopedia of the Vietnam War. I told them what I wanted to do. One day we took the jeep out to hill 190. We stopped at a small Buddhist shrine outside the village where my round had killed the woman.

I had started writing a list, weeks before, of the many things that troubled me over the years. The guilt, the shame, the disbelief, that I could have ever been the person I once was.

I had brought some fruit, flowers and incense as an offering. I lit the list and prayed that all of these burdens would be lifted along with the smoke of the incense to the heavens. When I turned around, Tam and Jeremy had produced a woman out of the rice paddies from the village. Tam explained why I was there. I told the woman that I was sorry for what I had done to her village and her country. I gave the woman

and her son a few gifts, shook their hands, and looked in to her eyes and knew in my heart she had no malice towards me.

A few days later we took another jeep ride, this time to Barrier Island. We drove about 10 miles and I asked them to stop. I walked over a brilliantly white sand dune and knelt under a beautiful pine tree. I said a prayer holding my unit challenge coin for all who had died there and all over the country. I placed the coin deep in to the sand at the base of the tree. While kneeling I listened to the soft China Sea breeze brushing against the pines and my face. I remembered the beauty I had seen and felt 45 years earlier. More importantly I had made a huge step towards burying the horror with the coin.

I didn't go back to Vietnam to change the past, for that is an impossibility. I went back to reconcile the past with the present.

Today the man in the mirror ain't a half bad guy.



*JACK J. KLEIN RETIRED FROM THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE IN 2010. FATHER OF A 25 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER AND GRANDFATHER TO A 6 YEAR OLD GRANDDAUGHTER. HAPPILY COMMITTED TO A WONDERFUL WOMAN. PRIMARY RESIDENCE FOR MOST OF MY LIFE HAS BEEN MILWAUKEE, WI. ENLISTED USMC 8 DAYS BEFORE MY 17TH BIRTHDAY, INDUCTED 12 DAYS AFTER. MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1971.*



*Hill 190 over Jack's right shoulder. Right before stopping at a roadside shrine and meeting a local from the village where too many civilians lost their lives.*

# American Reckoning

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

*American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* by Christian G. Appy (Viking, 2015)

Christian Appy's "American Reckoning" is one of only a few histories of the Vietnam War that describes how it ended America's exceptionalism - the broad faith that the US is a unique force for good in the world. For most people it had a profound effect on our national identity. Although I have read more than fifty books on Vietnam, this is by far my favorite because it is the most comprehensive and unique. His astounding research provides striking quotations from LBJ, Nixon, military commanders, their advisers, our troops, that they knew we could not prevail. The South Vietnamese Government was corrupt and unpopular, their troops would not fight at night and often ran from combat, and for us to accept these realities and seek a peaceful solution would be unpatriotic, unacceptable, and unmanly. He draws from movies, songs, memoirs, media, Pentagon studies, government propaganda, speeches, scholars, and journalists to demonstrate how American exceptionalism, that powerful myth, a litmus test for patriotism, was doubted as never before by so many. There is hardly enough room here to do this masterful work justice so here are some of the highlights.

In Vietnam we pulverized the landscape with napalm bombs that exploded on contact, producing giant fireballs that spray gobs of burning, sticky gel in all directions burning skin ten times hotter than boiling water and cannot be wiped away. Many nearby died from suffocation, heatstroke, or carbon monoxide poisoning. We dropped 400,000 tons on Vietnam, far exceeding the 16,500 dropped on Japanese cities in World War II. Our B-52s carpet bombed Vietnam making fifteen foot deep craters with a thirty foot diameter that killed more civilians than combatants. Anti-personnel cluster bombs with little bombs packed inside one big one contained hundreds of smaller bomblets, each with hundreds of razor-sharp darts (fléchettes) that would not always kill but would burrow deep into one's body and were impossible to remove. The

US used Agent Orange, a defoliant that caused grievous damage to many on both sides, the body count as a measure of success, and free-fire zones, where anything that moved was fair game. Our leaders were sure such brutality would demoralize the enemy, but they were dead wrong.

The Diem regime with our encouragement refused to hold elections promised by the Geneva Accords after the French Defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 because we knew 80% of the people favored Ho Chi Minh. Our support of the unpopular brutal dictator stands in opposition to our claim of

**Fragging was the extreme form of GI resistance. It is the attempted murder of officers with fragmentation grenades that leave no fingerprints.**

protecting democratic freedoms and respecting the people's will. Our government lied that Ho had many Catholics and others in prison camps in North Vietnam who were tortured to make it appear we were humanitarian. By late 1968 the Tet offensive exploded any idea that victory was around the corner. A combined force of NVA and VC placed their flag over the Hue Citadel for almost a month and dramatically exposed the draconian failure of body counts, brutality of free fire zones, the indiscriminate air war, and overall military policy. We could not defeat a determined people to have their choice of government rather than the pathetic dictators we placed in Saigon. We established beyond doubt we were anything but exceptional and many felt our conduct of the war was genocidal and involved war crimes. Walter Cronkite concluded the war had become a bloody stalemate with no end in sight. Unsatisfied with Ngo Diem's corrupt government's secret police, concentration camps, repressions against Buddhists and non-Catholics, and inability to stop the insurgency, Kennedy authorized the CIA coup that replaced him with generals who had him killed. Similar replacements followed.

Regarding the Gulf of Tonkin

claimed unprovoked attack on two destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy, August 4, 1964 LBJ said, "Hell, those dumb stupid sailors were shooting flying fish." He said to Bundy regarding Vietnam early on, "I don't think it's worth fighting for and I don't think we can get out and it's just the biggest mess that I ever saw... what the hell am I ordering (those kids) out there for?" When reporters pressed him to explain why he waged war with so much opposition he unzipped his fly, drew out his substantial organ, and declared, "This is why."

Anti-war protests included four anti-war sailors from the

Nixon removed Calley from prison, moved him into bachelor's officers' quarters under house arrest. After three and a half years the army with Nixon's approval reduced Calley's sentence making him eligible for parole.

In the face of rising protests and failure of his military forces Nixon decided to invade neutral Cambodia April 30, 1970 setting off a massive anti-war movement on college campuses and in the streets. On May 4, 1970, four students were killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State and nine others wounded. Vietnam Vets Against War (VVAW), Vets for Peace and others began showing Americans that many Vietnam veterans stood with the protestors. This created a dilemma for the administration so they marginalized the long-haired peaceniks as effete snobs and sissies. VVAW denounced the war as criminal. On Labor Day weekend 1970, 200 VVAW marched to Valley Forge, PA. from Morristown N.J. in Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal) tracing the Continental Army route taken in 1777 to reach its winter encampment. VVAW staged guerrilla theater performances along the way to educate the bystanders on the tactics used in Vietnam against the "gooks."

The resistance included disturbing facts Appy substantiates: Desertions jumped from 14.9/1000 in 1966 to 73.5/1000 in 1971, the total numbering half a million military desertions. Fraggings was the extreme form of GI resistance. It is the attempted murder of officers with fragmentation grenades that leave no fingerprints. The grenades could be rolled under a cot or booby-trapped at a latrine. Some units offered bounties to kill a despised officer. There were 126 fraggings recorded in 1969, 271 in 1970, and 333 in 1971, but those are the reported incidents. In a 1971 assessment from an armed forces journal, Col. Robert Heintz (ret) said: "Our Army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers, and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near mutinous." Five aircraft

*continued on next page*



## American Reckoning

*continued from previous page*

carriers were kept out of the combat zone by acts of sabotage and protest by active duty sailors, and some anti-war pilots who were refusing to fly combat missions.

Henry Steel Commager, although a champion of America's exceptionalism, argued: "This is not only a war we cannot win, it is a war we must lose if we are to survive morally... some wars are

so deeply immoral that they must be lost, that the war in Vietnam is one of these wars, and that those who resist it are the truest patriots." Despite this history our imperial presidency led by an aggressive military industrial complex ignored these lessons and plunged us into a war after 9/11 against a country that had no connection to our attackers, and

has ignored the lessons Professor Appy urges to correct our nation's foreign policy ever since: "Perhaps the only basis to begin real change is to seek the fuller reckoning of our role in the world that the Vietnam War so powerfully awakened - to confront what we have done. It is who we are."



VVAW MEMBER DANIEL C. LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, AND A SHIP, TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST AND BECAME A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW. HIS MEMOIR, "ALL THE DIFFERENCE," DESCRIBES HIS EXPERIENCES. WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM.

# Myth and Memory

KIM SCIPES (REVIEWER)

*Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks: The Vietnam Anti-war Movement as Myth and Memory* by Penny Lewis  
(ILR Press, 2013)

Penny Lewis has written an important book about the Vietnam anti-war movement, challenging important myths and received memories that have affected US politics ever since. The myth, on which much received wisdom is based, is that it was upper middle class folks and elites who opposed the war, while working class Americans supported it. The reality, she quotes from Howard Zinn, is that "throughout the Vietnam War, Americans with only a grade-school education were much stronger for withdrawal than Americans with a college education."

Lewis spends considerable time supporting her argument. While she notes that initially the anti-war movement was populated and led mainly by activists from elite universities, this didn't last long. Many working class people joined the movement and eventually, the movement looked very much like the general population of the United States.

She tries to understand this reality, and how it was misrepresented by the right (particularly by the Republican Party under Richard Nixon) and accepted by the mainstream media. Accordingly, the myth has been passed on as historically correct.

Part of the difficulty of understanding this movement (she claims there are no full-length sociological studies of the anti-war movement) is its size and heterogeneity: "The Vietnam anti-war movement was a massive, sprawling, multiheaded phenomenon. It is estimated that as many as 6 million Americans actively participated in it in one form or the other, with another 25 million sympathizers." And it was "internally riven, with revolutionary nonreformers battling those who would work within the Democratic Party, proponents of a single-issue orientation fighting those who would broaden its objectives, and full of heated disagreements about demands, audience, and especially tactics."

However, Lewis argues that

the myth was built on an all too limited class analysis - limited to white workers only. She shows that when we consider workers of color, there actually was much more opposition to the war among them than among white workers. However, the concept of class, even among whites, was generally limited to the organized part of the working class, i.e., the labor movement. The leadership of the AFL-CIO solidly and resolutely supported the war: "The bulk of the labor movement, embodied in figures like George Meany, remained to the right of its members on issues of war and peace, and remained sclerotic and unyielding on the issue of rank-and-file democracy."

Where Lewis really gets it right is when she recognizes the important role that ordinary soldiers (GIs) and veterans of all racial groupings had in ending the war. These people came overwhelmingly from working class homes, and while they recognized that, they didn't identify themselves on an explicitly class basis. Their actions, however, built an anti-war movement inside the US military that, over time, limited the US' ability to fight the war on the ground in Vietnam, in the air forces that were attacking from above, and on the ships offshore. [A plug here must go to David Zeiger's wonderful film on this, "Sir, No Sir!", with a truncated 48 minute version of the 84 minute film now free on YouTube. Highly recommended.]

So, in other words, the conservatism of the working class was a misrepresentation of what was really going on. In fact, working class people both supported the war (as has been well reported), and opposed the war (as has been much less reported), but the latter has been purged from our memories and representations of the war.

Lewis tries to understand where the myth came from; how could such ideas develop and get settled in our understandings of the war, despite being so wrong?

She says we have to go back to the 1950s, and argues that the stories in the media during that period of the "affluent white working class" laid the groundwork for the "working class as conservative" trope of the 1960s to the early 1970s. Basically,

she says that organized labor of this period had no major figures nationally who would stand up for them and their interests other than the arch-conservative, George Meany.

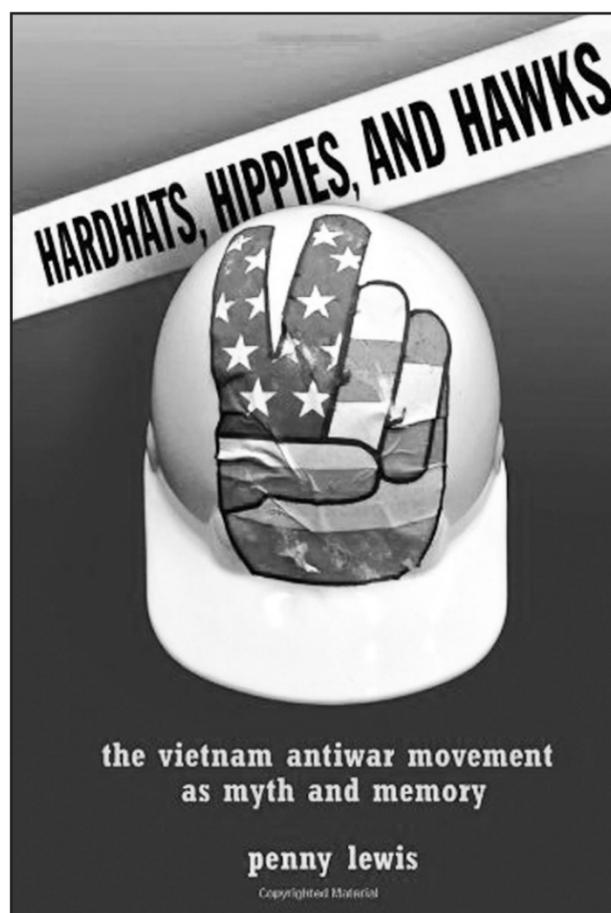
This is the one place this reviewer disagrees with Lewis. The roots of the problem didn't emerge in the 1950s, but rather in the late 1940s. The supposedly radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) purged 11 left-wing unions from the labor center in 1949, a move that disemboweled the labor movement, and continues to affect organized labor today. These left-led unions were supposedly led by communists, but in reality included people of a wide range of politics, including communists, socialists, anarchists, former members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), black nationalists, rank and file militants. They were people who were willing to "think outside of the box," and who had the audacity and willingness to utilize direct action in the workplaces to get what working people needed. [According to Steve Rosswurm, as the CIO expelled somewhere between 750,000 to a million members with these unions, the FBI later stated only 16,520 trade unionists, less than 1 percent of the total CIO membership, had been members of the Communist Party.] By removing the left from the labor movement, the wider social justice concept of labor became confined

to just narrow business unionism. Without having these broader values and goals as essential parts of the labor movement, there was basically no one who could challenge the conservative leadership of people like Meany, who claimed to represent all working people. Lewis' argument would have been even stronger had she made this connection.

Nonetheless, this is an excellent study of the Vietnam anti-war movement, which she uses to try to think about politics today. Labor's position concerning the Occupy Wall Street Movement, for example, has been considerably different than it had been to the war in Vietnam. She makes a strong case for treating working people with respect, and not just accepting old myths that were false even when they were new.



KIM SCIPES, PH.D., IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTH CENTRAL IN WESTVILLE, INDIANA. THE CHAIR OF THE CHICAGO CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL WRITERS UNION, UAW #1981, HE SERVED IN THE US MARINE CORPS FROM 1969-73, WHERE HE GOT POLITICIZED FIGHTING WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACISM, WHILE STAYING IN THE US ALL FOUR YEARS.



# War Is Not A Game

GERALD R. GIOGLIO (REVIEWER)

*War is Not a Game: The New Antiwar Soldiers and the Movement They Built by Nan Levinson*

(Rutgers University Press, 2014)

When it comes to being thoroughly familiar with one's topic, author Nan Levinson is the real deal and her work in "War is Not a Game" makes one want to set that useful baseball cliché in italics. Here we have a comprehensive, engaging account of the birth and development of the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) along with an in-depth look at key GIs, veterans and civilians who built this and ancillary organizations like Military Families Speak Out (MFSO).

This bright and carefully crafted book is essentially journalistic in style, yet can approach participant observation when the author gets more deeply ingrained in events she's reporting. With a reporter's eye and a story teller's bent, the author is nevertheless scrupulous about footnoting source material (documents, email, phone calls) and provides a helpful, focused bibliography and index.

"War is Not a Game" features eleven chapters covering events from as early as 2005 with most action taking place from 2007-2009, a time in the development of GI, veteran and military family resistance to the war that Levinson describes as: "...a golden season in the life of a political movement when it is poised between obscurity and banality, inchoate impulse and ossified routine, a time so full of hope, so electric, it practically crackles."

Levinson admits that with the emergence of IVAW she became, "strongly drawn" to these anti-war GIs and "realized that these veterans and active-duty soldiers were at the heart of the story I wanted to tell." And tell it she does, with detail, sensitivity and occasional humor keeping the focus on individual players, their thoughts, feelings, motivations, gifts, shortcomings, struggles and commitment to ending the war.

Levinson generally sets the stage by reporting on various actions or major events, but throughout we learn about the key actors through conversations, phone interviews and email exchanges that allow the veterans, GIs and activists to speak for

themselves.

We come to learn how this current generation of anti-war veterans sought to replace what they viewed as a tired protest culture with something uniquely their own; how they wanted to build an organization in their own generation's image.

In Chapter 4, *Home Fires Burning*, we are treated to a nice overview of those who organized and were active in MFSO. In Chapter 5, *What Noble Cause*, we follow Cindy Sheehan, Gold Star Parents and others who founded and populated Camp Casey. Named for Sheehan's son, killed in Iraq, Camp Casey was located on a plot of land in Crawford, Texas, a few miles from the Western White House. As Sheehan explains it, she planned to stay camped out, "until that jerk (George W. Bush) comes out and tells me why my son died." For Levinson, here at Camp Casey "the most effective protest against the war was born. It would also mark the emergence of IVAW on the national scene." A noble cause, indeed.

Some of the more unique activities advanced by this generation of anti-war GIs appear in Chapter 8, *Art Heart Dream Peace*. Here we see Iraq and Afghanistan veterans exploring, "the interrelations of war, politics and art," while trying to heal emotional and psychological wounds via street theater, spoken performances, poetry and art. One of the most creative healing endeavors involved crafting Combat Paper that is, mashing up old uniforms and turning them into sheets of paper. Paper then used to create prose, poetry or polemics. The pen, especially at the fingertips of those trained to pull triggers, being much, much mightier than the sword.

Working with author and scholar, David Cortright we see how Iraq vets made creative use of the Whistleblower Protection Act. Here, over two thousand active duty and returned GIs signed an Appeal For

Redress that was sent to members of Congress calling the war futile and seeking the withdrawal of all forces from Iraq.

We also see how seasoned peace activists from VVAW and Vets for Peace worked with, mentored and wisely took a back seat, while IVAW built their movement. Still, some GI resistance actions of the past resonated with this new generation of peace activists. So, we see fresh interpretations and use of dramatic actions from the Vietnam era such as Operation RAW and Winter Soldier Investigation.

Finally, it was good to see the late Dave Cline quoted here, and in ways that those who knew him would remember; to wit, Dave explaining how a vet sharing his experience was doing an "experiential rap." Classic.

Here's the "take-away." If you want to learn more about the good work the current generation of peace warriors has been doing, you want to read or own this

book. If you are like me, you'll come away from it inspired and reminded of what it felt like to be in their shoes at their age. Like me, you just might agree that the kids are all right and that the struggle for peace and justice continues to be in good hands. So, let me suggest that those of you who are lifers in the peace movement go TDY. March down to your local library and insist they order a copy of Levinson's fine work. Kids thinking about joining the military, families being harassed by recruiters and those who want to be assured that wars can be



GERALD R. GIOGLIO, OFS, IS A VVAW MEMBER AND AUTHOR OF "DAYS OF DECISION: AN ORAL HISTORY OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN THE MILITARY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR." DRAFTED, BUT OPPOSED TO THE WAR, HE WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE ARMY IN 1969 AS A CATHOLIC CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.

## NEW from RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS

**"What a superb book! Well, I'll call it a masterpiece. Nan Levinson has done us all a service by writing this excellent book."**

—Veterans for Peace

**"Those affected by war and in a moral game of threes are the subjects of this rare, compassionate and informative narrative about people who 'never came close to stopping the army from doing what it wanted' in the last decade but 'caused people in the army to stop and reconsider.'"**

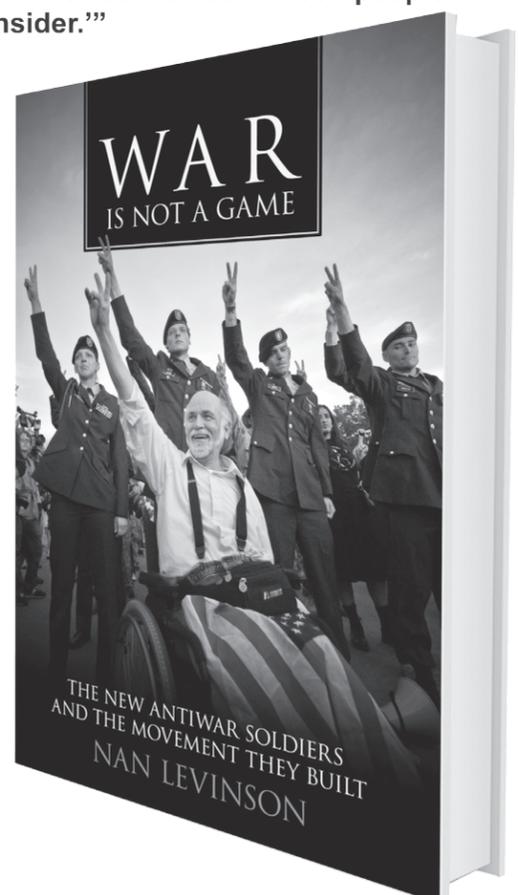
—Military Times

**"Nan Levinson has brought to life an important piece of recent history, both tragic and inspiring, told the story beautifully, and found some genuine American heroes."**

—Adam Hochschild, author of *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918*

**"What does 'support our troops' really mean? It means listening to them when they have unpleasant truths to tell about America's wars. Levinson truly listens; so should we all."**

—William J. Astore, Lt Col, USAF, Ret., author of *Hindenburg: Icon of German Militarism*



**WAR IS NOT A GAME**  
The New Antiwar Soldiers and the Movement They Built  
Nan Levinson  
cloth & ebook  
A volume in the War Culture series

**RUTGERS**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Visit our website and sign up for news and special offers.  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

<http://rutgerspress.rutgers.edu>



# Exploiting Korean War POWs

BEN CHITTY (REVIEWER)

**Name, Rank and Serial Number:** *Exploiting Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad* by Charles S. Young (Oxford University Press, 2014)

Every day on my way to work I drive by P.S. 8, my local public elementary school, where the POW-MIA flag flies beneath the US flag. These days it seems more like an ironic celebration of Gitmo than any genuine patriotic sentiment, and surely it's a deceptive symbol to show to children. The use of POWs for propaganda and indoctrination, a.k.a. education, turns out to have some history.

Professor Young has done some amazing research and published an extraordinary contribution to our understanding of the Forgotten War, and to the hidden history of our government's political use of prisoners of war in the Cold War.

The story of the war itself is briefly told. On June 25, 1950, forces of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) crossed the 38th parallel into the Republic of Korea. Seoul fell in July, and by late August the Republic of Korea (ROK) and its US and UN allies were on the verge of complete defeat. Using troops stationed in occupied Japan, General MacArthur landed at Inchon on September 15, recapturing Seoul on September 25, crossing the 38th Parallel into North Korea around the first of October, and occupying Pyongyang October 19. The same day, elements of the Chinese Peoples Volunteer Army crossed the Yalu River into Korea, and moved on US/UN forces, driving them south. Seoul was

recaptured in early January 1951. By early February, the war was at a stalemate. A new Chinese offensive collapsed in May. Truce talks began in July and were essentially concluded by December, 1951.

However, the truce was not signed until July 1953, delayed by a single issue, the repatriation of prisoners of war. Once both sides met their military objectives—the US stopped the invasion of the South, the Chinese the invasion of the North—the war mutated into an intense propaganda campaign. On the international front, it was a display of US credibility against the aggression of the Communist Bloc and an ideological struggle between freedom and tyranny. On the domestic front, it was a psyops campaign designed to mobilize a war-weary populace for a new war against Communism with permanent conscription and vast military spending. POWs served in both campaigns.

On the international front, Chinese and Korean claims of biological warfare, documented by confessions extracted from American pilots, were countered by reports that vast numbers of Communist POWs wished to refuse repatriation, to trade an enslaved life under Communism for a free life in South Korea or Taiwan. The deployment of weaponized insects was never conclusively proved; the repatriation story is more complicated.

US soldiers captured in the first months suffered greatly during the winter of 1950-51, even being strafed by US airplanes as retreating DPRK units moved POWs north. The US shot at anything that moved. Thereafter, conditions became less grim.

The Chinese considered enemy soldiers to be fellow proletarians, and had some success reeducating captured Kuomintang troops during and after the civil war. They took the same approach to American captives, and prison camp life mainly revolved around lectures and discussions about the failures of the capitalist system. In addition to confessing to biological warfare, POWs were encouraged to question the war in their letters home, sometimes even to condemn it. After the armistice, 21 US soldiers elected to stay in Korea.

Conditions were different in POW camps run by the US, like the main camp on Koje-do Island, which held over 150,000 prisoners at its height. The camps did run education programs, especially vocational courses, and gave access to Christian missionaries, although not the Red Cross. However, the guards let the prisoners pretty much police themselves, mainly through gangs. Political operatives from Seoul and Taiwan were sent into the camps. Taking charge of some gangs, they worked to persuade POWs—especially KMT and ROK veterans impressed or enlisted into DPRK forces or the CPVA, to defect, or refuse repatriation. They used threats and intimidation, as well as techniques like tattooing recalcitrants with anti-communist slogans to temper thoughts of home. After the armistice, thousands of Korean and Chinese POWs refused repatriation, many of them undoubtedly by free choice, many others certainly coerced.

The war dragged on for nineteen months while the details

were debated and negotiated about who would be allowed to refuse repatriation. Propaganda substituted for military victory.

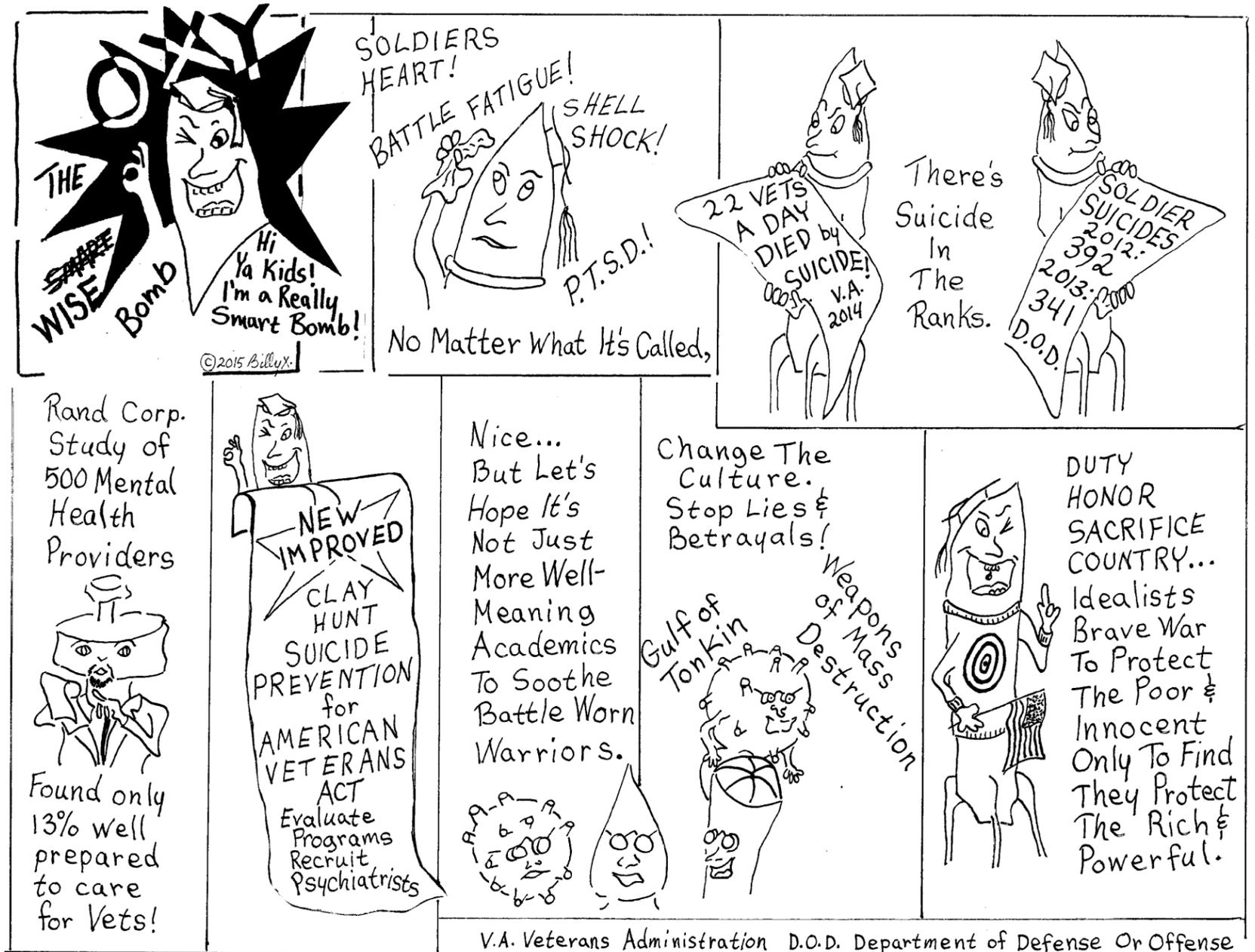
Coming home, American POWs found themselves embroiled in one more war. First, the military had to explain why so many soldiers surrendered, so few tried to escape, so many confessed to war crimes, and so many questioned or condemned the war in letters home. The ready answer was that they had been brainwashed, an insidious technique perfected by perfidious Communists to sap a prisoner's will and turn him into a stooge, or worse. The government expected some or many of the returned POWs to become political subversives.

The Department of Defense was more concerned about discipline. Collaboration was an offense under the newly adopted Uniform Code of Military Justice. The military developed extensive files on suspected collaborators during intensive interrogations of the POWs as they were shipped across the Pacific. The Army, which depended on conscripts to fill out the ranks, was especially adamant that collaborators be court-martialed; other branches not so much. But the proposal provoked a backlash of popular criticism. If the soldiers had been brainwashed, how were they responsible? Why were Army conscripts singled out for punishment over sailors, Marines, and air crews? Many returning soldiers had already been discharged. Their files were turned

*continued on next page*



*The Manchurian Candidate (1962).*



Comments or suggestions? [billyx.net@gmail.com](mailto:billyx.net@gmail.com) [www.billyx.net](http://www.billyx.net)

### Exploiting Korean POWs

*continued from previous page*

over to the Justice Department (DOJ). Since collaboration is a military infraction, not a civilian crime, DOJ declined to prosecute. In the end only 14 soldiers went to court martial, 11 were convicted, and most of those convictions reversed.

Still, DOD needed to know why its soldiers had proved so vulnerable to brainwashing and indoctrination. The answer was "momism." The collaborators were morally weak because of too strong an attachment to their mothers, a psychiatric disorder rooted in an incestuous maternal relationship and known to produce effeminacy and other deviant attitudes and behaviors. The theory dovetailed with another theory of the McCarthy period, that sexual perversion was a contagious social disease which predisposed its victims to political perversion, a theory which led the Truman and Eisenhower administrations to purge thousands of suspected homosexuals from government service. The theory also provided the rationale for the plot of the popular movie *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962).

DOD developed a code of conduct for US soldiers taken prisoner, enacted as Executive Order 10631 by President Eisenhower on August 17, 1955. The new code ruled out surrender until "all reasonable means of resistance [are] exhausted and... certain death the only alternative," required prisoners to "resist by all means available," to "make every effort to escape and aid others," to "evade answering... questions to the utmost of [their] ability," and banned accepting special favors or treatment.

Whether the code actually stiffened the backbones of American POWs during the Vietnam War is hard to say. Behavior once considered collaboration was never prosecuted. Senator John McCain was alleged to have confessed that the principle targets of the US air campaign were schools, orphanages, hospitals, temples, and churches.

Professor Young suggests that "perhaps Korea should not be called the 'forgotten' war since so many of its essentials were never well understood in the first place." The government



never told the truth about Korea, either why the war was fought, or why peace negotiations took so long. Nevertheless the war had consequences. Aside from the new Code of Conduct, Korea led to an expanded military based on permanent conscription, the quadrupling of the defense budget, and the entrenchment of the national security state. The sorry history of the government's treatment of its soldiers taken captive is embedded in the warp and woof of that story.

And like the government approved myth of POW brainwashing infiltrated the popular imagination and blocked the prosecution of alleged collaborators after Korea, the

government approved myth of missing POWs after Vietnam infiltrated the popular imagination and now the POW flag flies everywhere in these United States, even though the US is today the only nation known to detain suspected combatants as prisoners of war, forever.

Some days when I drive to work, I mutter to myself, "Long may it wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."



*BEN CHITTY IS A SHELLBACK NAVY VETERAN OF TWO DEPLOYMENTS TO VIETNAM, AND A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.*

# Myths, War Stories, and Adventures In Fred Rivera's "Raw Man"

RG CANTALUPO (REVIEWER)

*Raw Man by Fred Rivera*  
(A Word with You Press, 2015)

I'm probably not the best person to be reviewing memoirs posing as Vietnam war-based novels. The experiences I bring as a thrice-wounded combat veteran, a grunt, an RTO, a draftee, a PTSD survivor, and ultimately a VVAW protester/leader who was targeted by the FBI and went underground in 1972, often run counter to the myths, clichés, and false or inaccurate notions about the Vietnam war perpetuated by many autobiographical novels.

Such was my difficulty reading Fred Rivera's novel "Raw Man." As a novel, it doesn't have the narrative arc essential to keep the reader engaged. As a memoir, it perpetuates many of the false myths and stories about the Vietnam War I have spent much of my life debunking.

In the very first chapter, for instance, we're greeted with a series of ultra racist white guys. I don't remember a single white guy in the book that wasn't racist or some kind of crazy psychopathic killer. We meet a psycho with a string of cut off ears, and a number of cliché characters right out of John Wayne's "The Green Berets."

The rest of the book is a series of adventures and misadventures as the narrator journeys through Vietnam on various errands

for his company. He picks up a mechanized track, interviews for a musician's job to get out of the bush, parties with Australians who seem like characters out of "Mad Max" more than the Vietnam War, and goes on tour as a musician.

In the last chapter, the narrator is spit upon when he returns home and called a baby killer. He is given a large welcome home party by his family, but hides in his bedroom to escape the festivities. He doesn't feel right about the war and decides to attend a protest march and is talked into throwing away his medals. He decides to throw away his Vietnam Service Medal but not his Combat Infantryman's Badge because he values it, it's something special.

All the usual suspects are there, VVAW, SDS, Black Panthers, a La Raza-like Hispanic group. He's beaten by "pigs," tackles a police officer and starts fighting with him. He is handcuffed and arrested. Later that night he is bailed out by his father.

Again, all this runs counter to my own war and anti-war experiences.

I never saw anyone either cut off ears or wear a string of ears around their neck or in the sweatband of their steel pot.

I never saw soldiers indiscriminately kill men, women, and children.

Cruelty. Brutality. War

crimes. Yes. On both sides. But just blowing people away for no reason? No, that, fortunately, I never saw or experienced. Very few of the soldiers I fought with in the 25th Infantry were psychopaths. Crazy from the war, sure, but sado-masochists, no.

My three best friends in Vietnam were two black men and one white man. My best friend and bunker mate when we were in Fire Support Base Pershing was Lonny, a black man from San Francisco. So, although I saw a lot of racism around me, mostly in the fire support base camp among the REMFs, I didn't experience much of it myself, nor have a lot of preconceptions or biases about blacks and Hispanics before I went to Vietnam. I guess, growing up in the Brooklyn projects with so many colors, cultures, and ethnicities around me, I was oblivious to the kind of racism Rivera expresses as being rampant in Vietnam.

Nor was I spit upon, screamed at, or even remember one confrontational experience with anti-war protesters because I was a Vietnam vet. When I joined VVAW in 1970, I organized, led and worked with many different anti-war groups and college kids in protests without feeling the kind of animosity so many Vietnam memoirs recount as fact. And, had I beaten up a cop and been arrested

for it, I might still be languishing in jail. The FBI tapped my phone and staked out my house simply because a photograph of me standing over a fallen motorcycle cop during our "blockade" of the Naval Post-Graduate School in Monterey was published in *The Herald*.

Beyond the perpetuation of old war stories, the good aspects of "Raw Man" are Rivera's, the narrator's, adventures travelling around Vietnam as a band member. These journeys described places and experiences I never knew were even possible in war-ravaged Vietnam and were very interesting.

For me, "Raw Man" would've been a much better read, and maintained a higher level of integrity, if it had focused more on these personal and rare experiences as a soldier. I found those stories, and the intimate details of a world I never knew, richer, more valuable, and offered a larger perspective about the Vietnam War. I wish there would've been more of them.



R. G. CANTALUPO'S (ROSS CANTON) WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN OVER A HUNDRED LITERARY JOURNALS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND ENGLAND. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V DURING HIS TOUR IN 1968-69 WITH THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION.



Dewey Canyon IV Demonstration, May 12, 1982.

# Saying No To War

BILL GALVIN

In 1965, two Army privates went on hunger strikes when their applications for conscientious objector discharge were denied: Pvt. David Oval at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, and Pvt. Scott Burchill in Manheim, Germany. Burchill stated that he would have nothing more to do with the Army, even if he starved to death. Eventually, both were discharged for "unsuitability."

People have been saying no to war as long as there has been war. The Center on Conscience & War (CCW) was founded in 1940, over a year before the US entrance into WWII, but at a time when it was clear we would be going, in order to protect the rights of conscientious objectors (COs). Our founders witnessed the torture and brutality endured by COs in WWI, and did not want another generation of objectors to suffer the same fate.

By 1965, CCW had clocked 25 years of dedication to extending and defending the rights of conscientious objectors. Back then, CCW was known as the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO). At that time, one had to be religious to qualify as a CO, so our early name reflected that. But 1965 was the year that would kick off a series of events that would compel us to change our name and broaden opportunities for war resisters. It was the year the Supreme Court handed down the Seeger decision, which struck down the requirement that conscientious objectors must believe in a supreme being. That

decision laid the foundation for the court to decide a few years later, in *US v. Welsh*, that conscientious objection could be based on ethical and moral beliefs, as well as religious beliefs.

1965 was also the year the massive US bombing campaigns began in Vietnam and the year the US put the first real boots on the ground, which made an already controversial war even more so. Many people who did not identify as conscientious objectors still opposed this war. Monthly draft call-ups began to rise significantly in 1965. In January about 5,000 men were drafted, which was in line with the monthly numbers drafted in previous recent years. By June the monthly call-up was over 17,000, and by December, it skyrocketed to more than 45,000! Protests against the war were on the rise, and resisting the draft was becoming a major focus of the anti-war movement. When people began to publicly burn their draft cards in '65, Congress made burning a draft card a federal offense. In just a couple years the nation would see draft board raids, protesters deliberately destroying Selective Service files to impede the draft. For the first time in history, a major organization of veterans (VVAW!) was actively protesting the war while it was still happening.

CCW (NSBRO), along with the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO, which closed its doors in 2009) were busy training and resourcing a growing network

of draft counselors, who helped people learn effective ways to avoid getting drafted. Soon, draft boards would begin reporting an increase in conscientious objector applications because of the unpopularity of the war.

CCW (NSBRO) also was advocating for a broader understanding and acceptance of conscientious objection. While the definition of religion began to expand in 1965, after Seeger, the law still required that conscientious objectors object to war in any form. This meant that people who objected to the US War in Vietnam, but not, say, to WWII, could not qualify as COs. This type of objection is sometimes called Selective CO, and is often equated with just war theories. In '65 NSBRO adopted a resolution stating, "An important concept in our religious and moral heritage distinguishes 'unjust' from 'just' wars. . . it appears difficult from a religious or moral viewpoint to deny a conscience formed by this conviction the recognition now accorded to conventional conscientious objectors. Indeed, as the recent history of a totalitarian government warns us, no nation can afford to penalize the discriminating conscience." Our nation still does. CO law still requires a person object to all war (think Lt. Ehren Watada, who was court martialed for refusing deployment to Iraq, but not Afghanistan).

While much of the work of CCW (NSBRO) during the 1960s was helping conscientious

objectors stay out of the military, the reality was that many people who couldn't avoid being drafted also objected to war, and to the war in Vietnam in particular. In 1962 the Department of Defense (DoD) finally established a policy providing for discharge or reclassification to non-combat status for conscientious objectors already in the military. In the early years of the policy, almost all military CO applicants were turned down. But things began to change as the unpopularity of the war continued to grow, Draft Counselors got specific training on how to help military conscientious objectors and court cases were being won that clearly upheld this right for military personnel. By the early '70s, two-thirds of all conscientious objector applications in the military were approved. By 1975, 99% of objectors already in the military were approved.

The seeds that were planted in 1965 continue to bear fruit, as Conscientious Objection is still alive and well in the US military, even without an active draft. Conscience is powerful. Few of us know that better than those who have been to war. And so many – then and now – moved by conscience, have risen up and said NO.



*BILL GALVIN IS A VIETNAM-ERA CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR, AND CURRENTLY, THE COUNSELING COORDINATOR AT THE CENTER FOR CONSCIENCE AND WAR.*



*Milwaukee VA Demo, September 8, 1975.*

## Celebrate IVAW's History

AARON HUGHES

I have been thinking a lot about those long-time members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) who have been building IVAW from the ground up. I know it can be hard to look back at the last decade of activism, organizing, and community building, and feel a sense of great accomplishment in light of how deeply entrenched the military now is in the Middle East, the growing instability throughout the region, the lasting impacts of US intervention on the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the painful effect on the veterans' community. It is hard for many to remember the massive amount of work that we have done over the past decade and the victories that we have fought for.

I have been thinking a lot about the new members joining IVAW. Some of them are still in the military while others have been out for some time, but all of them have realized that the military experience is not what they had hoped for. Even after having one on one introductions to the organization with Maggie Martin, IVAW Organizing Director, spending time reviewing the

website, and perusing the internet it can still be hard to get a full picture of all that IVAW members have done and accomplished over the past decade.

I have been thinking a lot about our peace movement's struggle for unity, direction, momentum, and the redundancy and exhaustion of specific tactics and actions. It can be hard for this movement to acknowledge our accomplishments, reflect on our missteps, and draw on our history in figuring the best ways to move forward to end US foreign intervention, occupations, and militarism.

I have been thinking a lot about future generations and what they will know about Iraq Veterans Against the War.

It is all this thinking about IVAW, that encouraged me to begin to work on a portfolio project to celebrate IVAW's history. I have spent the past year working with Kevin Basl from Iraq Veterans Against the War, Josh MacPhee and Jesse Purcell of Justseeds Artists Cooperative, Siri Margerin of Civilian-Soldier Alliance, and Marshall Weber of Booklyn Art-

ists Alliance to create *Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice*, a portfolio of prints celebrating IVAW's ten-year history. The portfolio features contributions from IVAW members, Justseeds Artists' Cooperative members, along with allied veterans, artists, and writers. The prints highlight key ideas, moments, projects, tactics, and individuals from our history in order to uplift IVAW's ongoing struggle, inspire others to take action, and preserve the movement's history for future generations.

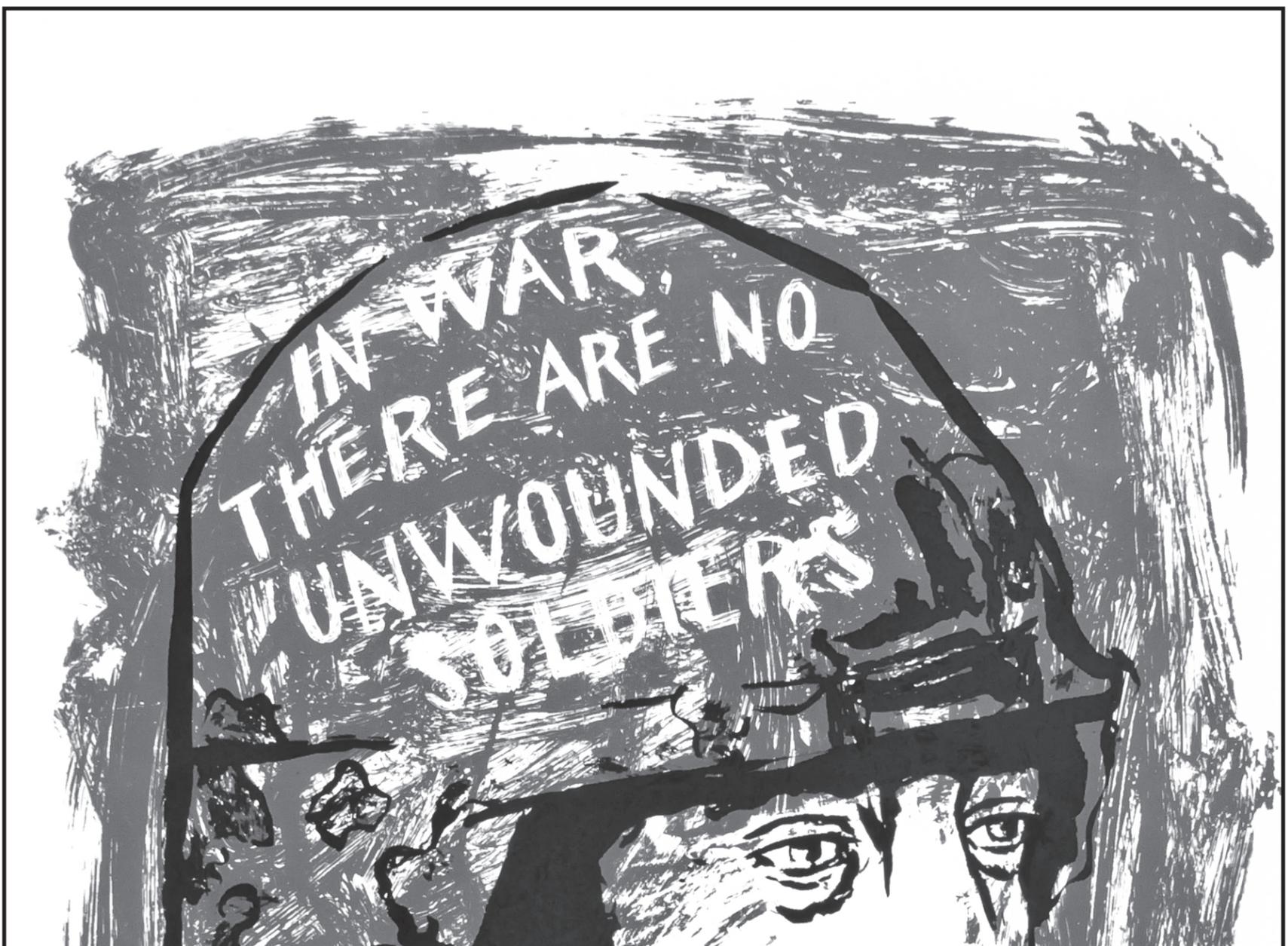
This portfolio is for those long-time IVAW members to recall proudly and be inspired to action by the victories that we have had and all the work we have done. It is a tool for orienting new members to the history they inherit in joining IVAW. This portfolio is a tool for the peace movement to reflect back on what has worked and what steps we can take moving forward to build a stronger and more effective movement. This portfolio is for future generations to understand the rich history of

struggle and resistance with the military and veteran communities.

Booklyn Artists Alliance, Civilian-Soldier Alliance, Justseeds Artist Cooperative, Iraq Veterans Against the War, and Repetitive Press have begun to exhibit and distribute *Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice* portfolio and we want to share it with you. The portfolio is promising to be a historical art and educational document for veterans, artists, activists, researchers, and the American public! If you are interested in hosting an exhibition of the portfolio in your local community please contact me at aarhughes@ivaw.org. I would love arrange to loan you an exhibition copy.



AARON HUGHES IS AN ARTIST, TEACHER, ORGANIZER, AND IRAQ WAR VETERAN, WHOSE WORK SEEKS OUT POETICS, CONNECTIONS, AND MOMENTS OF BEAUTY, IN ORDER TO IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT NEW LANGUAGES AND MEANINGS OUT OF PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMAS.



From *Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice*.



From Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice.



From Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice.

# The Forgotten Warriors

DENNIS MCBRIDE

Thousands, if not millions, of veterans have had illnesses and medical conditions related to Carbon Tetrachloride but the VA still refuses to say that their illnesses may be related to it. Illnesses from Carbon Tet are far more common because it was used by all branches of the military for a much longer time. It is difficult to prove connection when they lost many years of our medical records in the fire at the National Records Center in St. Louis.

There have been a few bills in congress like: H.R. 4179, Veterans Carbon Tetrachloride Benefits Act but none have been passed. This Bill was killed in Committee. Thousands of veterans continue to die from illnesses related to this chemical which was used as a cleaning agent and degreaser. It is an industrial solvent, often containing polyhalogenated hydrocarbons, used to remove grease from mechanical parts. All branches of the service used this prior to, and shortly after, the Vietnam conflict. The Navy used it constantly and in enclosed small spaces like engine rooms, auxiliary engine rooms, small special frequency generator rooms and fan rooms. Carbon Tetrachloride is also called carbon chloride, methane tetrachloride, perchloromethane, tetrachloroethane, or benziform. Or as we vets referred to it, Carbon Tet.

I have talked to many vets that have the same illnesses I have or medical problems related to Carbon Tet. I asked them if they ever used it and most all the older vets say yes. It was banned from our type of use sometime in the 1970s and banned entirely by 1980, except for some industrial uses that requires a permit and safety precautions because of human health hazards. A friend who was exposed in the Army had exactly the same medical conditions that I have and although we are the same age he died about 5 years ago.

I recently talked to a Navy airman that would stand underneath the airplanes on ship and spray Carbon Tet on the engines. Not only did they breath the fumes but their clothes became so saturated with it that often the clothes would have to be thrown away.

A shipmate and I were cleaning an unventilated fan room

and other crew members didn't like the smell so they closed the hatch. We both became dizzy and my friend was losing consciousness. We crawled to the hatch under pipes, I got the hatch open and helped my friend out. We both sat on the deck for at least 20 minutes until we could stand. We were young and didn't think much of it. The next day I couldn't move my foot and when we got to Hawaii I was misdiagnosed with "peroneal nerve palsy" a brace was put on my leg and foot. The doctors were amazed that I could move it after about a month of wearing the brace.

**Carbon Tet was banned from our type of use sometime in the 1970's and banned entirely by 1980 except for some industrial uses . . .**

A new study on Toxic Neuropathy lists associated medical conditions that may also be present. I have most of them. On the bottom of the list it states: "Motor dysfunction (eg, abnormal gait and foot drop): in severe cases." This information was important to help prove service connection. In 2005 I applied for compensation but was denied and they said they saw no evidence of a foot injury. A year ago I filed again and requested my active duty military records from the National Record Center. The Record Center sent me a letter saying they sent the records to the Regional Office of the VA located at the Federal building in West Los Angeles. I wrote to the VA in LA requesting my records and a lady called to tell me they didn't have them. She said she would send me a release of information form for the Tripler Army Hospital in Hawaii where I was treated. Well a friend was driving down there to get his records and asked me if I wanted to go along. I went and got my records in 10 minutes. In my records were 6 documents covering over 3 months of my foot drop and two from Tripler Hospital. So they lied to me about not having them.

It is important for vets to know if their medical problems are

associated with these toxins. Many of the illnesses related to Carbon Tet are also listed with illnesses from Agent Orange. One is Graves Disease, which occurs 3 times more often in Vietnam veterans than the rest of the military. Many Navy vets have Graves Disease like I do.

The Navy personal that served in the South China Sea have also continuously been denied Agent Orange benefits. The Navy still refuses to accept the Australian study on the water purification systems used on Naval vessels. The study shows that in the distilling process the

Agent Orange dioxin's potency was actually increased up to 2,000 times. We were cooking our food in it and drinking it.

Some medical conditions are related to Carbon Tet. Besides a wide variety of cancers there is also:

1. As a Cardiovascular Toxicant; elevated blood pressure (hypertension), hardening of the arteries (arteriosclerosis), abnormal heartbeat (cardiac arrhythmia), and decreased blood flow to the heart (coronary ischemia).

2. As an Endocrine Toxicant; hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus, hypoglycemia, reproductive disorders, and cancer and I might add Graves Disease (hyperthyroidism) which is 3 times higher for Vietnam Vets.

3. As Gastrointestinal or Liver Toxicants; Carbon tetrachloride and related chemicals, such as chloroform, are linked to cirrhosis of the liver.

4. As Kidney Toxicants; ureter, or bladder (Kidney Toxicity). "Toxic injury to the kidney is known to occur as a result of exposures to halogenated hydrocarbons, such as carbon tetrachloride..."

5. As a Neurotoxicant; induce confusion, fatigue, irritability, and other behavioral changes,

weakness in the lower limbs, tingling in the limbs (paresthesia), and loss of coordination. 6. As a Respiratory Toxicant; Respiratory toxicity can include a variety of acute and chronic pulmonary conditions, including local irritation, bronchitis, pulmonary edema, emphysema, and cancer.

Also these from the Study on Toxic Neuropathy:

Signs and symptoms Patients with neuropathy typically present with symptoms of pain, tingling, or numbness in their feet, consistent with dysfunction affecting the longest and largest fibers of the peripheral nervous system (PNS). Other manifestations of neurologic dysfunction that may be present include the following:

- Hypohidrosis or hyperhidrosis
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Urinary incontinence
- Sicca syndrome
- Blurry vision
- Facial flushes
- Orthostatic intolerance
- Sexual dysfunction
- Cramping
- Tachycardia
- Rapid alterations in blood pressure.

During physical examination, the following symptoms of polyneuropathy may be found:

- Sensory loss in a stocking-glove distribution
- Distal to proximal progression: Consistent with the commencement of axonal degeneration
- Early loss of symmetrical ankle jerk
- Motor dysfunction (eg, abnormal gait and foot drop).

Information from: *Chemical: CARBON TETRACHLORIDE CAS Number: 56-23-5 Chemical Profile for CARBON TETRACHLORIDE (CAS Number: 56-23-5) Human Health Hazards* [http://scorecard.goodguide.com/chemical-profiles/summary.tcl?edf\\_substance\\_id=56-23-5#hazards](http://scorecard.goodguide.com/chemical-profiles/summary.tcl?edf_substance_id=56-23-5#hazards)

Complete report: <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1175276-overview#a0156>



DENNIS MCBRIDE WAS IN THE US NAVY FROM 1964-1966.

## Hearts Afire

The one true moment  
 Amongst the flag wagger's  
 Pro patria chatter,  
 The shell shocked anthems,  
 Teary eyed hand ringers,  
 Ball game whistlers,  
 Perpetual clappers,  
 The one true moment  
 Struck when the ROTC kids,  
 Not old enough to hang a hat on,  
 Tricked out in dress blues,  
 Too big visor caps,  
 Black leather shoes that clicked loudly  
 As they walked down the center aisle  
 CLICK CLICK CLICK  
 Startling the curled up service dog  
 Beneath the fold up seat beside the aisle, whose  
 High yelps ricocheted off the bare walls  
 Sending chills  
 Up the spines  
 Of the jittered citizens,  
 Until that moment, hearts afire  
 With duty, honor, country.

—Marc Levy

## Rain, Rain, Rain

The Monsoons are here  
 Not a dry spot on our gear  
 Ponchos so thin and wet  
 Keeps us awake to fret

The coolness of the night  
 Makes you shiver a might  
 Temperature really drops  
 The rains soak the rice crops

It rains so hard and for so long  
 Don't see much of the Viet Cong  
 Thank God for the Monsoons  
 Finally here and none too soon

No beating the bush in the heat  
 Glad to be down and off our feet  
 No fighting, dying, or in pain  
 Bring it on...rain, rain, rain.

—Paul Cameron



Chicago wheat-pasting of images From Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice.



*From Celebrate People's History: Iraq Veterans Against the War—Ten Years of Fighting for Peace and Justice.*

## Holotrophic Village

The past was filled with the drumbeat and heartbeat of the Village drumming love and care,  
 Eons have went to bed with care and love, cradled in nightmares of injustice  
 The warriors of the past had a path home to that village, concentrated with heart,  
 Today the journey has become lonely it is lost in the war of mind and conscience,  
 Where the warriors bleeds with sorrow and is discarded to the winds of indifference.

The honor of the village was the hallmark of the people, it is now drown't in pity  
 Empathy left yesterday, and along with it took love and care, leaving only empty minds and myopic hearts,  
 Hurrying into a future where they have lost the past, and in the journey they have not a map  
 The need to conquer nature has been invalid, rushing here and rushing there, leading to dead ends.

Yesterday's dreams were trounced by the pyper, the pineal nightmare lying guard at the gate of hope  
 Where the fingers became the mind and the heart became irreverent, love and care disappeared into,  
 The rush of tomorrows greed and lust where, nowhere was found holding-  
 A warriors pain and in the midst of this mindset, set on selfish denial,  
 The drumbeat of villages care and love disappeared into tardiness of destiny.

The entire village was at war, it was at war to keep hiding, sleeping in a nightmare they knew was there,  
 The pointy sharp fingers driving the whole into a puss hole of remorse, swimming in denial,  
 The warriors lift's his hand and blows away his brains, the blood and muck is swept upon the conscienceness  
 Of the village at war to keep looking past the enter tab and into a hurried past of gross dismal neglect.

Woe to the village! The millions upon millions of dead warriors lined up in rows of honor-less discard  
 Are now breathing the spirituality of discontent, where love, hope and care became invisible to naked eyes,  
 Glued to mechanisms robbing them of humanity, hurriedly denying the hand which is holding a bullet  
 Of suicide, aimed at their homicidal acts of indifference, Woe to the village!

The village is now sitting upon a pillow of saturation; the mind cannot follow the reason  
 Doom is the bedfellow of yesterday's callous indifference, the warrior was weeping in soul,  
 The tears ached and choked the heart, the mind became distant, and village was forewarned  
 The muzzle of hope fired repeatedly, deep into the heart of mean nasty distance,  
 Which, carried love, hope and care away from the drumbeat of humanity!

—Tomas Jose Juan Ascidro Giron

## The Greatest Generation?

58,000 young men  
 Of my generation  
 Were murdered  
 By The Greatest Generation  
 Hundreds of Thousands  
 Of our Lives were destroyed  
 Plus 3 million genocided Vietnamese  
 Not that "gooks" mattered to  
 The Greatest Generation  
 Then neither did we their Sons

—Francis A. Boyle

## You Can Tell

Thank you for your service.  
 It happened on a regular basis.  
 I'd swallow hard, in my mind  
 The bayonet  
 Went so far up she screamed  
 Bloody murder.  
 It happens now,  
 I say thanks, but tell me what I  
 Did, motherfucker.  
 Tell me what I did.

—Marc Levy



## No Parades

*A foolish faith in authority is  
the worst enemy of truth.*

— *Albert Einstein*

The Viking jet, framed by a cloudless blue sky, approaches the USS Abraham Lincoln. Lightning fast flybys elicit cheers. Navy 1

lands safely. A smiling president wearing "Top Gun" attire boldly exits the plane. Our Commander-in-Chief walks to the

podium and delivers a triumphant report: *Major combat operations in Iraq have ended.* A large banner reinforces his message:

*Mission Accomplished*

Seven years later the combat mission ends. No victory parades.

Questions plague war-weary Americans:

Billions are with nine zeroes, and trillions have twelve zeroes, right?

—*Barry L. Reece*

## Social Networking

Ho Chi Minh requested my friendship on Facebook today. In an instant message he thanked me for my friendship and said he liked my poetry, but I think he was just being nice. He has twelve friends most of them dead.

Ho reconnected with his first wife Zeng, a Chinese woman, through Facebook who just retired after a long career as a midwife. He told me he still loved and was sorry he left her, but she is happily married. She unfriended him. Uncle Ho is very depressed his heart broken.

Ho sent out a Facebook event poetry announcement to all his friends, to mark the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi by Richard Nixon and the takeover of the Statue of Liberty by Vietnam Vet's Against the War. He will be one of the features along with a surprise dead beat poet.

Ho now lives in Brooklyn and travels by bike to Battery Park, on most days, selling red tee shirts with his likeness in a yellow star made in Viet Nam. Other novelty items include Richard Nixon & Bob Hope bobblehead dolls. No one recognizes Ho as he sits there smiling drinking sticky rice wine.

—*Dayl Wise*



*Dennis Kroll at Dewey Canyon IV, May 12, 1982.*

# The Science of Absolution (Atonement) Dedicated To Michael

A soldier's bullet of a few ounces, a battleship shell of a ton  
are relative weights to the Death they devise.

To kill is  
as easy as pulling a trigger  
as easy as plotting a trajectory  
but, the consequences of these actions  
multiplies until guilt becomes a logarithm computing our humanity.  
The certainty of mathematics is a lie when the soul is involved:  
one dead is one hundred percent to the one dead  
one killing one. Is this arithmetic? Many killing many. Is this calculus?

How do you measure the weight of War?  
Is it the quality of our shame? The quantity of our suffering?  
Do you divide the number killed by the number killing;  
is this our fraction of responsibility? Does this fraction reduce,  
if not just the soldier but,  
all of us, Civilian Politician Priest Teacher  
all of us computes the burden in our hearts?

How do you determine the density of forgiveness?  
Does pardon have a dimension? If so, how is it gauged?  
Is absolution measured in the depth of our sorrow?  
The length of our rage? Or in the value of a Tear?

The anguish of a tear captured never calculated concentrates,  
unbalancing the Soul. Released, tears encompass  
the physics of forgiveness. Are the matter and energy of atonement.

The catalyst of crying converts guilt and shame and rage  
to healing unbound. Reconciled, the solace of a tear expands;  
calibrating the Soul. In tears is the chemistry of serenity.  
The properties of peace of mind. The equation of exoneration.

This is the Science of Absolution:  
First a tear then another then many  
then many, many more.

ACCOMPANING HAIKU: At this time, occasionally, I was writing an Haiku to encapsulate poems:

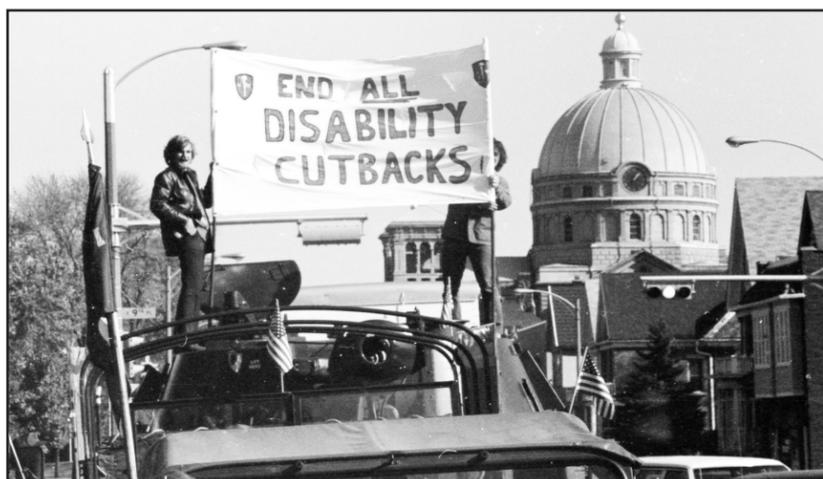
ATONEMENT (1) Soldier's kill to live but, to survive, will dredge their SOULS of GRIEF and CRY

ATONEMENT (2) Soldier's kill to live but, to survive, will dredge their SOULS for PEACE and CRY

When reciting ATONEMENT (not yet 1 or 2) at a gathering in honor of deceased veterans; I unconsciously used the words: "for Peace" not "of Grief." The origin of ATONEMENT (2).

ATONEMENT 1 and 2 form an healing arc, from GRIEF to PEACE by way of TEARS.  
A true encapsulation of "The Science of Absolution."

—Gregory Ross



# Lost World

DENNIS RAY SUTTON

I've known war, death and the misery that humankind is capable of personally, and as a sensitive human being that was raised by good parents to love our fellow man it crushed my spirit to be in war at such a young age. I still can't get over the frustration, the guilt and empathy I have for everyone.

There's good in all of us and I think I simply love people too much, so much that it makes me feel too fucking sad. What I, and my fellow comrades in arms did and were capable of doing to other human beings killed my inner spirit, changed the entity inside me that was innocent and loved everyone, I came back home to a "Lost World," filled with suspicion, bitterness and hatred for what I had done, what I was

witness to and partook of with glee.

I wandered the streets of a small town for a decade as a half human, drunk, drug dependent, and alone, except for occasional women I picked up at the bars for comfort. I have never recovered and have proven incapable of giving love this is evident from three failed marriages. My second wife Deb has always been, and is still, my only love. However, I have never been capable of expressing or showing her the real feelings I have so deep inside.

I feared hurting anything I loved, so, I retreated inside, alone, saddened and living in despair. Perhaps the only entity that truly knows my love is Cody, my little dog. Although I have suffered inside because I have noticed I

cannot express the love I feel for this great little guy, and hold back my true joy he brings. He has been my salvation during some dark moments. Thank God I have him.

I really do not know one moment to the next what will become of me and what action I will take towards my dilemma and myself. My faith in God is strong, however, I too am human and weaken at times.

My country could and should help me by awarding me my PTSD benefits for what has been a destructive life long issue in dealing with the war and my partaking of it with such a short duration of human onslaught and horror. My young life quality has been taken from me because of these actions and the horror

I witnessed and was exposed too, explosions, small arms fire, death and maimed little children, mistrust, hatred from soulless eyes, and carnage, three marriages destroyed, and destroyed by a war which was inhumane and demanding on the soul of a young man who died in 1970.

I don't have the passion anymore, and so remember, it's better to burn out than to fade away. Peace, love, empathy.



*DENNIS RAY SUTTON IS A VETERAN.  
HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE  
7TH ARVN AIRBORNE RANGERS/  
TDY 377TH CESCOSG, VIETNAM/  
CAMBODIA*

## Song of the Badlands

the wind picks up dust  
from strewn cinder block and brick  
small twisters cake the pores  
of GI's home from the war  
their last frame of life  
glimpsed from the battered rim of a helmet  
blown along blacktop like tumbleweed  
in Hue  
and South Dakota

rope swing from a leaning tree  
you get close and cough  
from the chaff of dead wood  
against a backdrop of pirated and gutted hills  
the shadow of the noose  
crossing a pile of bones on  
staked land of minerals and oil

(the dead buffalo lay in its' tipi  
teeth pulled for the gold)

small clouds of calcium rise  
with every step  
cavalry swords traded for automatic weapons  
the sound piercing sand and gravel  
and cutting jungle foliage

home from the war  
back to the town and cities with an amputated arm and empty factories

caught flak to drink gin on stoops  
and wait for the check  
nodding out into American top soil  
of broken glass and shit

troops on the corner  
protecting staked land - bankers pavement  
the hangman's rope dangles above  
in the slow moving air  
its' shadows crossing cracked beams and ripped gratings  
surrounding their boots

an eagle descends past the fall  
of the noonday sun  
broken arrow in its' beak  
sailing along the Pacific coast  
past Mexico and south to the Pole  
its' broken neck lays frozen on the ice  
sinking into the warmer earth to wait  
in America you can hear the beating of hoofbeats  
and watch the wigged ascent  
from the southern polar cap thundering toward middle earth

Hue rose against the dust  
the Dakotas and America will also rise

—Bob McGlynn



# Veterans Mediation

SHARON TRACY

Quabbin Mediation (QM) is a community mediation organization based in the North Quabbin, a low income region in central/western MA. In February 2007, I took a mediation inquiry call from a young man who had just returned from the Iraq War. Coming from a multi-generational military family, I was struck hard by the realization that QM needed mediators competent to work with people fresh from combat. The question was how to bridge the deep gulf between the civilian world of community mediation and the military world? The answer: train people with military experience to be mediators. This was the initial impetus for Veterans Mediation (VM), a QM program in which QM trains and supports a range of individuals from veterans, to active duty military, to National Guard, military Reservists, Dept. of Defense civilians, and their families to mediate for their peers.

In late 2007, two Massachusetts senators met with VM members to create an action plan for taking VM statewide. This still-viable plan had to be put on hold due to the severe economic downturn. It involves partnerships among the Mass. Dept. of Veterans' Services, Veterans Service Officers, elected officials, District Attorneys, MA Courts, and community mediation programs. Now seven years later, QM's goals for VM are to renew this effort to take VM state-wide and to develop financial support for statewide and nationwide replication of the program.

According to the US Census, veterans number approximately 10% of the population. Veterans

plus all other military-affiliated personnel and their families therefore comprise nearly one-third of the general population, and thus are an integral part of the "community" it is QM's mission to serve. In addition, the challenges faced by returning veterans illustrate the importance of having mediators who are tuned in to veterans and their issues.

Mediation is a formal process in which parties themselves can define the issues, find common ground, and determine the outcome. The process illuminates for the parties the power and abilities they already possess to create fair and just solutions, rather than having solutions imposed by outside authorities. Having an experienced veteran-mediator doing intake, case coordination and mediation for cases involving veterans/military and family members engages the veteran in the mediation process because they are dealing with someone who is competent regarding the veteran's experiences and issues.

Since 2007, QM has trained 50 veterans/military and family members as professional mediators in three 40-hour training sessions. Veterans are now some of QM's most talented volunteer and consultant mediators, trainers, and public educators. We are fortunate to be working in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which has one of the strongest support systems for veterans in the country. An organization strongly tied to VM is the Veterans Service Officers' Association which is administered by the Mass. Department of Veterans Services. Every town and city in the state has a VSO,

also known as Veterans Agents whose job is to help their resident veterans and family members. Four local VSOs are mediators, and there are many more on the wait list for mediation training. The local VA facility also employs three members of QM's mediation rosters; two are re-entry therapists and one is a minister. Members of VM also include veterans support workers at the regional unemployment office (who is working to get his peers around the state trained as mediators), and at a state college, an agency employee working with homeless veterans, and a local police chief.

VM members carry out substantial education activities, reaching thousands of veterans/military and family members. VM members teach conflict resolution and communication skills to veterans groups which not only conveys helpful skills, but is a mechanism for informing about the usefulness of mediation. QM continues to provide VM members with advanced mediation skills training in such issues as victim-offender mediation, managing high emotions, and case coordination and intake.

QM serves a large region in central/western MA which extends from the NH border to Connecticut. QM is approved by the MA Trial Court to provide mediation services at every stage of a conflict in the Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Probate and Family Courts, the Orange, Eastern Hampshire, and Palmer District Courts, and the Franklin-Hampshire Juvenile Court.

Mediation services for veterans/military are provided

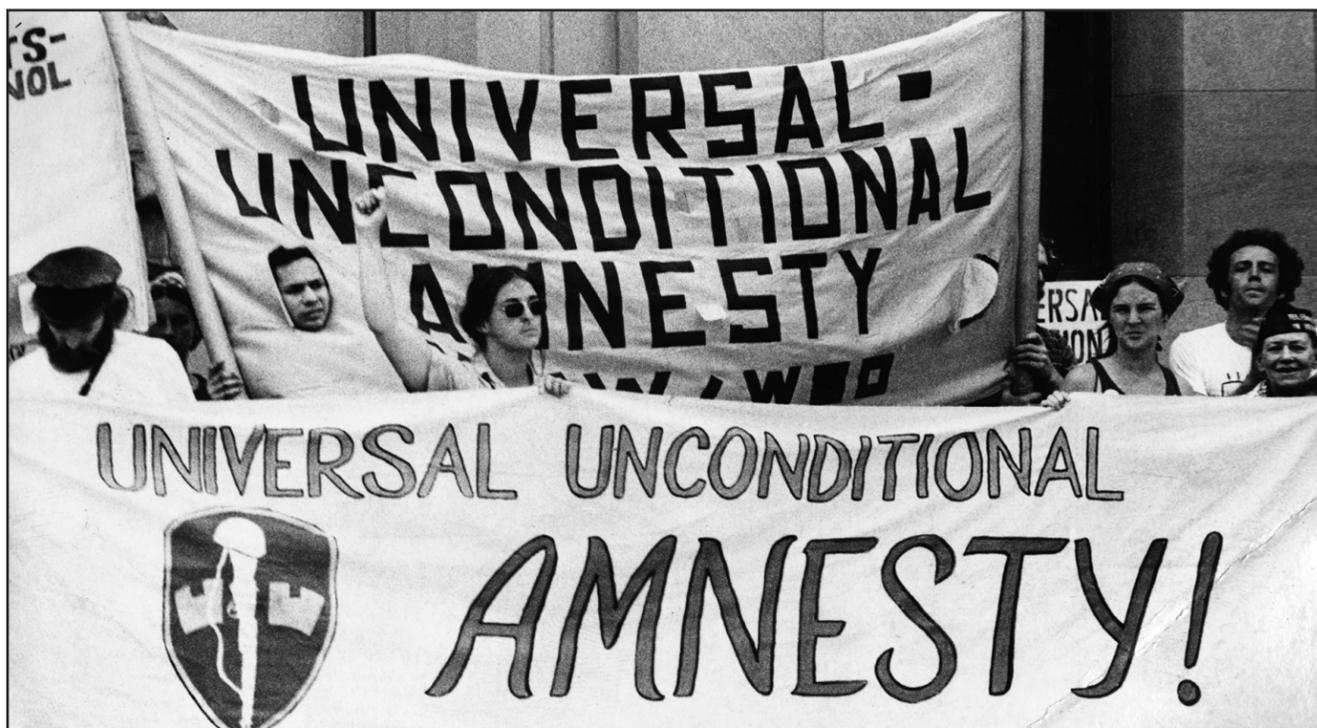
within this region. (Additionally, VM members willingly travel to other areas of the state to mediate for their peers.) QM's large service area is small town/rural, but also encompasses the urban areas of Holyoke, Springfield, and Worcester. The population served through mediation is mostly low to moderate income, thus our services are free or very affordable (based on a sliding fee scale).

During the past seven years, QM and veterans we have trained as mediators have provided mediation services for 1,625 veterans/military and their families, cases which have involved small claims matters, family, workplace, housing and home retention, consumer disputes, neighbors, divorce, child custody, and minor criminal matters. QM collects demographic and outcome data which shows a settlement rate of 82%, and that 95% of the participants were satisfied with the outcome (whether or not they reached a written agreement), and that they would try mediation again themselves and would recommend the process to others.

Quabbin Mediation is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a seven-member Board of Directors and is certified by the state as a women-directed organization.



SHARON TRACY IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF QUABBIN MEDIATION. SHE HAS BEEN A MEDIATOR SINCE 1990 AND A MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINER SINCE 1994.



# Blood Chit

JIM SCHMIDT (REVIEWER)

*Blood Chit by Grady Smith*  
(Apippa Publishing Company, 2012)

From Grady Smith's website: "A 'Blood Chit' serves as an Armed Forces aviator's last survival tool employed when all other methods of evasion and escape have failed in a combat zone and the aviator considers assistance vital to survival."

This is Grady Smith's debut novel, a fast-paced, well written account of the battlefield experiences and subsequent life of Army SSG Chuck Paxton. Though he acted heroically in the face of the enemy, Paxton was

devastated with grief at the loss of his squadmates. The opening battlescene is overwhelming, with realistic images and language. Paxton's singular point of view gives a grittiness and urgency to the tale as it unfolds.

Smith follows Paxton and his physical, mental, spiritual and emotional struggles through the end of his Army career and back into civilian life. As with many who endured that war, Paxton leaves Vietnam, but Vietnam never leaves Paxton.

There is a frightening realism to Paxton's journey. His attempts to understand and deal with his condition echo the experiences of

many. Mental health professionals are attempting to deal with too many cases of people who are deeply shattered. Short term solutions are not the answer when the damage is this deep. Like many, Paxton questions the ability of a civilian to understand the depths of his dilemma. Can someone who has only read about it in a book ever really understand?

Paxton feels the pressures of integrating back into the civilian world at every level. He has difficulty holding jobs and maintaining relationships. He spirals into an existence in which he questions his perceptions of what is real and what is not. His

experiences in that rice paddy are always very close to the surface.

Grady Smith's book will not be an easy read for anyone who was there. There are too many images of the brutality of war for it to be enjoyed casually. Sometimes, however, we need a reminder of why we work to stop war. I recommend this book highly to those who were there, and especially to those who were not.



*JIM SCHMIDT WAS A DRAFTEE  
SOLDIER IN THE 101ST AIRBORNE,  
VIET NAM 1971-1972.*

## Secretary Swiftboat-Heinz

44 years ago, John Kerry exploited VVAW for his personal political gain.

Now, VVAW will exploit senator swiftboat to rejuvenate and renew our national notoriety and cachet.

And also to lobby for a secretary of state who is not ptsd-impaired.

Yes sir, it is now PAYBACK time. Get some.

—Bill Wisniewski



VVAW Chicago, January 1974.

# First Friday: Incoming

GREGORY ROSS

Oakland, California keeps working to bolster civic pride amongst its citizens. Not an easy thing to do in a city with the fifth highest murder rate in America. One thing they do is throw a party. The most successful result of this strategy is called First Friday. It started as an event designed to bring more people to the Uptown area. It was originally organized by the art gallery owners in the district. They stayed open late the first Friday of every month, offering a little food and wine, maybe acoustic music. As word spread more people showed up. Streets got blocked by unexpected crowds that over time have come to be in the thousands. Now it is a big social occasion: food trucks, arts and crafts booths, three stages with amplified music, Public Service tables and EMT and police presence.

The President of Veterans For Peace Chapter 162 passed out leaflets at UC Berkeley every Wednesday afternoon. I joined him whenever I could as did other members. Eventually, it fizzled. It was disheartening to find, as we walked back to our cars, half the fliers scattered about. At a meeting a member suggested tabling. We brainstormed where. The first suggestion and the one that stuck was First Fridays. It had become

the place to be, a hip, cool, giant party.

Vendors were let in around 3PM. We set up our table, a portable canopy, attached the 8 foot by 2 foot VFP, East Bay Chapter 162 banner, stacked up copies of "War Crimes Times," the VFP newspaper, which recently changed it name to "Peace In Our Times" and prepared to hawk peace (unintended double entendre). The gates opened at 5PM. The whole thing went until about 9PM. Most people ignored us or worked very hard to do so. After about six months, I began to refer to our presence as "The Shell Shocked Veteran Uncle Who Showed Up Unannounced At His Nephew's Ecstasy Orgy And Wouldn't Go Away." But, people did stop to talk. Some were Veterans of Iraq, Afghanistan and, occasionally, Vietnam. We would give them info about Veterans For Peace, Swords To Plowshares, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Afghan Veterans Against the War, and the Veterans Administration. Or sometimes they just wanted to talk.

Non vets stopped as well. Many had relatives, friends or lovers who were thinking of joining and wanted to talk. Or they themselves were thinking

of joining and wanted to talk. The story was usually the same: can't afford college, no real job possibilities, tired of feeling useless. We tried to have info about education, job fairs and job training. We had fliers about the truth of military service, recruiters, PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Military Sexual Trauma. We would point to ourselves: one of us in a wheelchair, one with a prosthetic leg and a cane and one with a limp and a cane; all of us with PTSD. We would suggest they did not want to turn out like us. We viewed ourselves as the best anti-war propaganda at the table.

In the over two years that we have been tabling, one of the most satisfying experiences was the two high school seniors who wanted info to take back to their school as a project for their Social Studies class in a city seventy five miles away in the Central Valley of CA. They came three months in a row. We did our best to connect them with a closer VFP Chapter.

Later, Grandmothers Against War joined us for part of the night. They donned vests with their logo, waded out into the crowd passing out their fliers. Not many people, not even the most tragically hip said NO to a Grandmother. We on the other hand were viewed more

as grumpy old men, no matter how nice we were. Most people just ignored us but, to those who abruptly, with irritation, said, "No Thank You," we might reply, "I wish I could have said that 50 years ago." Some got it and maybe smiled, a few stopped to look at our literature. We kept up a patter of "Free Paper here" or "It's free," until we got irritated with being ignored, then one of us might say, "It's free, I already paid for it." Some got it. As the evening wore on, sometimes out of frustration one of us would say, "Come on take it, I dare you." And as the night was coming to an end, sometimes we would say, "Take it already, so we can go home." That seemed to work well but, we followed it, in our best Dad and to some our best Grandpa, voice with, "Now read it, don't just throw it away."



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY, THE GUN LINE OFF COAST OF VIETNAM WITH THE 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. GRADUATE OF A VA DRUG, ALCOHOL AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY SINCE 1989, LAID OFF 2011. PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE". FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM

## The Ex-Brothers of SAE

WELL, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW?

MAYBE WE COULD JOIN THE ARMY?

YES!  
AND GO KILL US  
SOME RAGHEADS!



NYTS/CWS Mar11 2015 (6306)

DANZIGER

# Indian Winter

TOMAS JOSE JUAN ASCIDRO GIRON

Sorrow weeps in the lonely empty heart, as it ends its time in the test of history and the promise of freedom and liberty, which were a promise buried in bigotry. The little Indian Lad was joyful and happy in a world of promise, growing in an environment of hate and greed. This story is about the truth, and about the real live experiences of living as an Indigenous Native in their land occupied by a different flag and ideology. Unfortunately in history this time was also an explosion of greed, hatred, genocide, marginalization and callous indifference.

These many years of traveling a "white road" brought the little Indian Lad to a final Indian Summer, wretched into a violent Winter which is the product of the above forementioned. The beginning of our tree was established in the eons of history prior to the occupation of our spirits. Our Nations joined the military efforts for a promise even after being almost annihilated to be free and have liberty and freedom. In this winter solstice of age my regrets are like rivers running with swollen anger, hate which never was known in spirits of our Nation. Time is reaping the sowed fields of history, weeping at the acts of humanalia upon each other.

With a century of familial dedication of military service to a

Nation our regrets are many. The promises were hollow as the wind which now forsakes their future. The home spun stories carried into to every decade of the 20th century, has revealed the mean spirited hatred and greed carried in a Nation of Racist's! The time to lay down the weary pen of hope, which is knocking upon this door of winter's solstices, only bringing empty rivers of promises which never found the harbor of honor. The lonely empty tears, cry into the forever's, of tomorrow's justice where the veteran of dishonor lies in his bed of forsaken war crimes, committed by greed, hate and lies.

We leave no one behind! The honor of a Nation stands on these words, today if the Nation would open its eyes it would see the veteran with no legs, no arms, mindless laying in the muck of their freedom. In our familial case of military service I could see the sociological engineering and decimation of our breed through war, but the real true indoctrinated red blooded Americans do not deserve a death bed of callous indifference, and otherwise neither do we!

This Nations responsibility to veterans must change! And, it needs to be immediate! It can start by reducing the number of service organizations, 40 or more, which only seem to

jam the VA System and are receiving outlandish salaries for their CEO's, ADJUT., (Chief Executive Officers, Adjutants). For example, the American Legion CEO receives \$206,661, DAV CEO, \$328,252, VFW CEO, \$239,534. I thought they were volunteer service organizations.

It was 34 winter solstices when my case in the Veterans Administration (VA) was approved. Sorrow leaked into Mother Earth with tears of unforgotten miseries, and is traumatized today with the shocking truth of trusted laws and constitutions being violated in pure hatred, greed and decimation of our veterans, who have served with honor to a nation of bigots! Change needs to be immediate and direct. The painful tears of mothers have been laid upon a hollow tomb of dishonor, where justice is screaming for truth.

America and the Constitution, the Red/White/Blue, have lost its way. The path of liberty, freedom and justice has been tainted with selfishness and self-aggrandizement to the tune of brutality when it comes to the care of the United States Armed Service Veterans whomever they may be. The honor to toe up to the line of voluntary honor and valor has been desecrated by the hopelessness of acts which make

green young willow limbs break in storms of callous indifference. Tears are being choked back in the weathered aged ducts, where they fall unto Mother Earth with the acknowledgement of dreaded hope lying in the rivers of hope which never found the wharf of truth in time! The villages grew, now the villages must act, every village that holds the wounds of honor, and valor must make the ultimate sacrifice to heal their homecoming veterans with love and compassion.

In closing this vignette, the feather of the sky that sees all is now leaking red blood of sorrow to Father Time, who with the deepest ingredients of honor and valor beckons the consciences' of humanalia, pleading for the retreat from the unwarranted climate attack on Mother Earth and to heal the honorable who have been members of a special breed, whom have given life, limb and honor. Honor, to the Native Indigenous Warriors who have served in the protection of these precepts and inducements to Life, Liberty and Justice for all!



TOMAS JOSE (US FED. GOVT.)  
 JUAN ASCIDRO (CO STATE GOVT)  
 GIRON IS A DISABLED VETERAN OF  
 THE UNITED STATES ARMY 1963-  
 1967.



Dave Cline speaking at 20th Anniversary of Dewey Canyon III, April 1991.

# Veterans Day 2014

BILL JOHNSTON

"Thank you for your service." I was wearing my US Air Force Veteran hat the first time someone said that to me. My reaction was, "Huh?"

I was in the Air Force from 1966 to 1970, a period of time when the US military was losing about 100 to 200 guys a week. For those of you unfamiliar with the Vietnam disaster 58,000 Americans were killed. The closest I got was Taipei Air Station, Taiwan. I was lucky. Located next to Taiwan National University me and 120 other USAF Airmen sat basically spying on the Chinese mainland. It was good duty and we had little fear someone was going to drop a mortar shell on us.

Every veteran, no doubt, has his or her reasons for their "service." My decision was easy. In 1966 the draft hung over anyone 18 to 24 just waiting for you to become noticeable in some way. And most obvious was not making satisfactory progress in college. Fall below the 12 credit quarter average and you were reclassified 1-A (first to go!). That was my motivation. And I knew the US Air Force did not carry M-16's or slog through rice paddies in Vietnam. So when I am thanked for my service I put self-imposed limitations on myself before taking such appreciation too seriously.

But I am a veteran and I am proud of it. I was always proud to wear the uniform of my country even when I did not agree with what my country was doing. To this day almost all my best friends are veterans and from experience I know the term, band of broth-

ers, means something. So when certain armchair generals and so-called patriots who have never served in their country's uniform use events like Veteran's Day to proclaim their dedication to us and our welfare I believe they need to be called out on it!

Let me start with the US Congress. They all jumped to their feet and erupted in applause when President Obama introduced Sgt. Cory Remsburg at the State of Union Address this year. My reaction was, you bunch of hypocrites! Quick to vote to send their constituents' sons and daughters off to war, death and injury. Quick to send tax dollars to the military-industrial complex who contribute (i.e. bribery) millions to their campaigns. Quick to ignore cost over runs on weapons systems that don't work. Not so quick to provide for veterans when they come home.

Oh yes, Congress is fast to blame others such as the Veterans Administration for problems congress created. The United States is currently in a 13 year war that has never been paid for. Congress has basically raped (the perfect word for it) the rest of the economy to start a war originally intended to pay off big time for the oil companies and their five-time draft dodging hack Vice-President Dick Cheney.

Never before in our history has this happened and veterans are paying for it. Veterans Hospitals are understaffed and the seriously injured die before getting to see a doctor. Mental health problems from being sent into combat zones, time and time again, where you

never know who is going to take a shot at you needed to be addressed years ago. The Republican House of Representatives voted down increases in veterans benefits last year until public outrage forced them to pass a watered down diluted bill. If the American people honestly Support Our Troops as so many bumper strips proclaim, they need to demand a war tax to pay for war and all of its consequences, meaning veteran's requirements.

In 1975 Congress was made up of 70% veterans – today it is 20%. The average age of a member of Congress is over 62 and I am thinking....that would make the average congress member about my age and very eligible for military service during Vietnam. The same time my working class parents had four sons in the military. Strikes me as if Cheney is not the only draft dodger hanging around the Capitol Building these days.

Congress finds subtle ways to screw over veterans. For example I am a Vietnam era veteran, not a Vietnam veteran. The difference is I am not eligible for the same benefits as a Vietnam Veteran. This has never happened to any veterans before Vietnam. All veterans were recognized as veterans. Congress cobbles together veterans benefits on the cheap whenever possible.

Another disturbing idea apparently has popped up from the congressional swamp recently. When Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl was released by the Afghan Taliban after he walked away from his post five years before, the never-ever-served-in-the-military-armchair generals asked, "Should he

be negotiated for and allowed to come home." I guess when you get captured, no matter how, you had better watch out you don't do something to offend the chicken-hawks, even if you are getting the crap beat out of you, or they will throw you to the jackals. I guess Support the Troops for certain members of congress is selective and optional.

We are now in a new phase of the so-called war on terror brought on by the dumbfounding stupidity of the Iraq invasion. More money and no doubt more casualties are down the road. The other day Obama told disabled veterans the country "must move heaven and earth" to make sure they get the benefits they deserve. No doubt hearing that Congress would jump to their feet and erupt in applause had they actually been in Washington D.C. working, they weren't. And as a veteran I won't hold my breath on that promise.

A term we used in the military I think sums up the US Congress when it comes to what we veterans can expect from them – SNAFU! As this is a "genteel" newspaper I will let you look the term up.

As for my fellow veterans and Band of Brothers (and sisters) have a great Veterans Day! And maybe sneak into the closet and see if you can still button that Class A Uniform Coat.



*BILL JOHNSTON IS FROM TACOMA, WASHINGTON. HE WAS A SGT - USAF (1966-1970) AND IS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL WRITERS UNION (UAW LOCAL 1981).*



*VVAW 25th Anniversary in New York City, 1992.*

# God, Country, and Heroes Like Chris Kyle

R.G. CANTALUPO

I don't like heroes who are self-righteous and justify killing people with abstractions like God-Is-On-Our-Side, the American Flag, and fanatical Patriotism. So when I saw and read "The American Sniper," it brought home my differences as a Vietnam Veteran, a VVAW member, and a survivor of PTSD. And since I am in the middle of finishing my own memoir, "The Light Where Shadows End," I realized how diametrically opposed I am to what the book and movie perpetuates, and the very real dangers of the Chris Kyle world view.

Here is an excerpt from my memoir, offered as contrast and counterpoint to the justification of the mentality that the only good hajji is a dead hajji and the dangerous pro-war attitude it perpetuates.

## Excerpt from "The Light Where Shadows End"

"You gotta love this war." Spike said, panning his M-60 on a water buffalo lumbering through the elephant grass.

"You really get off on this shit, don't you Spike?"

"You don't?"

"It is what it is." Devil surveyed the bombed out ruins of a pagoda and picked up a dusty fragment of a stone Buddha. "It is what it is."

"Yeah, last night this was a black dot on a grid, a fuckin' speck. And now—"

"And now it's a fuckin' crater."

"I swear, I think you love these gooks, Radio."

"I respect them. There's a difference. You don't respect shit, Spike."

"I got all the respect I need right here." Spike locked and loaded his M-60 machine gun and panned it across the horizon. He stopped on a water buffalo grazing in a field about a hundred meters away.

"Impressive, ain't it?" Lonny posed.

"What?" asked Lee.

"Seeing what 20 81's fired for effect can do."

"Just a speck on a map, man. Just a speck on a map in a shithole country in a shithole war. You find any bloodtrails?"

"Nobody crawled away from this shit, Spike. Not even Buddha." Devil put the stone fragment in his pocket and nudged some debris

with the muzzle of his M-16.

"Let the water buffalo be, Spike. We're here to check out the pagoda, not start a war with dumb animals."

"Could be a Viet Cong water buffalo, Sergeant."

"I said, let it to fuck be!"

Mike came up behind Lee and gestured toward Spike who was moving out toward the field.

"What's John Wayne up to this time?"

"Dumb fuck wants to waste a water buffalo," shot Lee. "If he had more than shit for brains, he'd be dangerous."

"He's already dangerous. Thinks he's in a fuckin' war movie."

"Hey Spike, Mike says you think you're John Wayne in 'The Green Berets'." roared Devil.

"Keep your voice down, you'll wake the dead."

"You got that right, Devil, I am in a fuckin' war movie!" Spike shot back.

"If you don't keep your traps shut, I'm gonna put you in my war movie!" ripped Mike. "Nothin' worse than a fucking FNG with a hard on for war. Spike, get your ass back here, you're sniper bait out there by your lonesome."

Spike lumbered back and put his M-60 at rest.

"You get your shit together or I'm gonna volunteer you for permanent night patrol."

"I didn't mean no harm, Sergeant, just wanted a little pay back after—"

"First off, out here I'm no sergeant. I'm nobody. I'm Mike. You leave all that rank shit back in the base camp. I don't need some sniper thinking I'm in charge."

"Sorry. I didn't think--"

"That's because you've got shit between your ears. How long you been in the bush? A month?"

"Twenty-four days. Today's twenty-five."

"That's twenty-four days longer than you need to be John Wayne in the 'Green Berets'. This ain't no place for heroes. Here, all the heroes are dead, and if they ain't dead, they're getting other people killed. You be a hero out here, and you're gonna end up with a bullet between your blue eyes."

"I wasn't—"

"You believe in God?"

"I'm a Baptist."

"Then get this 'Spike the Baptist'. I don't know what brainless fuck over at Battalion Head-

quarters gave us these coordinates for H & I's, but we don't need to be fuckin' with somebody else's god. It's bad luck. And wasting that water buffalo is bad luck too."

"Uh...I—"

"You pray?"

"What do you mean?"

"Lee says you carry a bible."

"I like to keep one with me, yes."

"Good. Then you pray for us. You pray this fuckin' dismembered Buddha here forgives us for blowin' his temple all to shit."

"But—"

"That's a fuckin' order. You pray to your God to tell their god this was a mistake. You got that?"

"Yes. I got it."

"Now get your gear together, we're moving up the road in five."

Mike headed off beyond the pagoda to survey the horizon. Smoke spiraled up from a stand of eucalyptus trees. He panned across the rice paddies and the trees, then stopped and focused on a single spot.

Spike and the rest of us got our gear together.

"Superstitious motherfucker, ain't he?" spit Spike.

"After two tours, you get superstitious or you get dead," fired Lee.

"What you carry a bible for anyway? Ain't you got enough weight with that M-60?" asked Devil.

"God lightens my load."

"You gotta be fuckin' kiddin'

me. Pscho-killer's a god-damn Jesus freak?"

"He's a freak alright," jabbed Lonny, "a stone cold head case freak."

"Yeah, with God on his side." barked Mike as he returned. "Let's move out. I'll be expecting a good prayer."

"I can't pray without my bible."

"When we get to the checkpoint, you make sure he takes it out, Lee."

"Affirmative!"

"Spike, get behind point. Let's move!"

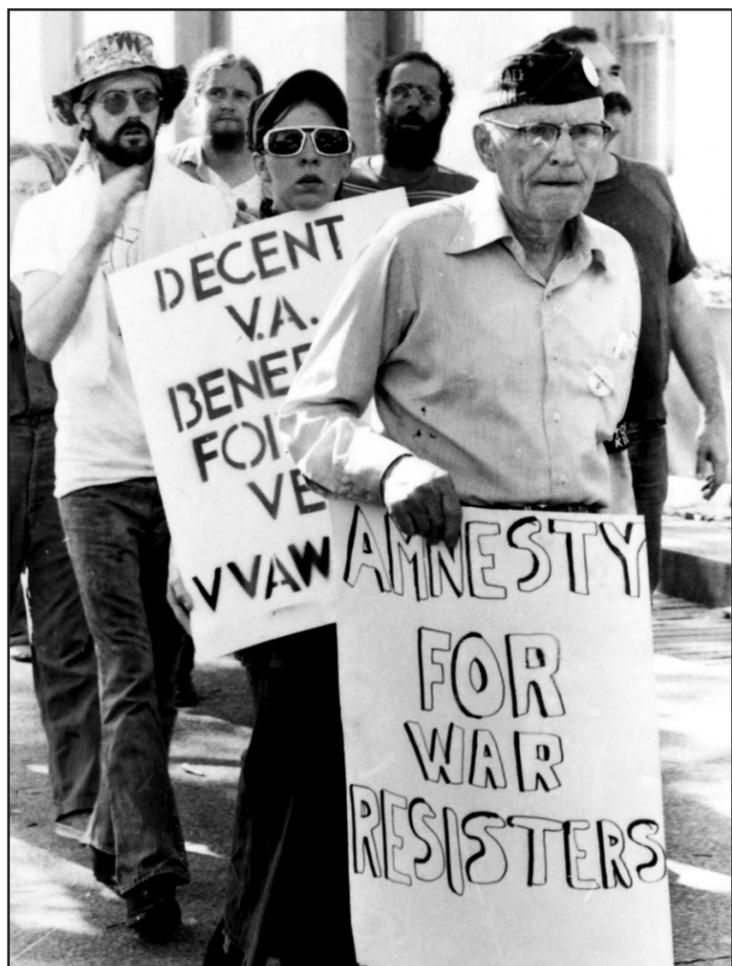
"Fuckin' freak," spit Devil.

"Yeah, a mothafuckin' Jesus freak."

"With shit for brains."



R. G. CANTALUPO'S (ROSS CANTON) WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN OVER A HUNDRED LITERARY JOURNALS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND ENGLAND. HIS AWARD-WINNING VIETNAM WAR MEMOIR "THE LIGHT WHERE SHADOWS END" WAS SERIALIZED IN THE LITERARY JOURNAL "WAR, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS". HIS INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS VVAW EXPERIENCE WAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN TIME LIFE'S THE VIETNAM WARS. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V DURING HIS TOUR IN 1968-69 WITH THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION.



# Portrait of the Musician As Forever Moonlight

MICHAEL BURKE

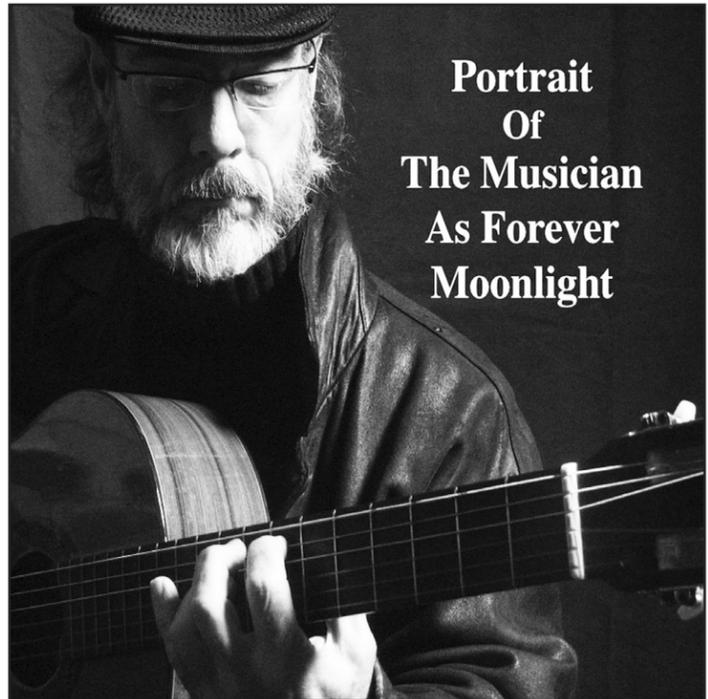
*Portrait Of The Musician As Forever Moonlight by Marc Sloan*  
(Self-released, 2014)

Versatility is the key ingredient in this CD of everything from country and western numbers to peppy South American sounds such as Faruca Argentine and Rhumba. That's right, thirteen fast moving numbers in all and not a loser in the whole flock. From "Freight Train Blues," written by John Lair in 1935, to "Here To The Bayou," to "Crystal Clear," dedicated to Woody Guthrie, the rhythms are so well synthesized it is difficult to imagine that along with bass guitar, congas, mandolin, violin, slide guitar and drums, there's an accordion in there somewhere.

Vocalist Marc Sloan, who plays classical guitar and Martin bass is backed up by professionals such as Simon Fishburn, Guy

Thillet, Pablo Shine, Danny Blume, Elliott Sharp and Marco Benevento, all of whom bring together their skills and talent in this finely wrapped package. Sloan had me going for awhile, thinking I was listening to Hank Williams, or was it Merle Haggard? Wasn't there also a little bit of Johnny Cash coming on the scene in "Overcast," a blacksmith's lullaby dedicated to Johnny?

Yet, I cannot rave about this collection enough without raving about the instrumentals as well, especially Faruca Argentine. After several trips around this disc, this former Long Island boy, now residing in Atlanta, was very pleasantly surprised to see Marc Sloan had acknowledged the Long Island Railroad as the birthplace for the poem, "Where Loved Ones Like To Go," dedicated to Richie Havens, Sanstone's Skyp Guillette, Peter Townsend and



Steppenwolf. This collection is a real keeper and I'll pass it along to Ryker, my five year-old grandson, for whom we're now building a wealth of music for the future.

MICHAEL BURKE IS A VIETNAM COMBAT VETERAN WHO SERVED OVER TEN YEARS IN THE ARMY, WITH TOURS IN GERMANY, KOREA, AND VIETNAM.



VVAW in Arlington National Cemetery, May 1982.

# Fix VA Care

THOMAS MANTHE

Despite a 40+ year relationship with the VA Health Care System, like many vets I had high hopes for the new "Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act" of 2014. In hindsight I suppose we all should have known better.

The new law offers little choice or access to rural vets with a VA Clinic located within 40 miles. A VA employee has already admitted quite frankly that it's just another layer of bureaucracy, and I must agree.

These satellite clinics the VA created some years back to serve rural vets, along with the new law, and its 40 mile rules and 30 day scheduling mandates, allegedly designed to provide better access are both huge disappointments. They are a waste of tax dollars,

and remain a hindrance to both access and choice.

In my own case, to receive actual care from a VAMC means traveling 3 hours, one way, for a 30-45 minute appointment, maybe grab something to eat, then traveling the 3 hour return. Its an all day event for many rural vets.

By who's definition can this be considered accessible or providing a choice?

And if you happen to have a disability? Traveling alone can be physically, mentally and logistically a challenge at best and prohibitive at worse.

Is there any other segment of our citizenry that is discriminated against in this way? Vets deserve the same health care accessibility and choice as those who enact

these laws, at least if we are to believe their rhetoric.

Solution: close the VA satellite clinics. I can get flu shots or blood drawn at the local hospital, where they already send us for X-Rays. Just let vets see their own LOCAL doctors if they choose to. Those selected agencies could waive their fees and/or get tax write offs for serving vets. What? Too simple? Complex systems generally serve the top, and are designed to hide money and corruption (think TAX CODE).

I'm a Milwaukee Native, first introduced to VVAW while still wearing a uniform, by other service members when serving together with the 101st. I'm a Vietnam era vet, service connected

for a TBI (known as head trauma back in 1972) and other related injuries. My wife and I were quite active in VVAW Milwaukee for a while during the 70's and the early 80's.

Current health care is inaccessible, neglected, offering little choice due to distant travel. Thus care remains denied by the VA in my opinion. Service Connected Mental Health, Chronic Pain, Imbalance/stability issues all require the 3 hour, one way, ALL DAY event. I'm currently overdue for a colonoscopy, could really use a new pair of glasses. This care either gets addressed locally or it ain't happening.



THOMAS MANTHE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW FROM WISCONSIN.



VVAW lined up in front of the Capitol Steps at Dewey Canyon IV, May 12, 1982.



## Letter to the Editor

I was a medic with 3rd battalion 9th marines 3rd Marine division in 1971 in Okinawa. While on training operation in the jungle we were sitting around a campfire having chow. A few locals were walking around the area because they lived nearby. A little girl about 10 to 12 years old was about 30 feet away yelling, "Cokes, G.I. want Coke Cola" over and over. Suddenly our Lt. ran over and dragged her to the ground and stole her warm cokes and proceeded to pass them out to his men. He had maybe 6 or 7 cokes. There was about 10 of us sitting there and told by Lt. to share the cokes between us. When myself and 2 marines refused to drink the warm coke the Lt. got pissed off and ordered us to have some. The 2 marines took drinks from the bottle and I passed it by. The Lt. looked at me with scorn and had some words with me later away from the men.

Later in the evening, the 2 guys who took the drinks as

ordered told me they did not want to get busted by refusing the Lt. I told them I understood. Some of the other guys besides the 2 guys who refused wanted to do something about this. I suggested they write letters to their congressman or local newspapers. I do not know if they did or not, but some of them said, "would you do it for us Doc, you got a way with words." So I wrote several underground newspapers and possibly you guys. I also wrote to my hometown paper, *The Los Angeles Free Press* and congressman Bob Wilson.

About a month later, my dad sent me the letter that was printed in our hometown newspaper and I got a official letter from Bob Wilson thanking me for bringing this to his attention and I could be sure that he would make appropriate inquiries. I still have those clippings and the letter from Congressman Wilson.

My ego wanted the attention

and I was proud of what I had done so I signed my full name on all 4 to 5 letters I wrote. Well, one day I called my family and Dad told me several people called the house and said your son is a communist, your son should be put in jail with rest of those anti-war freaks, I hope your son is killed, and so on. I told Dad I was sorry he had to listen to that. It really upset my mother. Dad said it would stop soon and I told the truth about what I saw and that was good. I was impressed by what Dad said because he was a conservative man who voted for Nixon and could not understand why all these hippies and anti-war groups were making so much trouble in America.

I also have a letter that was sent to my commanding officer in Okinawa with the letter I had written. Whoever sent it was smart enough to leave my name off it. Written on the side of the clipping it said, "This jerk needs castrating. You should write *The Los Angeles*

*Free Press* putting them straight." The letter is post marked 1972.

I learned a big lesson from that experience! Any letters I wrote after that I signed them G.I. Joe. I was paranoid for quite awhile thinking they might figure it out or someone would give my name to the military.

I trust you guys and have supported you since the 1970. So, whatever you do with this e-mail remember my name is G.I. Joe.

I get medical services from the V.A. in Detroit and I do not need castration. They already took my prostate due to cancer in 2011.

Keep doing what you do. Thank you for your service and your fight for justice for all veterans.

I enjoy *The Veteran* paper very much and look forward to it. I wish you could have one every month. Be well and thanks.

—G.I. Joe



John McCutcheon Winter Truce Concert in New York City, December 20, 2014.

## Spitting Mad

FRED SAMIA

*NOT published by The New York Times (NYT)*

As a Marine Vietnam combat veteran, I was pleased to see Matt Richtel address this important matter ("Don't Thank Me for My Service," *NYT Sunday Review*, February 21, 2015). That familiar expression of gratitude is right up there with "Support Our Troops" for meaninglessness, since they both imply, as Richtel points out, thoughtless endorsement of the policies and politics that put the troops in that situation.

I was not pleased, however, to see Mr. Richtel revive the myth about returning Vietnam veterans

being spat on. I realize that he is quoting Mr. Freedman, but by doing so in print, he gives it a legitimacy it does not deserve. The spitting libel was an attempt to discredit and disgrace the anti-war movement (and, by association, anti-war veterans) and to blame it for "losing" in Vietnam, and has itself been discredited in such works as "The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam," 1998, by sociologist (and Vietnam veteran), Jerry Lembcke.

Even before we left Vietnam to return home, we heard such stories, usually promoted by bitter military lifers. In the

States, conservative, and some not so conservative, pundits repeated these phony accounts and even Hollywood did its part. In "Rambo, First Blood," for example, Sylvester Stallone's character claims to have been both spat on and called a baby killer, combining the two most common false accusations leveled at anti-war protesters.

This may seem a minor point in the long, sordid history of Vietnam, but veterans have a large enough burden to bear as it is, without adding another layer of cruel deceit. I am also extremely sensitive to this issue because I was both a Vietnam veteran and,

after my discharge and return to the States, a participant in many demonstrations against the Vietnam war. Often I wore my combat ribbons, and I neither spat on other veterans nor was spat on by civilian protesters.

It's time to bury this myth once and for all.



FRED SAMIA IS A MARINE VETERAN OF THE VIETNAM WAR WITH SEVEN DECORATIONS INCLUDING THE PURPLE HEART.

## Letter to the Editor

*Columbia University Magazine*  
*Winter 2013-2014*  
*Letters*

Thank you for publishing Michael Christman's "Shades of Green." [Combat, Marine Corps, Afghanistan]

His writing is a refreshing change: clear, direct, and without unnecessary words. This style is often found among those who have served under fire, where using four long words where one short word will do could be fatal.

Christman makes two points that merit full attention.

First, "Mental-health experts remind us that the most important thing for these guys to do is to take

care of each other, that talking is the best form of therapy. They are right. Venting your anger, telling stories, taking a day or two off are all things that help."

Studies by the Veterans Administration and others confirm that talking is the best form of therapy. "Exposure therapy — reliving a traumatic experience by writing or talking about it — is the only therapy proved effective by independent research," wrote Kelly Kennedy in a 2008 article in *Army Times*.

The bad news is that too often, returning service members experiencing Post-Traumatic Stress are not given that treatment. Instead of receiving the best form

of therapy, they're handed multiple prescriptions for multiple drugs that do no good and can do harm.

Second, Christman writes, "It's great that we as a society recognize mental health as an important topic, but I worry that we may have swung too far and that the stigma of the veteran who 'loses it' is a burden that we all have to carry."

At a conference focused on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder held several years ago by the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs, a sergeant who had served under fire in Iraq spoke on a panel. Among other things, she said, "Don't you dare say that we have a disorder. We're having a normal

reaction to an abnormal situation."

Most of us see the world as a relatively safe place. Few of us have been in a situation where there were opponents doing their best to kill us. For those who have, everything is changed forever. There is a chasm between those who have experienced that and those who have not.

It can be lonely. Understanding that loneliness, instead of distancing ourselves from it out of fear, may be helpful.

—Thomas F. Barton '77SW  
New York, NY



## Spring of '72

*continued from page 40*

about Vietnam, about killing gooks. The sound of his voice was insidious, his intent unmistakable. I got up and walked out and that was the last I ever saw of him. It ended bad anyway.

Quite likely he had been the original, true Rambo of the American war in southeast Asia. At the enlisted club at Hood he'd drink the beer, spill his war stories and the atmosphere turned aghast. Adjoining tables emptied as I'd stare at the table top. I couldn't meet his eyes, wanted to crawl out the door. He'd refused to cut his hair and it grew down between his shoulders. He refused to wear either an o.d. T-shirt or the top of his jungle fatigues and his skin turned to umber. Always the top dog, he wouldn't listen to anyone, told the NCOs and officers above him how wrong they were, refused to follow orders and kept getting busted to E-1. Something about him kept them from tossing him into jail. Occasionally and on point, he could slash through the vegetation so fast that his squad couldn't keep up with him. Given his dark brown eyes, the company commander taunted him, said that they were so damned brown because they were full of shit - there under the triple canopy in Tay Ninh Province. That only

made him laugh.

More than once there had been speculation that he'd be put up for a Silver Star. No stars ever got pinned on him. When he processed out of Company C, Second Battalion, 5th Cavalry of the fabled First Air Cavalry he was handed the usual service medals. And he tossed them into a trash can as he walked out the door, December of 1970, four months before so many veterans were to toss theirs on the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C. (John Kerry included).

He also refused to write any letters home, just because he didn't want to feel home sick. I'd written his parents from Pleiku province and they responded that they were in agony not having heard from him. I checked with MACV headquarters and let them know where he'd been assigned. As well, I wrote to his company commander to relate that he and I had been best friends back in Sunland and requested, asked that if he were to be killed, whether I could accompany the body of Norbert Erwin Scheppers home to California. Intuition served to calm me, told me that it wouldn't happen.

So after I'd gotten his address I put in an order for a quarterly

subscription for him - for an avant garde publication the name of which I've long since forgotten. He'd quickly become notorious for having never received a single item - never a letter, magazine or package of cookies and the arrival of that first edition in the spring of 1970 way out in the boonies ignited something of a celebration in Company C. Everyone at loose ends came running through the jungle screaming for him, yelling for all to hear that Scheppers had FINALLY gotten something in the mail. That semi-hardbound publication from Manhattan likely caused him to scratch his head, and all of his cohorts in arms to howl with laughter.

He wouldn't learn who had had it sent to him till we met again at the end of that year back at that first curve in the boulevard, just over the hill from Sunland. One winter day not too many years ago here in Sacramento, I let loose on my boss, 24th block of Broadway, in the middle of the converted warehouse where I was then working. I'd had enough with his belligerent tone of speaking and there in front of everyone, our firm as well as the other firm with which we shared the space, proceeded to rip into him for treating people so shabbily as

well as sexually harassing one of his previous employees. My ferocity gave him to shake; a few hours later he let me go early. So I walked out, drove a few blocks west to the Tower Theater to see Brokeback Mountain.

I was awestruck. Heath Ledger's performance as Ennis Del Mar was way and beyond a revelation, caused me to return home to this aged wood paneled trailer on an old sheep ranch outside of Sacramento in a resonant trance unlike anything I'd ever experienced. Rather a fusion of James Dean and Marlon Brando, his final words in an aged wood paneled trailer far out on a ranch in Wyoming suffused with his memory of Jack Twist - were simply - beyond - description.



*JOHN CRANDELL RETIRED FROM THE 9TH RECON WING AT BEALE AIR FORCE BASE WHERE HE WORKED AS A PROJECT MANAGER IN CHARGE OF ARCHITECTURAL, CIVIL, FORCE PROTECTION AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS. HE SERVED WITH THE CONTINENTAL ARMY COMMAND AS WELL AS THE FOURTH INFANTRY AND FIRST CAVALRY DIVISIONS, CIRCA '68 TO '71.*

For my website, Medic in the Green Time, I'm posting first hand accounts of grunts or Arty who smoked pot. How you got it, where you smoked it, what it did to you, what you did while stoned, the up and downsides of smoking grass as an FNG, an old timer, etc. Keep to thousand words. Photo of you in VN, your job, unit/year, your name or anonymous. Officers and NCOs: what was your policy on men smoking pot--send a couple of anecdotes. I'll edit for clarity. See 'The War...On Drugs' in the War section of the site. You can email me, Marc Levy, at [silverspartan@gmail.com](mailto:silverspartan@gmail.com).

# 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 over 40 years old. The insignia, VVAW® and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.

## 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

## Spring of '72

JOHN CRANDELL

Memorial Day of '72 and I'd made a reservation to spend that weekend way south in Orange County, at Doheny State Beach. He'd said yes a few weeks before, suggested that we hit the road and get out of town after I'd come out to him, told him that I loved him. Meanwhile I grew so frustrated, all of twenty three years of age not having had a sexual experience as an adult and sensing that a holiday with him among the waves would be intolerable. I simply decided, fuck it, forget about it.

So I didn't call or stop by and see him and he didn't call me. He went on out and bought his Hog motorbike and I bought a copy of *The Advocate* to search amongst the personals. And when I finally did get to Doheny State Beach I'd been asked to photograph the wedding of Miss Leslie Halterman, onetime resident of Tujunga and Surf Board Bob Wilkenson, onetime resident of Canoga Park (and what an emotional wallop that turned into) all of seven years later.

So, rather than lay on the sand and remember who died

in Vietnam, I got laid my first time, south end of Lankershim Boulevard, across the freeway from Universal City – a writer of science fiction, who took me into Chris and Don's favorite bar a week later, bottom of West Channel Road, upstairs to the back room and in that crowded space the basic issue with myself began to clarify. Being in a crowd, I could no more relate to gay men than I could relate to bikers on their Hogs. And there simply is no word in our language to encompass the emotional weight of that realization.

So, at approximately the point in time that I laid naked on a bed beside the 101, he slowed his Hog on that first curve along Sunland Boulevard, slowed it on down to turn into his father's driveway. A drunk then hit him from behind and he and the bike were drug beneath the vehicle likely a hundred feet, given a speed of fifty miles per hour or so.

I didn't hear of it until election day, not until stepping forward to the registration table to vote for

my very first time (McGovern) in that year's June primary. And there sat Norma Linsley and in a cool tone she asked me if I'd heard about Norbert. Paranoia broke loose. My legs started to give way. I leaned forward to brace myself on the table expecting to hear that he was dead. Right there in the auditorium of the elementary school where I'd learned to dance as a child a hundred or so yards from the house where I'd been born and raised in Sunland.

I doubt that he ever ventured to ride a motorbike again. The ambulance came down from Tujunga to carry him off across the bridge over the boulders and gravel where Jack Nicholson would soon be filmed as Jake Gittes, standing in the dry riverbed, putting two and two together to the satisfaction of Roman Polanski (Chinatown). As tough as nails, he survived. Anyone else wouldn't have. I wonder now if he is still alive.

A few weeks after Bob and Leslie were married he came to see me late one summer night in that single year than I lived a few

blocks away from the Friendship Bar, directly across the channel from 333 East Rustic Road. And I sat at his feet, told him what he'd meant to me all of those earlier years on the trails, along highways, across that dusty plain at Fort Hood in Texas. The look in his eyes showed that he understood and the only reason that I didn't touch him was that I didn't want to then remember whatever degree of his negative reaction for the rest of my life. Didn't want it to end bad.

Another twenty years went by and we met for lunch in Westwood Village. I was doing good with running an office in Beverly Hills, working projects for celebrity megamillionaire estates. He had gone to seed, was jobless, weighed at least an eighth of a ton and both of us had turned grey. A Vietnamese couple sat at a nearby table there in the brick cafe on Glendon Avenue. As we ate, he couldn't help himself, suddenly and for no reason began to talk

*continued on page 38*

### Lieutenant Tom Cotton With His Men in the Iraq War

ALL RIGHT, MEN, FOLLOW ME...



NYTS/CWS Mar 12 2915 (6307)