



### For Peace, Justice, and Veterans Rights

BILL BRANSON

#### From the National Office

Eisenhower. Kennedy. Johnson. Nixon. Ford. GHW Bush. Clinton. GW Bush. Obama.

Those are all of the presidents we've had in our time of service, from the war against Vietnam through the struggle for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans. The last time the US actually declared war was after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 when President Roosevelt declared war on Japan, bringing the US into World War II. But we know all too well that the semantics of whether or not we are at war do not affect the realities suffered by those who fight and those who are invaded. Conflicts and extended military engagements—like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan—have the same consequences as a declared war. While the policies have varied under each of these Presidents, one common denominator has increasingly emerged - the fealty to the military-industrial complex.

We cannot predict who will be president when you are reading this (and if you read this before the elections, please take action: get out and vote), but we do know this: our mission remains as important as ever regardless of who is in the White House. Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) was founded in 1967, nearly fifty years ago, to fight for peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans. The struggle continues, perhaps these days more than ever.

VVAW has never stopped working to protect the welfare of those who served our country.

We must continue to carry out the struggle to end the current conflicts the US is in so that we can get justice for all veterans, and for the victims of the wars carried out in our name. This will not happen without our constant vigilance and agitation. VVAW calls for the end of these wars, to withdraw the troops, and to stop the use of chemical weapons and drone warfare. Fifteen years after we invaded Afghanistan and thirteen years after we invaded Iraq, we still have troops on the ground. As of August, US-led forces are bombing ISIS in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya, and sliding further into a dangerous quagmire by dancing around the Russians to bomb Syrian government forces.

If we as a country go to war, it will be for profit and for oil. The true costs will never be admitted. The true damage to our veterans, their families and those we attack will never be repaired. We should be providing lifetime healthcare for all veterans, regardless of bad paper or discharge status. We should be fully funding the VA, not defunding, destabilizing and trying to privatize the VA. A fully functioning VA should be the model for health care for the whole nation. But that is not what has been happening. GIs and veterans are coming home to a VA system that cannot handle the demand of both aging Vietnam vets and a new generation of vets needing

care, especially those seeking mental health services. While the VA has added mental health providers and established a VA crisis support line, we know that veterans were turned away from the mental health services they sought out. We know that calls and texts to this hotline went unanswered. This resulted in veterans' deaths. The VA needs more infrastructure, support, and funding.

Our country must also provide restitution for the victims of our wars. Fifty years after the US dropped Agent Orange on Vietnam and its people, the country is still reaping the horrible consequences. Agent Orange contamination and poisoning is still affecting Vietnamese, as well as the children and grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. We applaud the fact that President Obama finally acknowledged the not-so-secret bombing of Laos just this year, but that is not enough, it is only the first step. Unexploded ordnance still litters the countryside. We as a country need to formally and publicly apologize, and take action to undo the damage by clearing the bombs and paying restitution to the victims of our war.

VVAW continues to work with those we were at war with fifty years ago. VVAW and its members have made many trips to Vietnam over the years. We fought for the normalization of relations with Vietnam, which didn't happen until 1996. We are currently donating funds to help house victims of our war on the Vietnamese people.

But that is not enough and our work must continue.

It is time for the US to stop waging war and begin waging peace. The money wasted on bombs, planes, drones, and military adventures could easily be used towards providing free public health care to the whole country, free education for the whole country, and bolster programs to take care of the sick and elderly, especially as our countries' population and all of the baby boomers are aging. Instead, we as a nation allow our representatives and leaders to be bought and paid for by the military-industrial, and energy complexes.

We never thought that 50 years later we would still be fighting for justice. We have lost many good brothers and sisters since our struggle first began. We can't organize like we did when we were 20, but we know what needs to be done and how to do it. We have seen the horrors of war and have seen the power of collective organizing. Now it might only be our voices, not our bodies, that we can put on the line. But we will continue to do what we can and give what we are able. We know what our mission is. We must expose the lies and fight for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans.



BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW BOARD MEMBER AND CHICAGO RESIDENT.

### Delegation to Vietnam

SUSAN SCHNALL

From 1961 to 1971, the United States undertook a massive defoliation program as an instrument of war, over the years poisoning an estimated 4.8 million Vietnamese. The initial testing of chemical herbicides occurred in Konton province on August 10, 1961. Two weeks later, a second test run took place along Highway 13 north of the city known as Saigon. And then President Kennedy signed an executive order that began the massive defoliation program as an instrument of war.

This herbicidal warfare program has been considered by most of the international community to be a violation of international law and a war crime. In 1969, the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution restating the 1925 Geneva Protocol that prohibited the use of chemical or biological agents in international conflicts. The resolution specifically declared as a violation of that treaty, the use of any chemical

agents of warfare, whether gaseous, liquid or solid, which might be employed because of their direct toxic

effects on man, animal, or plants.

Our public health/science group has been brought together by our interest in and concern about the lasting impact of the use of Agent Orange/dioxin sprayed multiple times over south and central Vietnam. We have spent months, some of us years, reviewing studies and articles.

In June, 2012, our delegation of science and public health professionals affiliated with the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, a project of VVAW and Vets For Peace (VFP), were invited to Vietnam by the Vietnam Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin (VAVA). The purpose of our trip was to visit people suffering from illnesses recognized among American veterans to be associated with the spraying and use of AO/dioxin by the US military

during the American conflict in Vietnam. We also surveyed the land that continues to be contaminated by dioxin, threatening illness, pain, and suffering to thousands of Vietnamese, long after the cessation of fighting. Most striking are the severe birth defects, some of which are recognized as associated with Vietnam service among US veterans, now seen also in Vietnamese children.

Following the June, 2012 trip, members of the delegation continued to meet and discuss current studies and articles related to the Agent Orange/dioxin toxicity in Vietnam. We organized presentations to educate the American public and spoke before various audiences and constituencies. Some of our speaking engagements



August 10, 2016: Members of the US Science delegation join with VAVA to commemorate Agent Orange Day 55 years after the beginning of the use of AO in Vietnam. Marie Elivert (middle left) stands next to Pham Thi Nhi, second generation AO victim. At the far right in uniform is Mr. Nguyen Van Rinh, President of VAVA.

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# Why I Didn't Stand for the National Anthem

BARRY ROMO

After returning from the Vietnam War, I went nearly three decades without standing for the national anthem.

I enlisted in the Army right out of high school in 1966 on the buddy system with several of my friends. I couldn't wait to go to Vietnam. I was sent to Fort Bliss in Texas for training. We were so proud when we heard reveille and taps play that we would run outside to salute, even when we weren't expected to.

I was sent to Vietnam as an infantry platoon leader when I was 19. While I was there, my nephew Bobby was drafted and sent to Vietnam as well. My brother was 25 years older than me and had served in World War II. His son, my nephew, was actually a month younger than me. We were like brothers. I had wanted to fight in Vietnam, Bobby did not. But we both ended up in the same brigade.

Bobby died in an ambush at Dong Ha. When I got the news, returning from patrol that day, I had to wait two days before the intense fire died down

and we could get his body. I escorted Bobby back home. At Bobby's funeral, I almost jumped into the open grave when they performed the gun salute.

After Bobby's death, I finished my tour stateside and I went home. When the fighting in Cambodia began, I couldn't hide, and I couldn't cover my eyes any longer. I became politically active and I found Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) (or they found me). I had turned against the war, and I had turned against the racism and police repression of minorities in our country.

My friend, Gary Lawton, was picked up and arrested for murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Gary was an African American community organizer in Riverside, California. He had been in the marines in the 1950s. Two white police officers had been killed nearby. He and two other African American men were picked up and charged with their murders. The three men didn't know each other and came from different backgrounds. One

had been in Divinity school.

There was no evidence of Gary's guilt or involvement. Gary was often kept in solitary confinement even though he hadn't been tried or found guilty. When he was brought into the court for trial, he refused to stand for the judge. So I began to do the same, in solidarity. And it went from there. I didn't stand for the national anthem at sporting events. I didn't even stand at my daughter's high school graduation. For nearly thirty years, I never stood.

Gary was tried three times. The first two trials resulted in a hung jury. During this time, I was elected to the National Office for VVAW. I promised Gary's family I would be back for the trials. He was eventually released on bail and VVAW helped launch a defense committee, which I became the head of. Gary went on a speaking tour to raise support and awareness.

For the third trial, Gary was found innocent in the first vote in the third trial. After having a public defender in the second trial, Gary had a former

marine JAG lawyer represent him. He was found innocent with the first vote of the jurors. Gary was only the second person in history in California to be tried three times for the same crime.

After Vietnam, after the treatment of Gary Lawton, and in response to the ongoing police repression, I chose not to stand. It didn't bother me if others did, but it wasn't the right thing for me to do.

If a football player like Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers chooses not to stand for the national anthem in response to and protest of racial injustice, I applaud him for his conviction. He is risking endorsements and his career by kneeling instead.

Now I do stand when the national anthem is played, but I also stand in support of anyone who exercises his or her right not to.



BARRY ROMO IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER AND CHICAGO RESIDENT.

## 20 Years of *The Veteran*

JEFF MACHOTA

For decades, Barry Romo made sure *The Veteran* (and before that *Winter Soldier* and *First Casualty*) was published and distributed to members and supporters of VVAW across the country. First he did this as part of a collective, then later with only a few to help out. In 1995, Barry couldn't finish the current issue.

In the summer of 1996, after viewing the incomplete layout at Barry's apartment, I told him I was pretty sure I could give it a try. I brought the production into the computer era. Joe Miller, Lisa Boucher, and of course Barry, helped out with the content. I also brought the VVAW mailing list into the computer era.

Hard to imagine that was 20 years ago. I don't think in the summer of 1996 I had any idea I would still be doing this all these years later.

Many things have changed since then, most significantly the new format we had to adopt last issue to keep up with the changes in the print industry.

The wars of GW Bush increased our circulation to close to Vietnam War level numbers. Over 17,000 issues of the paper are distributed across the country twice a year. The days of stamping and labeling them around my dining room table are long past.

We have also managed to put every issue of *The First Casualty*, *Winter Soldier*, and *The Veteran* online at our website. 46 years of articles by and for VVAW members and supporters.

Over the 20 years I have been working on this, countless people have contributed articles, poems, photos, and cartoons since then. It amazes me that we can still manage to get great articles and we continue to re-discover great photos from the past.

Thanks for the opportunity to play a role in keeping VVAW alive.



JEFF MACHOTA HELPS PRODUCE THE VETERAN FROM HIS HOME OFFICE IN URBANA, ILLINOIS.



### THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War 50¢

Volume 26 Fall, 1996

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#### Recognition, Finally!!

On July 11, 1995, the U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. This is something that we in VVAW have called for since the end of the shooting war in 1975. While we celebrate this action, we must remember the price the people of Vietnam paid while waiting for successive U.S. political administrations to make this move. Though the shooting war ended in 1975, for the next twenty years the U.S. waged political and economic warfare against the

point of Vietnam, even to the point of supporting Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge against them! Finally, when Vietnam was knocked down to its lowest economic level, with the denial of international funds for reconstruction, not to mention the continued effects of the war (Agent Orange poisoning, unexploded ordnance, etc.), moves were made by political and economic elites in this country to open formal relations with the former "enemy." We must recognize the price that the people of Vietnam paid to achieve this goal.

*continued on page 17*



VVAW has been volunteering services over the years to help homeless veterans. Chicago VVAW feeds homeless vets in conjunction with the V.A. and other Vet's groups. (above) The Vet's Stand Down, which feeds up to 1,000 (homeless plus volunteers) and provides medical, clothing, showers, shelter and more, could not happen without the dedicated work of Phil Meyers and Jeanne Douglas. (below, shown with unknown Vet).

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#### VVAW Celebrates Anniversary

By JOE MILLER, VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE

The U.S. government has finally decided to establish normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam, and this is certainly an occasion to celebrate. It's about time! It must be remembered, however, that our government kept up an economic and political war against the Vietnamese people ever since that day in 1975. April 30, when they took their country back, after nearly thirty years of the intense struggle.

To celebrate the anniversary of that earlier event, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) and our friends gathered at the Hodouse in Chicago

on Saturday, April 29, 1995. This event was first planned at the annual VVAW National Meeting in October, 1994. We wanted to have a party to remind people that Vietnam's struggle against U.S. aggression was a just struggle. Further, we wished to remember and to celebrate our role in helping to end the U.S. war against the people of Vietnam.

Nearly one hundred and twenty people attended this gathering for a small donation, half of which would be sent to Vietnam to assist in people-to-people aid projects. There were also VVAW

*continued on page 6*



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#### Vietnam Era Ends at the City University of N Y

By JUNE SVETLOVSKY and BEN CHITTY

Twenty-two years ago, the last of over two and a half million American men and women sent to war in Vietnam came back to the world. Used by an imperial government, abused by a vindictive Pentagon, neglected by a corrupt and demoralized Veterans Administration, shunned by self-styled patriots among our fellow countrymen, we picked up our lives and carried on. Or at least tried.

*continued on page 7*

#### Fallen Comrades

• Jack McCloskey - obit on page 9  
• Shelly Ramsdell - obit on page 10  
• Walter Collins - obit on page 10




PO Box 408594  
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Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons.  
Thanks to Bill Branson, Ross Canton, Susan Schnall, Terry DuBose, Mike Hastie, Joe Miller, Jeff Motyka, Ellie Shunas, Scott LeGette Franklin, Stanley Campbell, John Retallack, and others for contributing photos.

### Veteran Staff

Jeff Machota	Jen Tayabji
Ellie Shunas	Charlie Branson
Bill Branson	

## VVAW Merchandise





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# Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

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

## Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

This column isn't about me; it just starts out that way. There honestly is a point to it, and your patience is appreciated.

Thirteen years ago, Barry Romo and I joined about ten other Vietnam vets in a one-hour WILL documentary called Vietnam Veterans' Stories. WILL is the PBS affiliate at the University of Illinois, and even though the show was planned to air only locally, it was eventually shown on over 100 PBS stations. We didn't get paid anymore because of that, of course. A few weeks before it went on the air, several of us from VVAW were invited to a screening. So off went me and Barry, Joe Miller, Jeff Machota, and Claudia Lennhoff to this event, on the way to which Claudia noticed that I appeared to be somewhat nervous.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked. "Gee," I whined, "WILL interviewed me for over an hour. I'm sure I said some really stupid

stuff in that period of time." Claudia immediately put me at ease. "Yes, Paul, I'm certain that you did that. But look at it this way. WILL wants to look good, so they're going to edit out 90% of the stupid shit you said and only show the three minutes where you said something that made sense." And that's what they did! Thanks, Claudia.

So flash forward a dozen years. WILL is now putting together a documentary called the Downstate Vietnam Stories Project, which includes (yawn) me again, along with several other vets from the Boonies. I learned to my horror that my entire one hour and seventeen minute interview is on the internet, meaning that they did not repeat the courtesy of editing out, per Claudia, the "stupid shit" I said. I would only suggest your looking at my part of the documentary if you wake up at 2 am and absolutely cannot get back to sleep. But there is, finally, some legitimate news here for our readers.

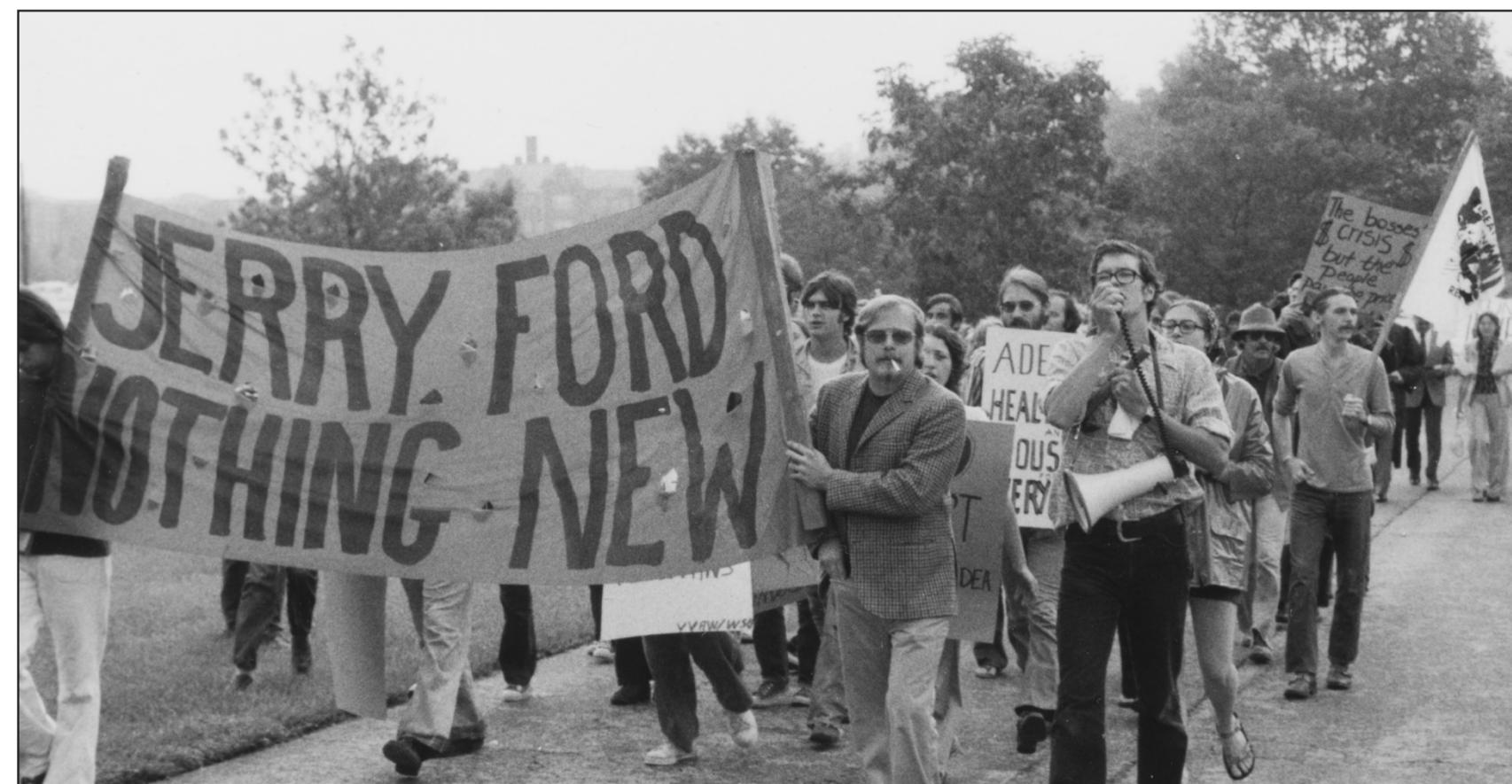
I got a letter a few months ago from Moss Bresnahan, CEO of Illinois Public Media, which explained where the project stands. According to Moss, this currently online documentary includes "links to lesson plans about the Vietnam War on PBS Learning Media—a vast, free digital archive of stories, lesson plans, videos, photos and more, designed to engage teachers and students in all subject areas" related to the war. I don't know how many teachers we have among our readers, but no matter what we do or did, and no matter how old we are, we are all continuing to be "students," right? Moss went on to say that "In 2017, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's latest documentary about the Vietnam War will be broadcast on PBS stations across the country. The final stage of our project will be to produce a local TV and radio series about the Vietnam War to air in conjunction with the Burns/Novick series." Hopefully that

project will cut my hour and seventeen minutes down to another three minutes, for reasons which Claudia clearly explained a dozen years ago.

OK, the PBS documentary is still a year away. So how do you find the online thing now? Glad you asked. WILL's website - [will.illinois.edu/wwii](http://will.illinois.edu/wwii) - includes interviews from several Vietnam vets other than me, which means that you might enjoy them even if you're not an insomniac. Besides which, it includes all of that really neat stuff which I mentioned in the last paragraph. As I suggested, it doesn't matter if we're in our 70s; we're all still students.



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



1974 VVAW Demonstration.

## "Thank You For Your Service"

JOHN KETWIG

The following was a letter to the editor of the Roanoke (Virginia) Times on Veterans Day in 2014.

Please don't thank me for my service. I was taken against my will, yanked away from all the hopes and plans I had for my life, and made to see and experience things that contradicted anything and everything I had ever been taught about right and wrong. I heard the screams of someone dying, far away from home, a fragile human being blown apart, for no good reason. I saw burnt, bloodied, maimed children. And men, and women. I smelled the scent of open wounds, of flowing blood and burnt flesh. I felt the splatter of someone's loss of life as it exploded across my face, and no matter how many times I have washed

my face over the past 47 years I cannot wash away that horrible stain. And you would thank me for that? I abandoned my morality. I lost my equilibrium. I cannot tell you much of what I learned, but it wasn't worth a damned thing in the civilian workplace, in my baby's nursery, or at the checkout of the grocery store. It is only a specter, a dense dark monster that pursues me in the night; that colors my view every day in ways no one else can see. Too many nights, almost half a century later, the horror twists my stomach into knots. Oh, I know, you thank me because you don't know anything else to say. You still hope that it was all about freedom and democracy and good things like that, and not just about profits and power, authority and career advancement and some

ancient goddamned illicit definition of the word masculine. It was about corporate profits and garish stripes sewn onto a sleeve, about genocide and the screwed-up notion that you can make a total stranger's existence better by killing or maiming him. I was playing in a rock 'n roll band when they came for me, reciting songs about understanding and brotherhood and love. They took me against my will, stripped me naked and beat me bloody, and they sent me to the other side of the world where death fell out of the sky and exploded, and its shards tore up anything and anybody they hit. I learned to lie as flat as possible on the mud, to will my body to become a puddle and sink down into the ooze. I learned to overcome the terror, the violent tremors, and I learned that

none of those things matter when your number is up. I learned it happens to the very best guys, in the very worst ways, and there's nothing right or righteous about it; they were just wasted. Please, oh please don't thank me. If you want to express something, promise me you will get involved in the struggle to abolish wars. Nothing else will say that you understand.

Then I will thank you.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "... AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM". FIRST PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 1985, IT IS STILL AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES.

# Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

A couple of months ago footballer Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers began to stay seated as a protest while the Star Spangled Banner was performed before the 49er games. After this, with the help of the media and social media, Kaepernick's actions became widely known and controversial. He received significant support, including from fellow athletes. He also received much condemnation. Then there seemed to be a good number of people who didn't agree with his action but understood that he had the right to make his protest as a form of free speech. Many of these people would also say that Kaepernick had the right to do what he did because American troops fought so that citizens may have rights, including those of free speech.

Some of those who brought the troops into the argument brought it even further, saying that the sacrifices made are reflected in things like the national anthem and the flag. Therefore protests involving these are disrespectful of the American soldier. Unfortunately President Obama also fell through this logical trapdoor. The argument is twisted. If you think soldiers sacrificed for free speech, why in their name deny free speech? If free speech is limited to what everyone wants to hear, then there is no free speech. This controversy is doubly interesting because it is an intersection between a righteous cause - the injustices faced by African-Americans and other minorities - with

the questioning of the meaning and challenging of conventional ideas of what patriotism is.

There's got to be a whole lot of people whose take on the progress of African Americans is that the civil rights movement opened doors for blacks and others. The perception has been that things are moving forward, and all is well and good and getting better in America. Now along comes publicity about how unarmed and/or non-antagonistic people are getting shot by the police. And that it is common practice for police to stop black citizens. And that the prosperity that is America doesn't seep down to all neighborhoods. And that funding cuts do seep down to those neighborhoods. And that poverty is a monster for too many lives. Many do not want to hear this let alone hear it as a challenge to the blessed Star Spangled Banner.

If someone doesn't stand for the national anthem that is a challenge to what is considered patriotic. It is a challenge to the carefully cultivated nationalism that enables our leaders to confuse the common good with the carte blanche to make acts of war or injustice for whatever excuse. A protest of the national anthem hits the nation at a spot not questioned very often. It is a wake up call for a serious issue.

This isn't the first time that an athlete has protested by challenging conventional nationalism. Most famous might have been Muhammed

Ali refusing to be drafted into the military at a time when the Vietnam War was raging and most Americans were supportive of that war. And at the 1968 Olympic games US sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos received the gold and bronze medals for their event. Instead of standing at attention as the Star Spangled Banner played, they stood with heads lowered and a fist raised to salute black power. For this they were vilified at home. Also in the 1968 games there was gymnast Vera Caslavska who also made a protest. When she received her gold medal she bowed her head and turned it to the side. Dastardly? No. American patriots had a warm glow from this one. Caslavska was a Czech. Her fellow medalist was a Soviet, and Caslavska was making her protest over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia when the Soviet anthem was played for the Russian athlete. Great going. Not like that Tommie Smith. Made an American proud to disrespect a national anthem. She was a real cold warrior.

It depends on your perspective. George Orwell wrote that "Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage... which does not change its moral color when it is committed by "our" side... The nationalist does not only disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hear-

ing about them." (from *Such, Such Were The Joys* by Orwell) Orwell was writing about pig-headed nationalists, and the extension of that would be the roles that symbols play in this nationalism. These symbols of nationalism can and should be challenged.

A national anthem has a place in our country. I think we could choose one with better words and music, but that is not the point. What we usually get is a misuse of the anthem. Standing for the anthem, saluting the flag and singing God Bless America may be appropriate at times when our national being is threatened, such as December 7, 1941 or September 11, 2001. But why are we expected to salute the anthem and flag at every damn sporting event when that action is only to brainwash us? Colin Kaepernick challenged this, even if inadvertently, when he made his points about the treatment of minorities. And it is a good thing. This super patriotic, war promoting nationalism needs to be challenged. As Orwell wrote, when the bad stuff is done by our side, it's not really bad. That's nationalism doing its job.



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



Free Billy Dean Smith Rally, summer 1972, main gate to Fort Ord, CA. Monterey VVAW riding together in truck to rally.

## VVAW Archive Update

MEG MINER

The VVAW Archive Project wants to encourage members to plan for the future of whatever they have collected about their time in service and their activities as members. The National Office (NO) started sending VVAW's official publications and records of events and meetings to the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) in the late 1970s.

This article brings you up to date on recent activities of NO staff to make sure as complete a record as possible is preserved for the future. We also want you to know how you can help secure your group's legacy and actions you can take to preserve your own.

If you have memorabilia of your involvement in VVAW we want to hear from you! Contact VVAW at [vvaw@vvaw.org](mailto:vvaw@vvaw.org).

Service-related material from members cannot be part of VVAW's collections at WHS unless it connects directly to VVAW activities. We have identified other ways VVAW members can save their personal photos, letters, journals, or artifacts from events and actions that took place prior to membership.

Some state archives or local historical societies will take these kinds of materials, but not all of them are funded and equipped to handle personal mementos. If you are a resident of Wisconsin you can contact:

Jonathan Nelson  
Collection Development Archivist  
Wisconsin Historical Society  
816 State St.  
Madison, WI 53706-1482  
608-264-6447

There is another archive that is devoted to telling the story of every perspective involved in the Vietnam War: The Vietnam Center and Archives (VNCA) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. The Vietnam Center seeks to provide a forum for all points of view and for all topics relating to Indochina, particularly, but not limited to, the American military involvement there. They seek to preserve the records of US veterans, who served in Southeast Asia as well as civilians active on the home front including the anti-war movement. In addition to its mission of collecting these materials, the Vietnam Archive currently administers two projects, the Oral History Project and the Virtual Vietnam Archive ([www.vietnam.ttu.edu/general](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/general)). The Vietnam Center can

be contacted at:

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

## Five Simple Words

ERIN H. LEACH-OGDEN

"Thank you for your service." My response to that phrase ten years ago was dramatically different than it is now. When I first heard those words, I was a twenty-one year old newly commissioned lieutenant with a whole lot of idealism and not the least bit of understanding regarding war's realities. So I accepted the phrase with what I thought proper – a small nod, and a quiet, "Thank you," in return.

I remember thinking that I didn't really deserve thanks, since I hadn't done anything yet, but how would a stranger know that? And why would an introverted and overly courteous young woman voice that thought when the only possible outcome would be the discomfort of the person who had offered kind words to begin with? I continued with my "nod, thanks, and move on" response as a safe bet.

As soon as I finished flight school, I was shipped to Afghanistan. The two best words I can come up with to describe that place are breathtaking and brutal. I vividly remember my very first flight. Sitting in a complex, multi-million dollar helicopter and looking down on mud-brick huts and hand-tilled fields made me think, "If not for this machine, I'd believe that we've just been transported 2,000 years back in time."

Over the course of hundreds of flights, my brain registered images of epic mountains, lonely desert, and lush river valleys, but it balked at burned-

out Russian tanks and women running for cover at the sound of our approach. I saw things that made me laugh, like a family of four riding a single motorbike, and things that seared my brain even as I tried to ignore them, like a row of Afghan men against a wall with black hoods over their heads. I had been one of the pilots who landed in their village in the dead of night and dropped off special forces who put every military age male in zip tie handcuffs and hoods before shoving them onto our aircraft to take back to the FOB for interrogation.

At the time, I questioned nothing, for the reasoning always went something like, "these could be the guys who keep shooting rockets at us while we're sleeping," or "I'm not taking any chances, that mortar hit so close to our aircraft that my bones are still shaking." One of the worst days of my life entailed flying to a crash site in order to pick up the burned remains of an aircrew. I never saw the bodies, never even got out of the aircraft. The infantrymen on site were responsible for the horrific task of filling body bags, and our crew chiefs then loaded them in the back. The pilot next to me said, "There's a smell you'll never forget." His words are what I can't get out of my head. The military dubbed those kind of flights Hero Missions.

That word, hero, never sounded the same to me after that. Neither did bagpipes, or the song, "Amazing

Grace". Those things were a part of every ramp ceremony, and they now cause me irrational panic. For every American death over there, we were lined up on the tarmac in rigid formations, holding salutes until our arms shook as flag-draped coffins passed in front of our eyes and onto a plane headed for home. I wanted to be on the plane, just not in the box. When I did get home, I didn't respond anymore to "Thank you for your service." I simply said nothing. The phrase made me feel incredibly conflicted.

I originally went to Afghanistan believing in the mission, believing in the evil of terrorists and the just cause we were sent to fight for. I even defended the war when other Americans began to question it. But ultimately I left that country wondering if we were doing more harm than good. No one who risks their life for a cause wants to find out that it was for naught. I fought against that possibility long and hard. Eventually, I faced reality. I shed the uniform after completing my contract, and I've been pursuing answers ever since.

I have regrets about participating in violence for profit, but being honest about that means responding to "Thank you for your service" (and its corresponding mentality) with "Don't thank me, I was wrong." As of yet, I've never had the personal courage to say that. I find relief in

the fact that people rarely say it to me anymore, since I don't wear a uniform, or a ball cap that proclaims my veteran status. You won't find a veteran status on my license plate, or an Army bumper sticker on my car. My identity is more than that. Some people might question my patriotism, but that would be incorrect. I simply choose to fight for peace now, rather than rush to war. I choose to respect the military by saying their lives should only be at risk as a very last and very rare resort. I choose to bring attention to a veteran suicide rate of 20 per day, and say that it shouldn't be a surprise to the general public. I choose to honor my family's long history of military service by working the rest of my life to prevent the next generation from ever seeing war, and from ever having to hear the phrase, "Thank you for your service."



ERIN LEACH WAS A BLACKHAWK PILOT IN THE 82ND AIRBORNE COMBAT AVIATION BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN 2007-2008 AND 2009-2010. SHE WORKS AT THE WILLIAM JOYNER CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES AT U MASS BOSTON.

See more responses to "Thank you for your service" at VVAW member Marc Levy's website *Medic in the Green Time.com* in the *Post War* section.



Armed Forces Day, June 16, 1975-05-16 in Washington.

## Five Simple Words

RANDEN PEDERSON

I think we served honorably in an unjust war. The unjust bit wasn't our fault, but still it gets me down. I don't get thanked for my service very often, because I don't advertise my vet status. Therefore it really isn't a problem. I just don't like being thanked because I feel guilty for helping to cause misery to the Vietnamese people for no good end and no good reason.

I'm happy to have served with all my comrades, but unhappy with where the service took place. I feel proud that I was able to step up to the plate and do my bit in spite of being scared out of my gourd sometimes. But again that feels tainted because of the war I was in. In many ways being

there was the best bit of my life, and I actually regret not staying on at least until my buddy Ken Cruise left for home. I was pretty fucked up in the head at the end. Probably not worth anything much as a soldier, but maybe it would have passed.

My uncles served in WW II, but my dad was too young. I always looked up to them and wanted to be like them. That was a big reason I enlisted. I feel kind of robbed because my war wasn't nearly as honorable as theirs.

I also don't like the phrase "Thank you for your service" applied to the most recent wars. I have a good friend (infantry) that fought in the 1st Gulf war. I think that one was justified

and well conducted even though the government did some lying to drum up support. But Bush Jr's wars based on out-and-out lies were not just, and were certainly not well conducted. These wars have added greatly to the misery of the people in the Middle East. The war in Afghanistan didn't get Bin Laden. We probably could have spent a large sum of money as a bounty, would have been miniscule compared to what that war cost. Someone would have sold that bastard out. But no. Bush wanted to be the "War President" and show up his dad.

Thank you for your service. I don't like the phrase because I don't want to be in support of our

continued bullying of other peoples. Intellectually I separate soldiers from policies, but emotionally that doesn't work. Therefore I don't like the phrase, especially when it is said to me. It's embarrassing really.



RANDEN PEDERSON SERVED WITH BRAVO 1/7 FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION 1969-70.

This essay is one of many that appear in the *Five Simple Words* project on *Medic in the Green Time.com*, run by VVAW member Marc Levy.

## Delegation to Vietnam

*continued from page 1*

included students and faculty at the City University of New York, the American Public Health Association, Vietnam Archives in San Antonio, medical students, nurses and attending physicians at Cornell Medical College, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) community on a panel with Noam Chomsky, the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan and high school students in the New York City area.

In August, 2016 members of the American delegation included: Dr. Franklin Mirer, Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at Hunter College of the City University of New York and former Director of the Health and Safety Department for the United Automobile Workers; Dr. Jean Grassman, Associate Professor at City University of New York and researcher investigating the effect of dioxins on human populations; Marie Elivert, a health care executive with over 35 years in the private and public sector; Dr. Daniel Robie, Assistant Professor at York College of the City University of New York where he conducts research, has authored a number of scientific papers, and teaches physical, analytical, and inorganic chemistry. Also, myself, Susan Schnall, an Adjunct Assistant

Professor at New York University in the School of Professional Studies and worked for 31 years as a senior executive in public hospitals in New York, and am a co-coordinator of the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign and a board member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

We were invited to the International Scientific Conference to commemorate the 55th anniversary of Agent Orange Day. We attended a conference on August 8 and 9, and a rally on August 10. The conference was titled: Assessment of the Harmful Effects of Agent Orange. Four members of our delegation wrote papers and gave presentations: Dr. Frank Mirer on: Updated authoritative reviews of Agent Orange/dioxin toxicity; Susan Schnall: Results of Studies on the relationship between exposure to Agent Orange and diseases in American veterans; Dr. Daniel Robie: Dioxins: Chemistry, Sources, and Sinks of Environmental Importance in Vietnam; Dr. Jean Grassman: An examination of the plausibility for contemporary human health effects from Agent Orange in Vietnam.

On August 10th I delivered a speech to the rally, representing VVAW and VFP as well as the Science



*Susan Schnall presenting a VVAW t-shirt to Minh Y, International Director of VAVA.*

delegation in which I said:

"I come before you today as a Vietnam era veteran of the American War in Vietnam to recognize and take responsibility for my government's use of Agent Orange/dioxin on your people and your land.

"We, the American Vietnam veterans took part in that spraying. We, the American people allowed that devastation to take place. We allowed the chemical companies to develop and use an herbicide that would destroy the mangrove and hardwood forests and that would destroy the food supply. Those once young American Vietnam soldiers have become old men and live with the memory of what they did so many years ago to your country and people.

"And they don't want to be

thanked for their service in Vietnam. They want to be forgiven. Today we have a responsibility to those we harmed, to those who were harmed in our name, to heal those affected. We pledge to work with you, toward healing the lasting legacy of this war, to clean up the land of the contaminants we left behind and to heal the people. We pledge to work with you, toward healing the lasting legacy of this American war, to clean up the land of the contaminants we left behind and to heal the people."



*SUSAN SCHNALL IS ON THE VVAW BOARD, CO COORDINATOR OF VAORRC, AND A VIETNAM ERA VETERAN WHO WAS COURT MARTIALED BY THE US NAVY FOR ANTI-WAR ACTIONS IN 1969.*



*Members of the US Science/Public Health Delegation to the VAVA International Agent Orange Conference (from left to right): Marie Elivert, Jean Grassman, Frank Mirer, Daniel Robie (standing behind Mmde. Hien-director of DaNang Children's Center), Susan Schnall, Ngo Nhan Than and others.*



*International presenters and attendees at the VAVA conference on Agent Orange in Hanoi. Behind the seated American delegation are the former Prime Minister of Japan Yukio Hatoyama with Mr. Rinh to his right. Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong, Vice President of VAVA is in the front row next to Susan Schnall.*

# Please Help Restore the Mural at My Lai

MIKE HASTIE

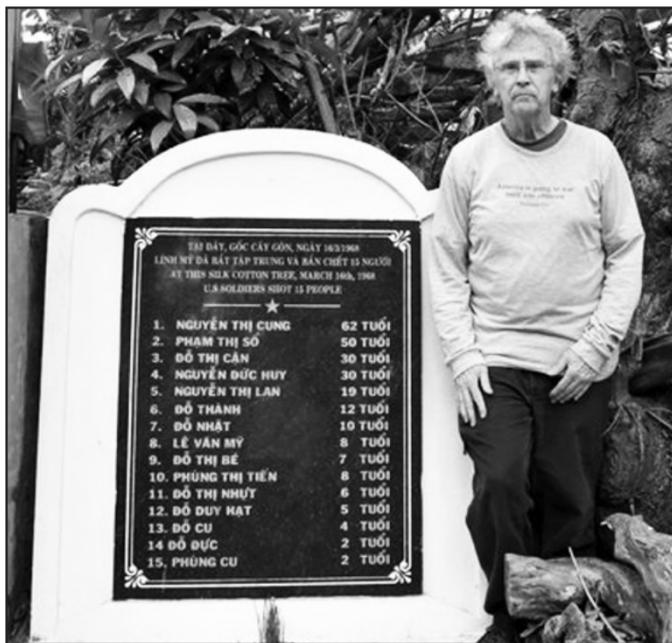
During a recent trip back to Vietnam with three peace activists, Brian Willson, Becky Luening, and Sandy Kelson (March 28-April 22, 2016), I spent two days at the My Lai Massacre site in Quang Ngai. Aside from being a soldier during the Vietnam War, this was my second visit to the My Lai site, the first time being in April 1994. Being there is not really a visit, it is more like a life experience. Having been very familiar with the breaking story that appeared in Life Magazine (December 5, 1969) and the horrifying pictures that were taken by Army photographer, Ron Haerberle, the experience of being at the memorial site is life revealing. For me personally, I see the My Lai Massacre as a metaphor for the entire war in Vietnam. The United States was responsible for over 20 million bomb craters during the war, what some people have called, My Lai's from the skies.

For the most part, while the four of us were walking the grounds, we were the only ones there on April 4-5, 2016. Near the infamous drainage ditch where US soldiers killed 170 civilians, is a large mosaic-tile mural, depicting some of the 504 Vietnamese civilians who were murdered by our government on March 16, 1968, in the last moments of their lives. The mural is very powerful on so many artistic levels. While examining the mural up close, we noticed the artwork had badly deteriorated from years of severe hot and wet weather that causes such damage.

While I was there, I had a

private conversation with the co-director of the museum. She has worked at the memorial site for 16 years. I told her I was a veteran, a member of Veterans For Peace, and that millions of Americans who were adamantly against the war, consider the My Lai Massacre site extremely important. I also said, as far as I was concerned, the My Lai Massacre site is sacred ground, and one of the most important memorials in the world. After I mentioned this, she broke down and cried. It was a very powerful moment for both of us. I felt a deep emotional connection to her, and a loving empathy that was so important in healing my soul. Shortly after we talked, she arranged for us to meet one of the lone survivors of the massacre, a Mr. Pham Thanh Cong, who was eleven-years-old when the massacre occurred. Four of his family members were killed by a US hand grenade. Meeting him was an emotional privilege. In his recent book published in 2016, "The Witness From Pinkville," he stated at the end of the book: "If there was one thing I might ask for, that would solely be your sympathy." When we parted, I kissed him on the cheek and said, I was born in America but my heart is Vietnamese.

When I got back to my home in Portland, Oregon, I corresponded with the co-director of the museum via email, and offered to raise the funds needed to restore the mural. She eventually replied that it would cost \$4,200 to complete the restoration. Our goal is to raise this money soon



Mike Hastie standing next to a marker with the names of fifteen Vietnamese civilians who were murdered at My Lai on March 16, 1968.

so the mural may be completely repaired by the 50th anniversary of the massacre on March 16, 2018. Some of us plan on returning to Vietnam for this historic event. To contribute to this project, please make checks out to VFP Chapter 72, and mail to: VFP Chapter 72

c/o Bob Projansky  
3036 SE Taylor St.  
Portland, Oregon 97214.

Any funds received over the goal, will be given to the My Lai Museum, and upkeep on the grounds.

As a Vietnam veteran, it has been an amazing experience to have faced the truth behind the My Lai Massacre, let alone the entire Vietnam War. Whenever the truth threatens one's core belief system, there is an urgent need to deny its reality. I feel a sense of

liberation in knowing that I no longer have to deny my moral injuries. It is a deep healing awareness that is denied many. With sincere appreciation for helping keep a profound historical memory alive.



*MIKE HASTIE WAS AN ARMY MEDIC IN VIETNAM. HIS FATHER WAS A CAREER ARMY OFFICER AND WWII COMBAT VETERAN. HE SPENT MOST OF HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD IMMERSSED IN MILITARY CULTURE. WHEN HE CAME BACK FROM VIETNAM, HE PICKED UP A CAMERA TO PHOTOGRAPH THE LIE OF HIS CHILDHOOD. HE FEELS THAT LYING IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IN WAR AND THAT LIBERATION FROM DENIAL IS EVERYTHING.*



Sandy Kelson and Brian Willson standing in front of the My Lai mural.

## A Veteran's Apology to the People of Vietnam

TIM MARTIN

There will never be a day when the Vietnam War is not on my mind. It was one of the worst mistakes America has ever made. Vietnam was fought for big money interests and promoted under the guise of nationalism. The war should have taught us a humbling lesson, but we let it slip away. Peace has become the enemy of corporate-run America. Our nation is accustomed to viewing life through the cross hairs of a rifle scope. We are a society in search of constant battle.

Over the past 50 years Americans have been spoon-fed whatever revisionist propaganda about Vietnam our leaders want us to hear. Their lies have kept us from understanding the truth: the war in Southeast Asia was immoral and unjust, a brutality akin to slavery and the genocide of the American Indian. Vietnam produced a realization in me that, much like the British redcoats who once tried to destroy our freedom, I had fought on the wrong side.

I am a veteran who would like to apologize to the people of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia for my part in the war. I joined the US Navy in 1966 to battle a nation that had been in a prolonged struggle to free itself from foreign domination. The Vietnamese defeated the Japanese occupation during the Second World War. In 1945, they declared themselves independent from France. They wanted only what

America's Founding Fathers wanted, liberty and independence.

In 1965, the US sent an army to Vietnam to battle a new revolutionary nationalist movement called the National Liberation Front (the Viet Cong). Our soldiers were told that all struggles for national liberation were ex-USSR or China led "Communist conspiracies." That was a lie. The Vietnam War was a pointless exercise in destruction. Americans were ordered to burn Vietnamese villages, destroy large areas of the countryside, and kill as many enemy fighters as possible. Our military dropped napalm and cluster bombs and sprayed people with herbicides. The results were death and injury, lifelong illness and genetic mutation.

The suffering did not end with the liberation of Saigon in 1975.

Author Edward Tick, known for his groundbreaking work with Vietnam veterans, wrote a book called "Fallen Leaves, Broken Lives." He collected statistics by searching history books, newspapers, and archives, and interviewing survivors and scholars throughout the United States and Southeast Asia. Here is what he discovered:

During the course of the war 2.5 million Vietnamese were killed, 4 million were wounded and 250,000 went missing in action. There have been 67,000 people maimed and

50,000 post-war deaths because of unexploded bombs and mines in Vietnam. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and suicide numbers are unknown, but there are an estimated 3 million disabled street people in Vietnam.

The environmental damage was enormous, ranging from devastated forests to petrol-poisoned rice fields. The US bombing in Vietnam (approximately 8 billion pounds worth) was 4 times more than during World War II. Over 5,778 Vietnamese villages, 15,100 bridges, 2,923 high schools and universities, 1,500 maternity hospitals and 484 churches were destroyed or damaged. Agent Orange-related deformities still occur at the rate of 35,000 a year. 11.7 million gallons of the deadly chemical were sprayed over the countryside.

I wish the Vietnam War could have ended with some form of introspection and reconciliation on our part, but America's leaders were (and still are) out to lunch. We have become an enormous military camp intent on creating new enemies and wreaking havoc around the world. The US has reached the point where warfare no longer requires victory. Our failures are self-inflicted. The Military Industrial Complex (MIC) is a parasite on this country, and our politicians treat young soldiers like consumable assets.

There is some good news: Americans are growing immune to our government's attempts to propagandize faux patriotism into a good and necessary thing. We are learning that war is rarely about a moral higher ground. US citizens are finally beginning to understand that our addiction to battle is a symptom of the sickness that pervades us.

Time does not heal all wounds, but owning the truth is a small step forward.

As a nation we are seriously flawed. Our military is deep in the blood of millions of innocents. My participation in the Vietnam War was a terrible mistake. I hope the people of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia will forgive me. As for the untruthful leaders of this country, no apology will be forthcoming. Their eyes are already locked on the next atrocity ahead.



*TIM MARTIN IS AN AUTHOR, SCREENWRITER AND OPINION COLUMNIST (TIMES-STANDARD NEWSPAPER, EUREKA, CA). HE SERVED AS A BOILER TENDER IN THE US NAVY AND HIS SHIP (USS HORNE DLG 30) WAS STATIONED IN THE GULF OF TONKIN IN 1968.*

*Edward Tick's Vietnam statistics (reprinted from Reader-Jan/Feb 2005 issue) <http://wjpb.com/casual.html>*

# Commemorating the War in Vietnam: The Long Tan Affair and New Studies of a "Lost Cause"

JERRY LEMBCKE

Fiftieth anniversaries of dates important to the American war in Vietnam are renewing interest in the war, and generating new studies and controversies over how the war should be remembered. President Barack Obama's Memorial Day announcement in 2012 of a \$65 million allocation for a thirteen-year series of 50th-year anniversary activities dedicated to the war (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/us/politics/obama-begins-commemoration-of-vietnam-era.html>) was followed by objections that Pentagon control of funding might result in biasing the historical record. Subsequently, historians and leaders of the anti-war community launched their own initiative to insure the fullest possible accounting of not only what the US did in Vietnam during the war years but costs of the destruction left behind (<http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/>).

As is typical of American insularity, interest in, or even awareness of, commemorations of the war that might go on in other countries like Australia or South Korea that fought on the US side, is virtually absent. There is little recognition that the Vietnamese themselves have their own commemorative practices and memorial traditions.

Thus, it is with all the more interest that we receive news from Chuck Searcy reporting a controversy erupting over Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) plans to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the battle of Long Tan, near the coastal resort of Vung Tau, where an outnumbered ANZAC force held off fighters of the National Liberation Front (aka the Viet Cong) 50 years ago. The Vietnamese government banned the celebration this year because of the large number of Australian and New Zealander tourists anticipated, and their bad behavior during previous commemorative events.

Searcy is a US veteran of the war who leads Project Renew, an organization in Vietnam dedicated to the removal of landmines and

bombs left behind by the U.S. (<http://landmines.org.vn/renew/chuck-searcy/>). In the following link, he provides his own commentary on the Long Tan controversy and includes some additional news clips about the affair: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/156a2338e80d5b7b>. We see noted in the link that last minute negotiations have resolved some of the disagreements and a limited form of the event will take place.

Readers interested in the Long Tan story can delve more deeply into the cultural and historical issues at play in struggles like it in a spate of recent books on what scholars are calling "transnational" commemorations of the war. Most apropos of the Long Tan story is Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen's 2014 edited volume, "New Perceptions of the Vietnam War: Essays on the War, the South Vietnamese Experience, the Diaspora, and the Impact." Her collection features an essay by Australian writer Christopher Linke, "Side-by-Side Memorials: Commemorating the Vietnam War," from which we learn about statuary that position Australian and South Vietnamese soldiers together on a single pedestal. That effort to represent the mutuality of Australian and South Vietnamese (ARVN) fighters is replicated by a side-by-side memorial in Westminster, Orange County, California that remembers the alignment of US forces and the ARVN.

The controversy over such memorials stems, in part, from the question of whether or not the former Republic of Vietnam (RVN), of which the ARVN was the military arm, was ever a nation. In her introduction to the volume, Nguyen suggests that the post-war Communist leadership of Vietnam commemorated the deaths of its revolutionary fighters as "heroic" while razing the cemeteries of ARVN dead as a way to erase memory of the RVN's existence. In his "After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai" (2006), anthropologist Heonik Kwon

writes about the "politics of memory" as a tension between a modernist state that disdained vestiges of superstition in funeral and burial practices in favor of commemorations that recognized war deaths as patriotic sacrifices made for the future of the nation.

Christina Schwenkel, an anthropologist, uses "The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation" (2009) to contrast US commemorations such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall which focus on loss and grief, with those in Vietnam, like peace parks, which are more hopeful and forward looking. As the themes developed by Kwon, Schwenkel document the ways spiritual tones of traditional practices have been incorporated into the secular and political forms in order to diminish the tension between the two. Especially poignant is her documentation of the ways US commemorative practices are penetrating Vietnam's own. As does Scott Laderman for his 2009 book, "Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory," she locates the source of that transnational contamination in Vietnamese marketing of war commemoration to erstwhile enemy veterans, a factor, one would imagine, in the dynamic of the Long Tan affair.

As with the title of Nguyen's book, many of the commemoration studies are framed by the diaspora experience of former residents of South Vietnam who were partisans of the Saigon government. "Looking Back on the Vietnam War," a 2016 collection edited by English professors Brenda Boyle and Jeehyun Lim, contains chapter-length examples of these studies. As a literary genre, this body of work constructs a reactionary "lost cause" narrative similar to that which followed the US Civil War, trying to keep hope alive that a culture, a way of life, would survive the demise of slavery in the South. One contributor to the Boyle and Lim volume is Viet Thanh Nguyen. The recent award of the Pulitzer

Prize for Literature to him for his novel, "The Sympathizer," about the power of the culture among some overseas Vietnamese that involves counterrevolutionary fantasies of going back to retake Vietnam from the communists, leaves little doubt that lost causes don't always stay lost.

For sociologists and anthropologists, studies like these are valuable for what we learn from them about social memory and the power of representation. But historians need to engage them more critically for their power to rewrite the historical record. For a while, after the dust of the war had settled, scholars were pretty widely agreed that the Saigon government was a client regime installed by the United States and kept in place by US political, economic, and military support. The idea that Saigon was a freestanding and sovereign entity that had invited US involvement, and that North Vietnam was, thereby, an invading nation that needed to be repelled, were discredited as fictions. The diaspora "lost cause" literature is the expression of that fiction.

For all of us, the report about Long Tan circulated by Chuck Searcy is a reminder that the war is remembered far beyond our own parks, museums, and anniversaries, and it should remind us that the Vietnamese stake in its remembrance is much greater than our own, or that of our allies. Beyond that, the story should encourage some curiosity about the way other people remember history, a curiosity that should be more whetted than sated by these books.

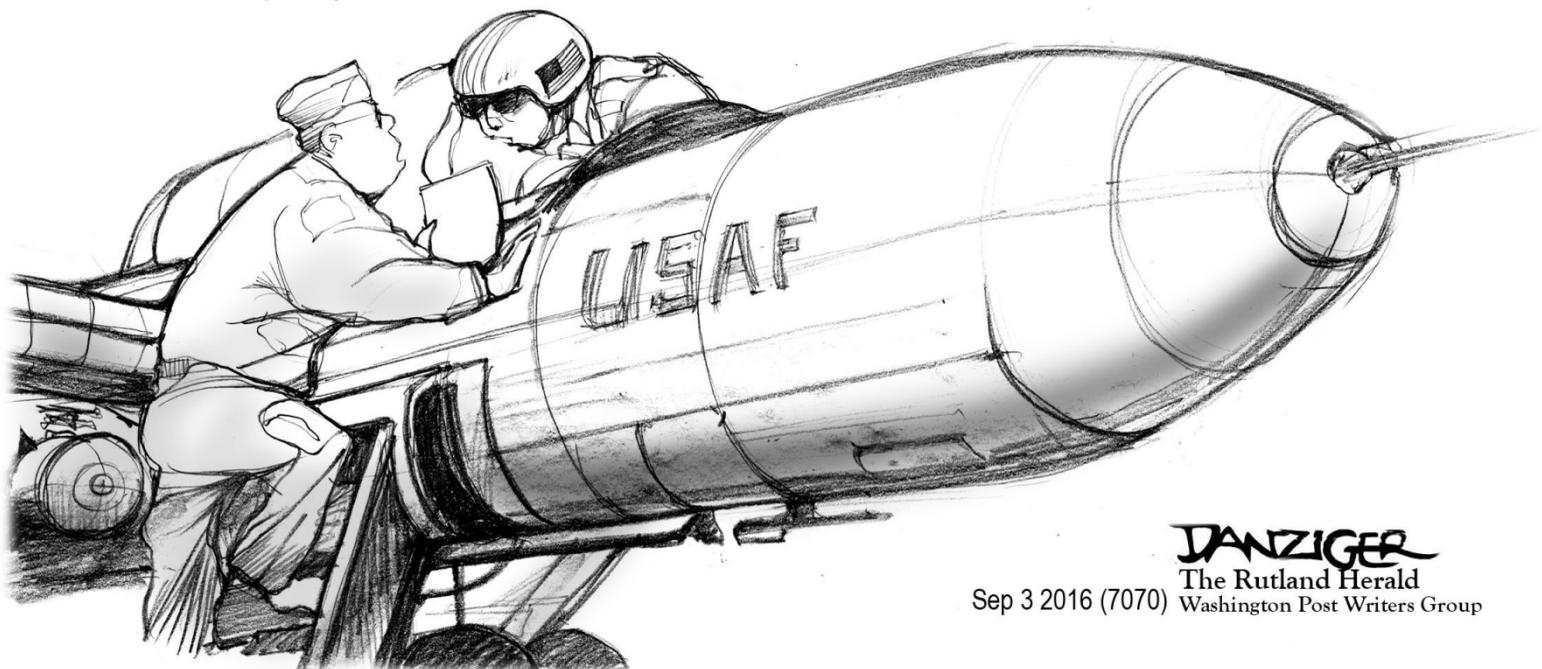


JERRY LEMBCKE IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF SOCIOLOGY AT COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS IN WORCESTER, MA. FOR A LENGTHIER READING LIST ON VIETNAM WAR MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION SEE HIS BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY IN THE JUNE, 1016 ISSUE OF CHOICE: [HTTP://WWW.CRO3.ORG/CONTENT/53/10/1427.FULL.PDF](http://www.cro3.org/content/53/10/1427.full.pdf)

## The Mission

OK, BOMB THE YPG BUT MAKE IT LOOK LIKE THE PKK ARE BEING BACKED BY THE KDP NOT THE PUK, UNLESS YOU CAN SUPPORT THE PKK AND MAKE THE YPG THINK TURKEY IS BACKING THE PUK-BACKED KDP, WHO THINK THAT WE ARE SUPPORTING THE TURKEY-BACKED ANTI-KURDISH PRO-RUSSIAN FORCES, FIGHTING THE SYRIAN REBELS LOYAL TO YOU-KNOW-WHO AND WHATSHISNAME FROM RAMALAMASTAN...

AND IF YOU ARE KILLED OR CAPTURED  
THE SECRETARY WILL DISAVOW  
ANY KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR MISSION...



**DANZIGER**

The Rutland Herald  
Washington Post Writers Group

Sep 3 2016 (7070)



## The Vietnam Experience or Coloring on a Tabula Rasa

SCOTT LEGETTE FRANKLIN

If I was born a blank slate, it did not take long for the world to write the word WAR upon me. It was 1965 and the number of troops in Vietnam went from around 23,000 to over 180,000. That's 180,000 young Americans sent to a country that most had never heard of, to fight a war that was unwinnable. A war that was misguided at best, illegal and immoral at worst. Soon the death toll of Americans would rocket and the shock waves created would reverberate through every aspect of our lives. The names of the fallen were read each evening on the nightly news as families sat around the dinner table. Each name smudged on our collective psyche. Each wave of bombing would shake and tear at the fabric of our social order. The broadcast of real war footage into our living rooms shone a light on the horror of war previously unknown to those who had not been in battle themselves. This war, fought so far from our safe lifestyle here in America, would shape the world around me. It changed the music I would hear. It affected the films that I would see. It shook the conscience of clergy and drove them to action for Justice. It was a catalyst for social change that would forever erase a generation's innocence. If I was a tabula rasa the war would etch death, protest, and the upheaval of social norms upon me. And if I was a blank canvas it would also paint music, poetry, and art on my soul.

He rolled into the auditorium style classroom at the University that I attended. I had seen him around campus. His legs amputated at different and odd locations as if done in a hurry. No thought given to the aesthetics or potential functionality. He sat in his chair nervously twitching the 6 inches of leg that remained below one knee. The other leg barely existed. Just enough there that he could bend at the hip into a normal sitting position. His appearance in the room had resulted in an immediate hush of nearly 100 students. He said nothing at first. He paced the floor by wheeling back and forth, as if he wasn't sure how to start or what to say. Without a word he pulled a pack of cigarettes out from his shirt pocket. His hand trembling slightly, he placed a cigarette between his lips and lit it. He inhaled deeply and let out a long billow of smoke. This was the 1980's. Smoking was allowed in most buildings, but not inside of a State school, let alone a classroom. I'd never seen anything like him.

By the early 70's I was a coloring book and the world had scribbled graffiti all over my pages. Phrases like mutually assured destruction, baby-burning, and carpet-bombing. Words like napalm and Viet Cong. Protest songs were being recorded into my skull: "War, huh! What is it good for? Absolutely Nothing," "What are we Fighting for? Don't Ask me I don't Give a Damn," and "Four Dead in Ohio." Images were burned into my brain: Naked girl on fire, Asian man with a gun to his head, Soldier without legs being escorted home in his wheelchair across an empty, wet airport tarmac.

I have been told that that in the 1950's, America itself was like a blank slate. Or maybe it was an etch-a-sketch. All the ugliness of two world wars erased by vigorously shaking itself clean. So I have imagined what

it must have been like for a young man born twenty years before me. A young man raised by the Greatest Generation. I have thought of him and how he must have believed in our government and had been taught the value of serving his country. And that the United States was a country that was morally superior to the rest of the world. He would have heard our President argue that the freedom his parents had fought for was at stake and the only way to save it was to stop the spread of communism that was domino-ing its way around the world. I imagined this brave, honorable, kid would have voluntarily put his life on the line. I have pictured him signing his name on a document that would seal his fate forever.

After exhaling, he broke the silence, "I'm Terry and I'll be teaching this class." More silence. The class seemed stunned by the strange behavior they were witnessing. The cigarette smoke was spiraling upward in streams and dissipating into the high ceilings of the classroom. He continued, "If I'm going to teach this class, I'll have to smoke. If that's going to be a problem for you, leave now and drop the class." A couple of startled students started quickly gathering up their materials. As they started to head down the steps toward the exit he added, "And I might as well add that if you will be offended by my use of the F-word or any other cuss words then you should leave now too. You can drop the class." More students made rustling noises as they gathered up their things. A couple appeared to be in a real huff. He sat quietly and took long drags off his cigarette as ten or fifteen of the original 100 made their way out of this madman's class.

When the last of the deserters had fled, Terry relaxed a bit. He told us that as long as he was smoking, we were all free to smoke in the class as well. Someone in the front row asked if they could bum a cigarette from him. Terry laughed and then obliged. He seemed glad to have gotten past the smoking and cussing disclaimer. Instead of pacing in his chair he now authoritatively wheeled front and center and addressed us in a casual voice. He had our attention.

The class was new. It had caught my eye when I saw it in the offerings of the English Department. There was no description. It just said ENG965: The Vietnam Experience, Frazier. In my Freshman Composition class, I had written a research paper on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial. It had only been dedicated the year before. There had been nearly as much controversy around the memorial as there had been about the war itself. Prominent conservatives had objected to the design. They had called it a wall of shame. They had been upset that the designer was of Asian ancestry. A compromise had to be reached in order to have a memorial at all. A second more traditional statue was built close by to satisfy the opposition. The research had piqued my interest in the war itself. So when I saw this class, I registered for it.

Terry informed us that it was going to be a film class. We would watch Hollywood movies about the War in Vietnam. Then we would have discussions comparing the films with his own experience as a soldier in the



Scott and Terry in 2016.

US Army. He told us that his legs had been blown off when he was hit by a mortar. He said that the Doctors had told him that prosthetics were not an option due to the small amount of leg that he had remaining. To lighten things up he assured us that he was in full possession of another appendage and he had children as proof!

"Platoon" was a fairly new release and would be the first film shown. Our professor would be watching most of the films for the first time. There was no syllabus. Terry was candid and told us that the class was going to be tough for him. He said that he was not sure if he would be able to complete the whole semester. It was going to be therapy for him. He explained that there was only one requirement to get an A and that was to complete a project of any kind about the Vietnam War by the end of the semester. There was no attendance or participation requirement. Ha! All those people that were offended by smoking and cussing left before that nugget was revealed!

He had not talked much about his experience in Vietnam or his feelings about it. He was using this class as a mechanism that would enable him to approach the subject academically. But it was obvious that this class was going to be anything but academic. Personally, I was about to participate in the only class in my entire college career that would change me in a fundamental way. With each film we watched and each emotion laden discussion led by Terry, I began to question everything that I thought I knew. Not just about Vietnam, but about our Government. I questioned our country's honesty with itself. I began to see that our entire worldview can be shaped by half-truths and one-dimensional perspective. I began to question myself. What kind of person was I? What kind of person could I be? And I questioned our entire system of education. Surely the experience in this smoke-filled, emotional, free-to-cuss seminar was at the core of what real learning should look like.

With each class Terry began to reveal more of his own feelings about the war. He talked about how his political views had been changed

by his experience. There were heated debates that led a few more students to walk out and never return. I was riveted to my seat. I was flummoxed that college kids like me, that enjoyed the luxury of being of age during peace-time, could be so self-inflated as to believe that they knew more than our teacher. Our teacher had been there. He had crawled on his belly through the jungles of southeast Asia. He could point out the inaccuracies of the firefight scenes in "Platoon" because he had been in the middle of the real thing. He could tell us that it was true that our leaders had supplied them with crappy M16s that jammed and cost men the seconds they needed to protect themselves or their friends. The students that stomped out were slates just like me. Their slates were covered in indelible ink. Their ideas were like permanent tattoos not to be altered and as a result they walked out of the best class ever. Other students just stopped coming. They were probably quietly disgruntled or just not interested. Half way through the semester we were down to about forty from the original 100.

Those of us that kept showing up had started sitting close together toward the front of the room. I had a regular spot in the front. I had started on my project. I was testing a theory from a sociology class that suggested the popular culture prevalent in society reflected the political state of the country. I enlisted the help of my brother who had a large record collection and some nice recording equipment. The research entailed logging the major events of the Vietnam War and comparing the time frame of those events with songs in the top ten pop charts according to Billboard Magazine. Then I would record my voice narrating the events over samples of the songs and demonstrate the relationship. The correlation exceeded my own expectations. I was excited about the finished product and turned it in early.

Terry rolled into the room with a jam-box in his lap. I wondered what

# In Memoriam: Emily Ann Friedman (1947-2016)

ELLIE SHUNAS

A few months ago our friend Emily Friedman died in Chicago. She was an activist in the movement against the war in Vietnam and a fighter for peace and justice.

I first met Emily in 1970 - when we were both young and feisty. She was a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, scene of many anti-war protests. She moved to Chicago and joined the Chicago Area Military Project (CAMP). CAMP published CAMP News, a paper covering news about GI resistance in the military and exposing the US government's lies about what was going on in Southeast Asia. The CAMP staff, all volunteers, worked on the paper and corresponded with activists all over the world and published many first person accounts.

Emily skillfully guided the paper's content and production. Thanks to her efforts, we turned out an excellent and timely publication. I remember on many late nights, she directed the crew as we covered the floor of our small office with typed galleys and photos. No computers or printers back then. Somehow she managed to get it all organized.

We also counselled active duty GI's, most of them AWOL, who made their way to our office. Emily took the lead. She researched Army and Navy regulations as well as the

Uniform Code of Military Justice (of course everyone called it INJustice) so that we could provide accurate information. We managed to stay a step ahead of the Army MP's and the Naval Investigative Service who frequently parked in front of our office. Several GI's that Emily helped kept in contact with her many years later.

After the end of the war, Emily turned her attention to health care and medical ethics. She wrote, lectured and consulted, always emphasizing that access to good health care is an

issue of human rights and justice. She wrote for a number of health care/medical journals and was known for her thorough research and cogent analysis.

The last couple of years Emily began researching and writing about attacks on hospitals in war zones. Inspired by a hospital nurse whose patients were murdered during the war in the Balkans in the 1990's, Emily uncovered many such acts of terrorism. Many Doctors Without Borders (DWB) facilities in war zones

in the Middle East have come under fire from warring factions, including the bombing of a DWB hospital by the US.

Emily never stopped fighting for peace and justice, never tired of speaking truth to power. We will miss her.



ELLIE SHUNAS WORKED ON CAMP NEWS AND IS PART OF THE STAFF FOR THE VETERAN. SHE LIVES IN CHICAGO.



Emily Friedman in the CAMP office, about 1972.

## The Pledge

C. F. HARRINGER, JR.

Your recent query about the Pledge of Allegiance brought to mind an early admission into the VA Hospital, where I was admitted to a stress unit. My first morning on the unit, this Nurse Ratched type started our day with a community meeting.

She had us all stand, and recite the pledge of allegiance to open this meeting. It felt surreal like something out of Arlo Guthrie "you got a lot of damn gall asking me to pledge my allegiance" (sorry Arlo) but as my complaint formed in my throat I turned around and witnessed the entire assembly of patients, standing tall, as sick as we were, and reciting at attention. The expressions of honor and pride were evident in every man's face. It didn't matter so much the slight, it mattered more, as an opportunity to express our pride, our united purpose, our United States.

I wrote this poem during that admission, a private moment, whistlin' out the window, at the object or rather, the subject in question.



## All Her Glory

Proud tho imprisoned  
she flickers at me  
and how she responds  
to Francis Scott Key  
the wisp of my whistle  
caresses her bars  
she bares me no colors  
choked my refrain  
The anthem completed  
her spirit is pleased  
and mine re-acquainted  
you see, I'm her seed.

We stand at your door  
We fought your damn dirty war,  
but the next damn war,  
won't go like before.  
For your sons grow strong.

Tell us how we tell our sons  
that we don't know how  
we who made the difference then  
make no difference now  
make no difference now.

—C.F. Harrienger Jr.



## The Vietnam Experience

continued from page 9

was up. Was he going to play my tape? My stomach turned over. The thought made me nervous. I told myself he would not do that. It probably wasn't as good as I had thought. He placed the tape player on the dais. He said, "Before we discuss the next film I want to tell you about a project that was turned in early by one of your classmates." My face heated up. Oh Lord. I hoped he was talking about someone else's project. Sort of. I also hoped that he was talking about my project. He went on, "Someone in this classroom has turned in the best project I have ever received." Holy Crap! Could he be talking about me? That would be a first. Surely it was someone else. Then he started describing the project. My project. I was breaking out in a nervous sweat. I thought he was going to say my name. He didn't. He told the class that he had listened to it several times. He talked

about how much the music from that era had meant to him. Then he played it. LOUD! He was smiling. He was snapping his fingers to the music. I was shifting between ecstatic at his enthusiasm and then completely embarrassed every time my nasally sounding voice came back in over the music.

He played the whole thing. When it finished the class burst into applause! Now I wanted him to say my name. He didn't. I caught the eye of the girl who sat beside me. I gestured to myself. She mouthed, "That was you?" I nodded. She whispered, "Wow. You're like Walter Cronkite." Best compliment I had ever gotten!

I didn't start out in Terry's class a tabula rasa. I had words and phrases. I had images. I had music. But his class didn't just add new information to my slate. He taught me that I was an ever expanding canvas. New space

was being created all the time. Clean, white space to paint colorful new ideas. Blank space not just to record music but to recognize its power. I learned that ideologies were not meant to be permanent tattoos. I learned to find confidence in my voice. And that I could use my voice to speak up in the hope that there will be a day when we come into this world and it etches only the word LOVE on our slate. That our world will not even have a need for the word PEACE because it has no opposite.

### Post Script

I wanted to thank Dr. Terry Frazier for the amazing experience I had as a student in his Film Class called The Vietnam Experience when I attended UNCC in 1988. Now through the power of blogging and the magic of Facebook I had that opportunity. Terry and I had a mutual friend on Facebook

who helped us reconnect with each other. So we have now communicated via text and plan to get together when he visits Charlotte later this year. It has been an excellent turn of events. I am forever grateful that he had the courage to share his experiences, feelings, and beliefs about Vietnam with his students and I count myself lucky in the rarest kind of way to have been in his classroom.



SCOTT LeGETTE FRANKLIN LIVES IN CHARLOTTE, NC WITH HIS WIFE MIRIAM AND DAUGHTERS ELLANA AND CARISSA. HE GRADUATED FROM UNC AT CHARLOTTE IN 1989 WITH A DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY. HE IS CURRENTLY BROKER-IN-CHARGE FOR SAVVY + CO REAL ESTATE. HE HAS RECENTLY TAKEN UP WRITING PERSONAL NARRATIVES FOR ITS THERAPEUTIC EFFECT. HE BLOGS AT INSANE EARTHLINGS.BLOGSPOT.COM

# Follow-Up to A Warning

JOHN KETWIG

In the Memorial Day issue of *The Veteran*, I offered a long article regarding my problems with the VA's "Choice" program and especially a company called Health Net that has been employed by Congress to assist the VA in administering health care via the civilian, or non-VA health care network. There are a number of criteria that must be met to qualify for Choice Program coverage, but basically it covers vets who live more than forty miles from the nearest VA clinic or hospital, or the nearest hospital does not have the qualified staff or equipment to address the veteran's medical needs. In my case, the VA hospital in Salem, Virginia did not have a neurologist or spine specialist on-staff to deal with my stenosis of the spine. It would be necessary to get approval from Health Net, but for weeks they were totally unresponsive, both to me and to the VA! I wrote to my Senators and Congressman, and Senator Tim Kaine (you may have heard of him) contacted Health Net on my behalf. Finally, my spine specialist received authorization to perform the surgery.

It should have been a fairly routine procedure. I went to the hospital eagerly, anticipating relief. Of course, I had been warned that "there

is a risk with every surgery." For the first few days after I came out of the anesthetic, I was overjoyed. Then the pain increased, my teeth chattered, and finally I was rushed to the Emergency Room. A CT Scan showed an abscess on my spine. I don't know how it happened, whether someone failed to wash their hands or sterilize an instrument, but somehow they had introduced a virulent infection into my spine! The doctor performed another surgery to clean away the infection. The pain was excruciating now, far beyond any discomfort I had ever imagined. An MRI showed the infection was still present. I was utterly miserable, aflame in pain, blazing out of control like a California brush fire roaring across the drought-dried hills. My strength was gone. I doubted I would ever see my home again. My wife told my newly-married daughter if she wanted to see her Dad she should catch a plane. The hospital brought in their chief infections doctor, and he later admitted that he was not at all confident I would make it when he first saw me. I underwent a third surgery. I was on IV morphine and handfuls of oxycontin and oxycodone, plus a number of other pills and IV antibiotics. My aging body was ill prepared for this type of challenge.

I lost more than forty pounds. Slowly, I began to recover. After weeks in the hospital and then in a rehabilitation facility, I was allowed to go home. Every day for seven weeks we returned to the hospital twice a day, every time the clock said eight o'clock, for two-hour infusions of powerful IV antibiotics. Finally, I was able to cut back on the pain pills. When I quit them altogether, I experienced withdrawal that was like an acute flu that lasted for weeks.

I'm doing much better now. I am unsteady, walking with a cane. My legs are weak, but I've been doing rehab physical therapy. I have problems balancing. I still feel some discomfort, but ibuprofen usually makes it livable. I am getting stronger every day. The doctors predict it will be a long time before I'm back to normal. My greatest fear is that the infection will return. Two vertebrae and the disc between were infected, and the doctors tell me infections often lurk in bone for years before reappearing when you least expect it.

Recently, despite the "authorization" from Health Net, I've received a number of statements indicating that the VA has declined to pay for my medical procedures or medicines. The VA has sent explanations, more

like legal position papers, including a number of reasons why my claim will not be paid. The primary reason cited is that "treatment was emergent according to the prudent layperson standard." Whatever that means. The letter assures me that I can appeal. I have another appeal with the VA pending. After three years, I had an in-person hearing last December. The very nice lady told me to expect a decision within 8 to 10 weeks. When I didn't hear anything in six months I called to inquire and was told decisions on appeals are currently taking more than five years!

Fifty years ago, in 1966, the Draft caught up with me. I had no interest whatsoever in becoming a soldier, but they systematically and all too quickly choked off my attempts to avoid conscription, and ultimately I enlisted "to get my choice of training" on December 30th, 1966. I was assured that I would have benefits; that Uncle Sam would look after me. No one told me how hard it would be to access those benefits!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND AUTHOR.



July 4, 1974, Washington, DC demo.

# Making the VA Work

RAYMOND REED HARDY

I don't like being a political football. I mean, sure, the Military and its activities will always be subject to a lot of political maneuvering, but this does not need to be the case for veterans, does it? I have felt this most, in recent years, in the form of both attacks and praise for the VA Health-care system. I personally don't like to be served by an organization that is as totally bureaucratic as the VA is. I mean, I sometimes get the feeling that I could get caught in its wheels and get totally ground up and spit out. I mean, seriously, there are so many catch 22s in the VA medical system it is dizzying, and yet, I have gotten wonderful care there. It's just that the care I have received has required the most strenuous possible self-initiated vigilance imaginable.

I am not going to give specific examples from my own medical issues, even though it would be fun to gossip. To do so would not only put my own health history out there for all to see, but it would be irrelevant since the point is that the need is for individualized health care, not institutionalized health care.

In order to make the VA health system work better for us for the long

term, we veterans must be pro-active. We need to get on the stick and sign up for the "MyHealtheVet" web program. You might think you don't want to do that. It's too much trouble. You may not like working with computers or the Internet, but think for a moment how much money the VA stands to save if the vast majority of veterans sign onto the system. Soon they will only need to send out hard-copy mail to just a few veterans. The rest of us can get our notices and confirmations via email or text. We are talking millions in hardware, paper, ink, mailing, and handling expenses that can be spent on real, actual health care.

Another thing to consider is doing what your Dr. says you need to do. I know there is a tendency to say, "I'm healthy enough for my age. I don't need to lose weight or exercise, or take that medicine." But, again, think of the savings to the system. If we can keep ourselves out of the VA's emergency rooms and also the nation's private emergency rooms, we can save millions and millions of VA dollars for health care for things that we can not prevent. FOLLOW YOUR DR'S ORDERS!

Finally, BE YOUR OWN AD-

VOCATE! Don't ever assume that you can not understand what your Dr. is trying to explain to you. Keep asking and making those funny faces that indicate that you are not getting what he or she is saying. You CAN understand, and you NEED to understand. Once you do feel that you understand what your needs are, make sure you ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED. I have been totally amazed at the willingness of my VA doctors, social workers, nurses and scheduling people to work hard on my behalf once I have made my needs clear. But, they can not help if they don't know what is needed. If your records are long and convoluted like mine, you need to summarize things for them and ask for what you need.

Finally, if you really don't mind the wait or the travel, I suggest that you don't use the Veteran's Choice program. I intuit that the VA can not suggest this because Veteran's Choice is there for us and the political pressure to create it was tremendous. And, don't get me wrong, I think it is a great and important and much needed option for many veterans. I mean really, really a good thing. But, I am just saying that it is a very expensive program that has drawn funds away from other

aspects of our VA health system. So, again, if you don't really mind the wait or the drive, use the established VA clinics and hospitals rather than those available through Veteran's Choice.

Finally, please, if you don't do any of the things I have suggested above, you just HAVE to do this one. The next chance you get, THANK YOUR VA PERSONNEL FOR THE WORK THEY DO! Yes, they deserve it. They are government employees. You, of all people, know what that means. So let them know that you appreciate their service.

Have a great Veteran's Day 2016!



RAYMOND REED HARDY IS A VIETNAM VET WHO SERVED IN THE 1ST CAV IN 1968/69. AFTER DEROS, HE RETURNED TO HIS WIFE AND TO GRADUATE SCHOOL. NOW HE IS A RETIRED COLLEGE PROFESSOR, WITH THREE GRANDCHILDREN, WHO IS STILL MARRIED TO THE SAME WONDERFUL LADY WHO WAITED FOR HIM ALL THOSE MONTHS AND STOOD BY HIM AS HE TOOK LITERALLY YEARS TO RE-ADJUST TO CIVILIAN LIFE.

# The Mutant Series

GREGORY ROSS

## Mutant Attempts Communication

WAR is not a sport, there are no rules.... I want to speak such simple truths that surely it will be clear to you, but WAR is just a word to you I want you to understand that in a WAR to not get killed you come back a killer a destroyer of bone and blood and flesh I want you to understand that in a WAR to not get killed you come back with ghosts I want you to know, without knowing first hand what it is like to live inside a WAR machine, to be an android with feelings of how it has mutated me of the anger and shame of the scars to my sanity of the open wound to my humanity, but WAR is just a word to you

## Mutant Attempts Communication Again

There is a man who can see DEATH has seen much DEATH he can recognize it like his neighbor has been part of a DEATH machine, has almost died knows DEATH with the familiarity of the morning paper knows DEATH does not wear a black robe but a Brooks Brothers suit knows DEATH short, tall, fat, small, young, old, male, female knows DEATH, white, brown, black, red, yellow. he knows DEATH: is made of metal and hurtles through air is made of metal and pierces flesh is made of metal but, needs flesh to kill this man knows DEATH like a brother, like himself this man knows DEATH is in us all this man knows LIFE is DEATH held precariously inside our bodies

## Mutant Attempts Communication Again and Again

I'm old enough to have been a "Hippie," but, I wasn't. Oh, I grew my hair long, down to my ass long but, I never was a "Hippie." I missed the sixties counter culture event, but, yes Jimi, I was experienced; Purple Haze all in my brain and I tasted many of the other colors: Acapulco Gold, Orange Sunshine and Panama Red, but, I had to quit the experience Mr. Hendrix, behind China White.

I am old enough to have been a "Hippie" but, I wasn't. I spent the "Summer of Love" in boot camp getting my head shaved and my ass hauled. Getting trained and retrained; getting broken down and reassembled; broken down and reassembled; broken down and reassembled into a "Fighting Unit, One Each." And on Woodstock Weekend I was lobbing 2,000 pound shells all over Vietnam and Cambodia. That made it hard to be a "Hippie" but, I tried. Wore a tear drop silver Peace medallion and on my locker painted the words: "How many Vietnamese died in our Civil War?" A slogan more relevant to the inside the war, war resisters and we did exist, the inside the war, war resisters but, we couldn't be "Hippie" because we were "baby killers."

When I got out I couldn't be a "Hippie," so I became a "Freak." A long haired, bearded, amphetamine drug addled, post traumatic stress disordering "Freak." A mutant. Time, a lot of therapy and a powerful love has soothed the "Freak" and I never was a "Hippie." But I still am mutated by my experience of war and nobody told me the truth about my father's two wars and how they made him a "Freak" stuck inside a bottle. I have a son now and he knows the truth of war. He has seen the "Freak" of war and he ain't going; he ain't ever going.

So, what is the point of this rant? It ain't going to end war. But you better believe he ain't going and maybe one or two of you out there who are feeling overly patriotic won't go and maybe one or two of you won't send your as yet unborn children and maybe it really will end war. The hope keeping this mutated "Freak" doing these poetry slams.

*GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY: MOROCCO, SINKING OF THE USS LIBERTY AND THE 6 DAY WAR [1967-68]; VIETNAM: 7TH FLEET ON THE GUN LINE [1969-70]. GRADUATE OF THE VA DETOX AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]. ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY, 1989 TO 2011. PUBLISHED AN ANTHOLOGY, "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE," EDITED BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON. FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM.*

## Main Thoroughfare

A breeze blows ceaselessly at the veteran's cemetery  
Reviving fresh memories of the missing and the found  
Bright sun on the warm white stones that bind us together  
Forever fixed in a willing earth that brings all to a halt  
Air slipping softly past like sappers, memories of then  
No one's fault, just grassy avenues of approaching men

—Dwight Jenkins

## Forming a Peace Media Group

BARRY L. REECE

During the heated Clinton/Trump presidential campaign, I saw TV coverage of a Trump rally held in rural Iowa. Many of the persons in the audience were holding signs that read "Silent Majority Stands With Trump." I immediately had a flashback to 1969 when President Nixon used the term silent majority during a major address to the nation. It was his belief that the great body of Americans supported his war policies and those demonstrating against US involvement in the Vietnam War were only a noisy minority.

Today our leaders are shallow on the subject of war. They are silent. War is terrible, but our current leaders will never speak the words spoken years ago by Franklin Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower: "I hate war."

The peace movement desperately needs a stronger voice. My recommendation is that we form peace media groups (PMG) across the nation. In 2012, a small group of North Carolina peace activists formed the first Peace Media Group serving Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill and

other nearby communities. The goal was to write and publish letters to the editor in local newspapers. Each letter would focus on an anti-war topic or issue. Our PMG, numbering less than a dozen persons, has had 350 letters published since the group was founded. These are short letters, numbering 100 to 200 words. Members of our PMG meet a few times each year to discuss our efforts to give the peace movement a stronger voice.



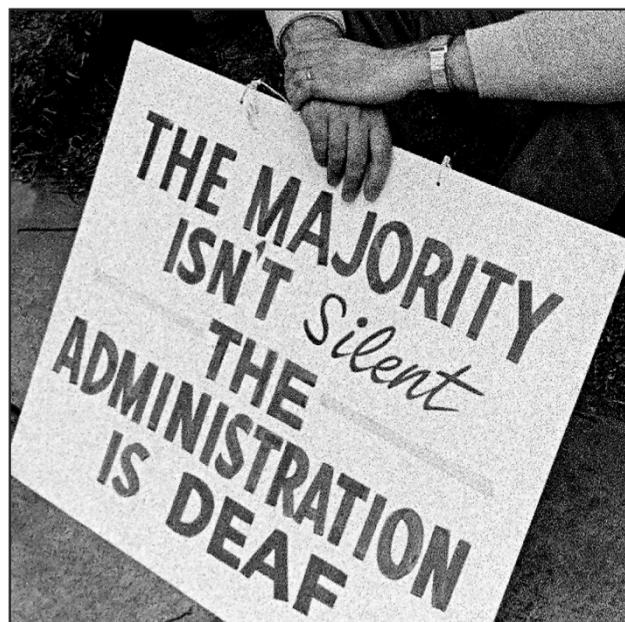
*BARRY REECE JOINED THE IOWA NATIONAL GUARD IN 1953. TWO YEARS LATER HE ENLISTED IN THE US ARMY. AT THE TIME HE WAS DISCHARGED, HE HELD THE RANK OF SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS. THROUGHOUT THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS HE HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, VETERANS FOR PEACE, AND THE PEACE MEDIA GROUP. HE HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL PEACE POEMS. REECE IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY.*

## Voting For Peace

BARRY L. REECE

Throughout more than a dozen recent presidential TV debates we learned very little regarding any plans to end America's longest war. The US-led invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 marked the beginning of a war that shows no signs of abating. The vast sacrifice of US lives and millions of dollars in military spending over the past 15 years has received very

little attention among candidates for political office. America has initiated three long wars (Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan) that have lasted 33 years altogether. Two of these wars still continue. We need to elect candidates for political office who support peace initiatives.



# I Never Heard the Mortar Call My Name

RG CANTALUPO

I never heard the mortar call my name.

No one did.

Oh, maybe you heard the round shooting out the tube a thousand meters away, the muffled poomf! and then a buddy yelling "Incoming!" but once it was in the air, you never heard a sound.

If they were going to miss you, arc high over your head or to the left or right beyond you, then you might hear them spinning, a soft whistle like wind through bamboo as they spiraled past you through the sky.

If they were close though—close enough to wound or kill you, so close they were going to hit the ground only a few feet or a few inches from where you stood—you didn't hear a thing, you only saw the orange and red burst of the explosion, and felt the burning shrapnel tearing through your flesh.

But on this night, I heard nothing—neither the firing, nor the explosion.

We'd just returned from three weeks of 'search and destroy' in the Ho Bo Woods, and Firebase Pershing, the battalion headquarters, was a welcome sight, the place where hot showers, clean socks, warm meals, and letters from The World were waiting, where no L-shaped ambushes or hot LZ's lay around a bend in the trail or on the shadowy side of a tree line.

No, with two rings of concertina wire around the perimeter, four batteries of artillery, and the battalion command post dug in under three layers of sandbags, the firebase was relatively safe.

Only the occasional sniper from

nearby rubber trees gave us the rush of terror now and then.

Or the sound of incoming mortars.

I awoke in the silent dark, not even the geckos cackling their favorite "fuck-you, fuck you, fuck you"; not even the crickets strumming their broken-stringed guitars.

I awoke and I did not know whether someone put a palm on my shoulder and nudged me, or whether some larger mystery roused me in the dark.

I awoke and the night was silent and I was inside a bunker, inside the belly of a beast whose rippled, olive-drab sandbag skin and steel ribs conjured up the belly of a gecko in my daze.

I doused my face with musty canteen water, tied my boot laces and stepped halfway into the doorway trying to find my bearings in the dark—

To the west nothing, not even a line where the horizon ended.

To the east, a few distant flares from a firefight too far to hear.

I turned toward the north, and looked out into the night.

A red ember caught my eye.

"One of the new guys on guard, smoking?"

Dumb. Dumb. Really dumb. Sniper-bait.

You don't smoke out in the open at night. Not if you want to survive. Not if you want to keep your head. You have to hide it, shield it, cup the red ember wholly in your hands."

I step out of the doorway.

One step. Two. Three.

Time compressed into a rapid

heartbeat and the rush of adrenaline-toward the burning ember, deeper into the mouth of night.

From the moment I stepped through the dark doorway and into the open sky, I felt something was wrong.

Call it a premonition, a sixth sense, combat hyper-awareness, but as I stepped through the dark doorway into the naked sky, the hairs on the back of my neck spiked.

I felt like I was walking into the firing zone of an ambush just before the trip-wire snaps.

I couldn't pinpoint it exactly, but I felt it.

It was too quiet maybe.

Or it was the careless red glow of the FNG's cigarette pinpointing our position.

Or it was the ominous black of the new-mooned night.

Call it what you want, but for the few seconds while the mortar was spinning toward me through the dark, I could feel death's breath on my neck.

One step. Two. Three.

Midway into the fourth, the ember burst into a thousand sparks.

I am blown into the night sky, thrown like a rag doll, a hundred burning fires shooting into my body as I hurl.

When I hit the ground, I hear someone screaming, "Medic!!! Medic!!!"—realize the voice is mine.

After that, all I remember is the heat, the red-hot metal, and jagged fragments piercing my arms, legs, chest, and head.

I remember the warm liquid oozing over my body, the jungle fatigues soaking and sticking to my



skin, the dull throbbing, and fear flailing like a caged bird in the locked chambers of my heart.

Still, I do not remember how I got there.

Not then, and not now.

I don't remember whether I walked out of the bunker because someone roused me for guard duty, or if I'd simply wandered outside because I'd heard someone call my name.



RG CANTALUPO IS A POET, PLAYWRIGHT, FILMMAKER, NOVELIST, AND DIRECTOR. HIS WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED WIDELY IN LITERARY JOURNALS IN THE UNITED STATES, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRALIA. HE SERVED IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION AS AN RTO FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY FROM 1968-69 AND RECEIVED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR UNDER FIRE. HIS BOOKS CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH NEW WORLD PUBLISHERS OR THROUGH THE AUTHOR AT [RGCANTALUPO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RGCANTALUPO@GMAIL.COM).



Milwaukee VA Demo, November 11, 1977.

## A Veteran's Lamentation

SUSAN FREY

The year is 1968. Following employment in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a large urban hospital, I seek a commission in the United States Navy Nurse Corps to cultivate nursing skills in triage medicine where a war zone offers the perfect milieu. This is at the apex of the Vietnam War. Under naval regulations at the time, nurses were required state-side duty prior to overseas deployment to hospital ships (my intention), so I faced initial triage experience in the ICU of Philadelphia Naval Hospital, the amputation center of the northeast corridor.

Philly hospital was a pit - a dilapidated campus on the harbor where the rats were as large as raccoons, where buildings jerry-rigged and connected by wheelchair ramps accommodated the 1600 combat veterans, primarily multiple amputees and otherwise mangled, angry men,

riddled with shrapnel coursing through their young bodies and in the throes of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, not yet understood or treatable. The in-country pain management and marijuana use incubated a fulminating environment of addiction. Adding insult to injury, race riots permeated the Philadelphia neighborhood.

One of my first patients was a quasi-celebrity for the times: Lt. Lewis Puller was the son of "Chesty" Puller, the highest decorated marine Commandant in the corps' history. Lew, newly wed prior to shipping out, returned as a triple amputee with abdominal evisceration, multiple organ failure and imbedded drug addiction. For six months strapped to a rotating Stryker Frame in an isolation unit, we irrigated and dressed his wounds, wrapped his stumps, fed him by hyperalimentation, flipped him hourly

to prevent bed sores, re-booted him from cardiac arrest and medicated him for intractable pain, assuring a sustained addiction. Lew eventually left the unit for ward care and extensive rehabilitation in his home state of Virginia.

Despite irrevocable pain and addictions he finished law school, ran for congress, authored a Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiography, remained married to his high school sweetheart, beget two children and committed suicide by shotgun at the Vietnam Memorial Wall in 1993.

The unpopular Vietnam War was nasty enough but returning veterans also suffered the vilification of the naive public. Lew's personal cost was immeasurable - mine was twofold: I abandoned the nursing profession and any patriotic fervor I may have once held dear.



1968 Lt. JG US Navy Nurse Philadelphia, PA



SUSAN FREY, PH.D. ND, PEACE ACTIVIST AND LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW RETIRED TO GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS IN 2003.

# Why Black Lives Matter To Me

JAMES BENTLEY

Growing up in Marlborough projects I had all kinds of friends. We had one thing in common, low income. The projects were built in an Italian neighborhood. Poor whites of all backgrounds, Hispanics, Jews, Irish, Italians and African Americans were my neighbors and friends. The first public school I attended was PS 212 in 1960. One of my classmates was Michael McNair. His brother Gregory was in my brother's class.

They were African Americans and they lived in the same building as my family. Our parents always greeted each other when they met in the lobby of our building and they were always nice to us. Gregory's mom suffered from crippling, rheumatoid arthritis and my dad was paralyzed by a stroke so we had something in common. Gregory and Michael were both tall and muscular as they got older and Gregory was the biggest boy in the projects. We played sports of all kinds with them but if I hit a home run playing stick ball, the ball would only hit the 3rd floor of the building behind the small park between buildings. When Gregory hit a home run there was a loud boom and the ball hit the 15th floor and broke a window.

One day my brother was playing football in a different park when the ball landed near some white guy's girlfriend. The guy was much bigger than he and came after my brother who ran from him and positioned himself with an automobile between him and the guy chasing him. Our friend Gregory showed up and told the guy to scram, so he left. My brother and Gregory returned to the small park next to our building.

Later an automobile pulled up and 5 white guys got out with baseball bats and were coming for my brother. Gregory and his brother Michael

positioned themselves between the guys with the baseball bats and attempted to calm things down. Then the guy who chased my brother from the park swung his bat hitting Gregory squarely in the jaw knocking his teeth out and fracturing his jaw and also hit Michael across his eyebrow. Gregory then jumped over the fence to get them and they dropped their bats and ran away.

Gregory was hospitalized and his jaw was wired back together by surgeons. My brother, with my mothers' blessing, went to court to testify against the guy who did this despite being threatened with death. That guy was sentenced to 6 years in prison and warned that if he ever stepped foot in the projects again he will be arrested. Gregory and my brother remained friends for life.

Gregory was drafted into the US Army and sent to Vietnam, as I was a few years later. During the turbulence of the 1960's the leader of the Black gang on the other side of the projects tried to get Gregory to join his gang. I witnessed this and Gregory declined. I personally have witnessed gangs of white thugs from outside the projects pulling up in carloads inside and on top of the cars with baseball bats chains and clubs running through the projects screaming racial obscenities and fighting with blacks. All the police were Italian so by the time the cops came, the project people came out with their weapons and some were arrested by the police.

One Fourth of July, I was in the park on the other side of the projects lighting fireworks. There were a group of young African American kids there also lighting fireworks. I was careful not to throw my fireworks near any of the kids. There was a building adjacent to the park where a white guy

was standing on the porch. I saw him light a cherry bomb and throw it into the park among the kids. Immediately they thought I did it because I was standing near them lighting fireworks. I was then surrounded by the leader of the gang and others who were holding baseball and stick ball bats. They gave the kids branches from a tree and told them to whip me.

All I could do is stand there and take it while the white guy who did this watched from the safety of the porch of his building. Later that same evening I was surrounded by a group of angry African American women and the same gang holding bats while the women took turns slapping me in the face and accusing me of calling them niggers. In my entire life I have never used that word to describe anyone but because of what happened it was useless to tell them that. Again all I could do is stand there and take the beating while the white guy who caused this stood outside on the porch watching them beat me.

Then someone pushed his way through the crowd and pulled me out. It was Gregory. He told them all to leave me the fuck alone and brought me home. After that I was never bothered again by those people and later some became my friends. Gregory married a white woman and I was invited to take the pictures at his wedding. To me it was a great honor.

When Gregory passed away about one year ago, both I and my brother attended his funeral. I came back to Brooklyn New York from Florida where I live now to be there. I met Gregory's son, who is as big as his father. I told him that his father was the greatest man I ever met in my life. If it had not been for what he and his brother did, that not only would I have lost my brother to a bunch of

cowardly thugs but I probably would never have become a doctor because my brother was sole supporter of our family since he was the first one of us to be old enough to work. I might have ended up in jail for taking revenge.

Nothing I have discussed here has ever been reported in the news. Every time I hear a certain presidential candidate insult people of color it disgusts me. I remember my father taking me to the Statue of Liberty and reading the poem at the base of the statue and each time I look at our coins the words E Pluribus Unum which is Latin for "from many, one." I remember my friends I grew up with and those I served with in Vietnam because when a person saves your life it really doesn't matter what color their skin is, what language they speak, what their race is, what their culture is or who they love, because in the end we are all brothers and sisters and that's what makes this country different from everywhere else.

Gregory McNair served in the US Army in Vietnam. He is buried in Calverton National Cemetery in Long Island New York. My parents and my wife are also buried there. My great great grandfather, James Charles Bentley served with the New York State Volunteer militia and carried the medicine into the battle of Fair Oaks during the Civil War. None of my ancestors were slave owners. All these unjustified police shootings of African Americans are disgusting me and my family. Police are approaching them with guns drawn for no apparent reason and they always shoot to kill.

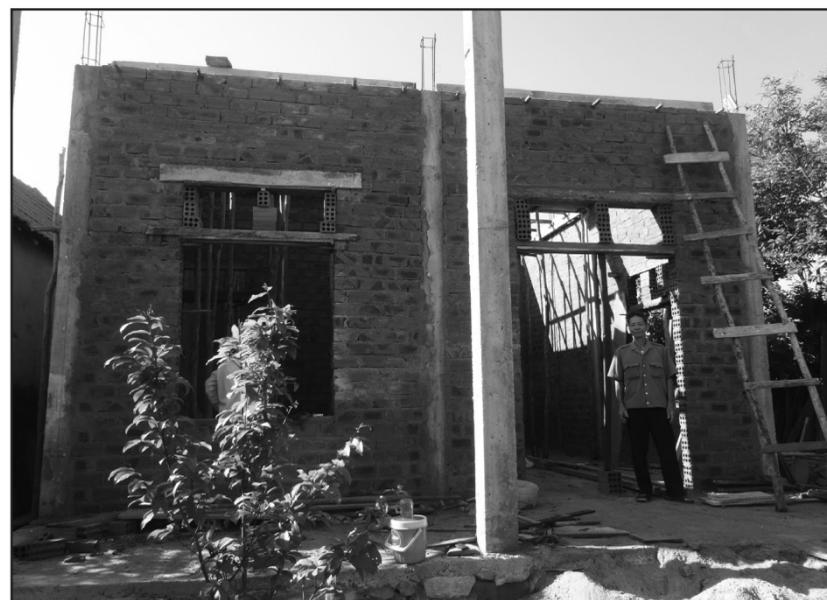


JAMES BENTLEY IS A VIETNAM VETERAN.

## VVAW Supports Housing in Vietnam



Mr. Rinh of VAVA receiving the VVAW donation of \$5,000 for the building of two houses in Quang Binh Province.



These two homes are the first to be built with funds donated to by VVAW to VAVA last year. The house on left is under construction for Mr. Hoan Van Huni, Van Trach Commune, Bo Trach District, Quang Binh Province. The house on the right is for Ms. Nguyen Thi Hoan, Duy Ninh Commune, Quang Ninh District, Quang Binh Province. Quang Binh Province is about 20 km from the 17th parallel that was considered the demarcation between north and south Vietnam during the American War. It lies immediately north of Quang Tri Province. Both provinces were severely devastated by the bombing from the US B 52's during the conflict. The US used more tonnage of bombs in these provinces than was used on Germany and Japan during World War II. Unexploded ordnance continues to be a major hazard to the people living in these areas. Quang Binh Province was home to General Vo Nguyen Giap.

## I Dream of Alternate Histories

Just imagine if Woodrow Wilson had met with Ho Chi Minh at Versailles in nineteen nineteen, decided Ho was right, and told the French, "I told the world, 'Self-determination.' Not just for whites; for everyone; I'm going to keep my word."

Or what if Roosevelt had lived. FDR, who said the French had ruled in Vietnam for eighty years and only left its people worse off now than when they first arrived. What would FDR have done when Ho declared his country independent?

But Harry Truman got the nod instead, and authorized the use of US ships to ship French soldiers back to Vietnam to wage an eight-year war against a people who had had enough of vive la France. What if Harry S had told the French to swim?

Or what if, after Dien Bien Phu had fallen and the French had had enough of Vietnam, Eisenhower had ordered Foster Dulles to agree the Maryknolls could keep Diem, the Virgin Mary wasn't coming south, and Ho Chi Minh could have his country.

Imagine John F. Kennedy in August nineteen sixty-three, hearing of the raids on Buddhist temples by the Saigon thugs of Ngo Dinh Nhu, had said, "That's it. These clowns are hopeless. Let's go home and cut our losses while we can."

Or good old LBJ. What if he, confronted with a much-provoked attack on US warships in the Tonkin Gulf, had had a revelation: "No more lies! Let's build a Great Society at home and export that instead of wars."

And then there's Richard Milhous Nixon. Dick who promised Peace with Honor, gave us Watergate instead. What if Eisenhower had dumped him? What if he'd been stoned to death in Venezuela back in nineteen fifty-eight?

—W. D. Ehrhart



August 19 2016 (7084)

**DANZIGER**  
The Rutland Herald  
Washington Post Writers Group

## Honor the Veteran, Not the War

ALLEN MEECE

War is the descent into an evil hell accompanied by a pack of lies to camouflage the behavior of human beings when they're reduced to the level of bloodthirsty savage animals.

When a civilian forms a mental impression of the war, they can only visualize the official propaganda that enshrouds the real horror. Since they live far from the slaughter, they have no direct experience upon which to form an opinion so they have to believe the farce which the professional liars, government officials and corporate media, are representing as the war.

An old truism says, "The FIRST casualty of war is Truth and the second is Respect for Human Life." Therefore expect not to receive ANY usable, factual information about what is happening in the war. You have no basis to honor the war.

We can't know what's going on unless we're there, and even

then, the power structure lies to the combatants about the big picture. Both warriors and civilians have no basis to respect the "news" that emerges from the owners who instigate war for power, fun, and profit. There is no real information upon which to base respect for any war.

The wars' owners hold ceremonies that drag out the old, gluey, words of fatal attraction like honor, sacrifice, noble, and brave. The truth is we were taken somewhere we didn't belong and had to fight our way back. We stuffed our fear and did not scream or run in circles because we knew that that would get us killed. We stayed calm and focused on our combat job like one cog in a hurt machine.

My destroyer, the USS Edwards, which was in the third Tonkin Gulf incident in September of 1964, was within ten miles of a North Vietnamese shore installation and

spied with electronic eaves-dropping equipment. I saw it on the radar. Our warship dared them to attack us. We, the crew, weren't told where we were or that our lives were being put in danger. We were awakened in the middle of the night by the General Quarters gong and had to shoot enemy sailors who had legitimate boundaries to protect.

The "Stars and Stripes," a propaganda rag that masquerades as a newspaper, called it "an unprovoked attack on the high seas on US naval vessels." We were nominated for a unit commendation medal for the way we defended ourselves. We almost got a pretty ribbon for fighting well when the truth was we didn't belong there and shouldn't have had to kill other sailors for doing their job. A ribbon for a lie.

But us sailors were idealistically defending democracy. That's what we were told and we believed it because

we were young. It's okay to honor us because we meant well and risked our lives and took some lives to protect other lives.

Fifty-eight thousand American lives later, Vietnam is one of our "most favored trading nations." They're still a socialist country which helped lift them from the poverty of exploitative colonialism. The war needn't have happened at all. The young soldiers and sailors meant well and it cost us plenty. Honor us for that but curse the war and pity those who demanded it. They are still with us and they will never learn from their atrocities. Resist their power today.



ALLEN MEECE WAS A SONAR TECHNICIAN ON THE USS EDWARDS IN 1964 AND HAS WRITTEN A NOVELLA ABOUT A TONKIN GULF INCIDENT CALLED "THE ABEL MUTINY" AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM.

# The Final Leg

DAN NEW

A thousand miles before touching down, the jet's turbulence amps up to a magnitude that seems lethal. Its wings contort and twist violently against the powerful gusts. Stomachs turn and wretch. The plane's cabin tosses fiercely in the night air. Baggage rattles in the overhead compartments. A bottle of water rolls up and down the aisle, toying with our captivity. The attendants strap into their seats. The pilot's voice remains silent as I pray for forgiveness during these last moments of life.

As quickly as it had begun, it's over. A sense of safety manifests through voices and movement in the seats and aisles near me. My praying stops, having experienced the relief of a steady and sure airlift again. It lasted almost two hours. The final approach to Ho Chi Minh City has begun. The East Sea is calm below us.

In minutes, the Nippon Airlines pilot, eases the jet onto the ground. I hear the tires grip the tarmac and feel the torque of another landing. It's been 26 hours since leaving Hartford on this reconciliation journey. I am weary and wide-awake. The landing is at Tan Son

Nhat International Airport. When I left this country four plus decades before, it was a military air base. The war had been at full throttle. I had vowed never to return. Yet, the memories of my time in this country, the violence, the grief, all continue to live in me and often visits me at night.

With my group of five, I stand fidgeting and anxious to exit as the flight from Tokyo taxis. My friend places a comforting hand on my back. I flinch at his touch. In painfully slow order, the plane empties row by row. For the second time, I deplane into Vietnam. Instead of descending a portable staircase to the roasting heat of the blacktop as I did the first time, I walk through a modern jet way to the main corridor. It sparkles with granite and chrome and moving sidewalks. I gasp at the impossibility of preparing for this moment. My friend is close to me, watching every step I take. I fight back my emotion, sucking in gallons of air to fill my lungs and to hold me in place. At 10:30 at night, something is wrong. I look through the windows to the landscape. There are no flares in the sky, no circling helicopters, no

orange columns of tracer rounds, no MP's guarding the entrance - no signs of war. I walk ahead of my group, looking for signs of that which haunts my night hours. There are none. It is quiet. I am disarmed. My fear leaves in a breath and mixes with all in the present. My body relaxes. I look back to my gathering group of five. They are busy with their everyday worries. I smile, maybe, even laugh aloud, who knows?

Customs and baggage claim loom ahead. I find my passport with the visa affixed to one page. I unfold it and start to a line marked "Foreigners." The lines are long. I glance at the clerk checking passports. He wears the uniform of the North Vietnamese Army. On his khaki green blouse at the shoulder on each side is the symbol of the flag of the Socialist Republic of Unified Vietnam. It's a five pointed yellow star on a field of red. The red symbolizes all the bloodshed and the yellow star for the skin color. The stars' points represent the intellectuals, workers, traders, peasants and military. They represent the northern enemy to me. I am now

in their power, under their control. My body stiffens again, the fear rises once more.

In a short while, I am next in line's queue. With the wave of his hand, I anticipate a confrontation. I approach this young soldier. He barely looks up as the optic scanner matches my passport photo. The only question he simply asks, "How long will you be in Vietnam?" "Two weeks." I reply and it's done. I find my bright yellow oversize LL Bean duffel bag by the revolving baggage ramp with my fellow traveler's luggage. It is all so simple. I lug my bag to another scanner. The uniformed guard helps to stack it on the conveyor belt. It runs through and I step into heat and humidity to gather with the others and cab our way to the Bong Son Hotel in downtown, Ho Chi Minh City.



DAN NEW IS A VIETNAM VET TURNED WRITER WHO RETURNED TO VIETNAM ON A RECONCILIATION JOURNEY WITH SOLDIER'S HEART IN DECEMBER OF 2015.



Joe Miller at Chicago VVAW Memorial Day Event, May 30, 2016.

## From the Archives

MARC LEVY

For my website (Medic in the Green Time) occasionally I request the military records of prominent veterans on the National Archives PEP list or through an FOIA request. Pending are the records of Senator Joe McCarthy (he faked his valor) and Senator Eugene McCarthy (a genuine hero). The other day the Archives called me about a recent FOIA request. Here is how it went:

"Sir, do you happen to know his social security number?"

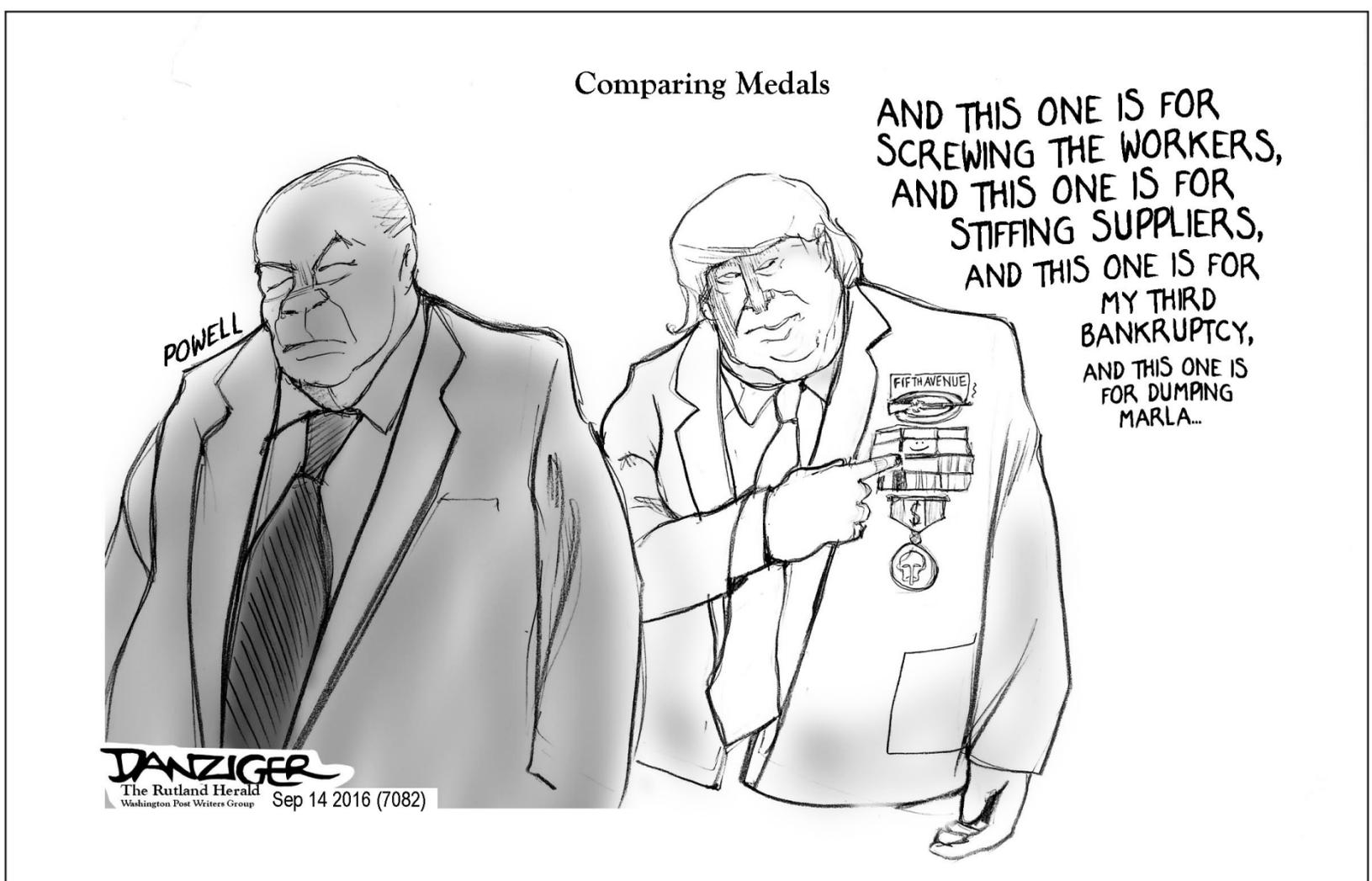
"No."  
 "Is he currently alive?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Do you have his current address?"  
 "He's incarcerated. Wait a moment while I go online. Here you go, he's in Coleman II United States Penitentiary in Sumterville, Florida. Would you like his prison number?"  
 "Yes."  
 "021820-748. How about his date of birth?"

"We have that. Is this person deceased?"  
 "Like I said, he's incarcerated. Haven't you heard of him?"  
 "Who?"  
 "The guy you're calling about. His name is James Joseph Bulger. He was a notorious Boston mobster. He was on the lam for almost 20 years. The FBI finally caught him and his girlfriend in 2014. It was in the papers. It was on TV."  
 "I haven't heard of him. How do

you spell his name?"  
 "B-U-L-G-E-R. First name James, middle name Joseph. Junior. His nickname is Whitey. You never heard of him?"  
 "How do you spell Whitey?"



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH D 1/7 FIRST CAV IN VIETNAM/ CAMBODIA '70. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME. HIS EMAIL IS SILVERSPARTAN@GMAIL.COM.





### The Rag, the American War in Vietnam, and VVAW

TERRY DUBOSE

#### The Rag 50th Reunion 1966-2016

From the very beginning of the newspaper, *The Rag*, in October, 1966, the American war in Vietnam was an issue in the publication. In *The Rag*, page 1, Volume 1, Number one, an editorial by the former editor of *The Daily Texan* (1965), Kaye Northcott, describes the opinions of the new *Daily Texan* Editor (1966, John Economidy) as, "Economidy has made decisions on the following issues: Vietnam – 'The enemy is the Viet Cong. The enemy is the cold, thin smile of a Viet Cong (VC) as he shoots to death a village official. The enemy is the laughter of the Viet Cong while making an old man dig his own grave before he is buried alive.' "In reality Economidy's accusations against the VC sound like the subsequent testimonies given by VVAW members about war crimes against the Vietnamese people. VVAW testified to witnessing and/or participating in war crimes at the Winter Soldier testimonies in Detroit, 1971. There is little question for this writer why Kaye Northcott was working with *The Rag* in 1966 and no longer with *The Daily Texan*.

In 1966, when *The Rag* was starting, I was a senior at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and knew nothing of *The Rag*, and little of the American war in Vietnam. After graduation in 1966, I could find no job that seemed appropriate for a graduate with a Bachelor of Business Administration and a minor in Economics. I had good credentials, fair grades, and four years in the student government ending as Student Body President.

In August, 1966, I enlisted in the Army, and was brain-washed into volunteering for combat in Vietnam. After Vietnam and being discharged from the Army I moved to Austin, Texas because if I still could not find a job, I could at least enroll at the University of Texas (UT), Austin, under the GI Bill. However, I did get a job as a Tax Examiner in the Motor Fuels Division of the Texas Comptroller's office, in 1969. After the Kent State Massacre, I left my desk and joined the protest march from the UT campus to downtown. Later I quit my job and hitchhiked to the West Coast, but by September 1970 I returned to UT and the GI Bill in "self-directed" graduate studies. There was no spitting at me, a veteran, only concerned students wanting to understand my experience and the war.

It was then that I met Bill Meacham, a PhD candidate, Steve Russell and Guy Herman, both law students and UT shuttle bus drivers, others on *The Rag* staff and folks in the Vietnam protest movement; many names are lost in the fog of the 1970s. I also met Alan Pogue, an award winning *Rag* photographer, Vietnam vet, and VVAW member. Alan documented many protests and social injustices in Texas and around the world.

It was then I connected with people from Direct Action. At one of the Direct Action's Sunday afternoon pot-luck dinners, the subject of a veterans protest organization came up. At this meeting a young airman requested assistance distributing, at the Bergstrom Air Base gates, an underground newspaper he was publishing. UT Student Body President, Jeff Jones, was present and

pointed out that UT had no veterans anti-war organization, so I took on the job of organizing UT anti-war veterans. The first meeting was at Eastwoods Park, just NE of campus. We decided on the name, Vets for Peace, not knowing there was already a national organization, Vets for Peace, which was a subordinate organization of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

Jeff Jones opened the coffers of the student body to the veterans, including all the materials we needed for posters, markers, paints, and helped us get established on campus. Bob Breihan, Methodist Student Union, provided us with purple, spirit mimeograph service for flyers. Breihan and the Methodist Student Union also hosted Sattva, a cooperative restaurant/dinner where anyone could get a wholesome meal for pocket change, for just a bit of help cleaning Sattva, or for nothing. Dr. Donner, chair of the Department of Radio-Television-Film at UT, agreed to be our faculty sponsor so we had access to meeting rooms, etc. on campus; though we tended to prefer to meet at local bars, Bevo's, The Orange Bull, or Scholz Garten.

Shortly after organizing, Jeff Jones called me because Randy Floyd had called from UT Arlington about a large protest in Washington, DC scheduled for April, 1971. Randy was a former US Air Force pilot who had testified at the Paris Peace Talks. He had contact with VVAW. A Unitarian Church (Arlington, TX) loaned an old school bus to get all the veterans we could get to go to Washington for VVAW's "Dewey Canyon III." When we returned to Texas, Randy moved to Austin, we formed the Texas VVAW, and Larry Waterhouse and I were named co-coordinators. The first mention of VVAW in *The Rag* was in the August 30, 1971 issue, p. 6.

Texas VVAW started working with the staff and GIs at the Oleo Strut Coffee House in Killeen, Texas, just outside the Ft. Hood gate. We silkscreened posters and t-shirts, and at the same time taught some GIs and UT students to silkscreen. When Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, and The FTA (Fuck The Army) Show came to benefit the Oleo Strut, the UT VVAW served as security when Fonda spoke at Scholz Garten. Afterwards VVAW served as bartenders at the cocktail fundraiser party at Dr. Donner's.

*The Rag* continually ran articles,

and news stories from other "underground papers" and generally led the anti-war movement in Austin and central Texas. There were 56 article titles containing "Vietnam" and eight with "VVAW" in *The Rag* Table of Contents between 1966 and 1977, and many other articles without those in the titles. *The Rag* staff were all very welcoming to Vietnam veterans; unlike the myth that was started by Sylvester Stallone's monologue in the Rambo series, in which Stallone's character berates anti-war protesters for, "spitting on us and calling us baby killers!"

Other protests and marches the Texas VVAW participated in were the LBJ Library Dedication, the March on Killeen when Pete Seeger sang war protest and union songs. There was the Texas VVAW RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal, or Operation Turning the Guns Around). The RAW march from Ft. Worth to Dallas, was fashioned after the original VVAW RAW march which was from Morristown, NJ, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in Sept. 1970. The Texas VVAW Raw march was guerrilla theater along the route from Ft. Worth through Arlington, Grand Prairie, into Dallas. VVAW and volunteers conducted "Search and Destroy" operations with dramatic questioning, screaming, and torture in parks, malls, and public places along the way, with a bivouac (campout) halfway through the route in a public park south of Arlington.

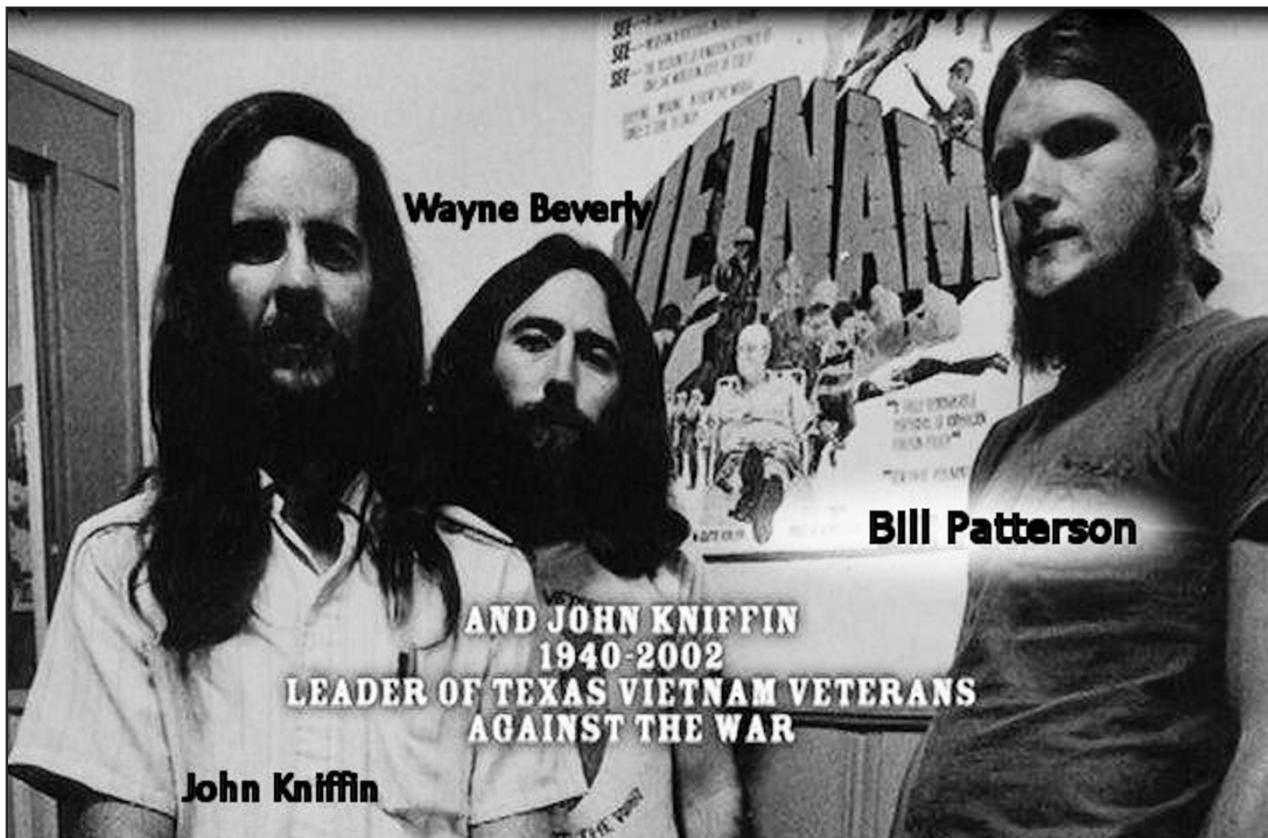
The Carl Hampton Brigade was a large march and protest of the murder, by the Houston police, of Carl B. Hampton, the 21 year old chairman of the People's Party II, a revolutionary black organization. Carl was shot by a Houston policeman with a rifle from the roof of a Baptist Church across the street from the People's Party office. Many from around Texas gathered in Houston the day before the march, including Texas VVAW and GIs from Ft. Hood and the Oleo Strut coffee house. The evening before the march there was a melee around the organizing of the speakers for the next day in Herman Park. As memory serves, there were approximately 20 organizations that wanted to speak; the VVAW speaker would be about number 15, with the People's Party after that. We protested that VVAW and the People's Party, Carl Hampton's organization should be nearer the beginning of the

program. It turned out that the YSA, again, had some guy from Ft. Hood to speak 3rd. The guys from the Oleo Strut didn't know who the YSA guy was, so it became a confrontation. The Oleo Strut people finally convinced the brigade organizers that VVAW should represent the women and men from Ft. Hood and the Oleo strut as speaker #3. But the People's Party was still way down the speakers list. The next morning as the march moved through downtown Houston toward Herman Park, there was still a lot of discussion and negotiations about the order of speakers. Finally, John Kniffin and Wayne Beverly, myself, and the Oleo Strut folks decided that this was the Carl Hampton Brigade, and the People's Party should be earlier in the program. So it was agreed that when they turned the microphone over to me, coordinator for Texas VVAW, Kniffin and Beverly would lead the GIs and veterans from the left and right rear of the stage and surround it, as I made a brief statement about the Vietnam War being racist and Carl Hampton was the chairman of the People's Party, therefore, the VVAW was yielding the rest of our time to the People's Party. The People's Party representative held the microphone and spoke clearly about the racist Houston pigs until the band started to play at the back of the crowd, the speeches ended, and the party started.

While the UT Shuttle Bus Strike was not a specific activity of the VVAW, there were many shuttle bus drivers who were Vietnam veterans. Eventually the condition of the buses deteriorated without maintenance, and the morale of the drivers got so low that we decided to strike and organize. If the bus running lights were out or other problems (brakes, steering, etc.), the driver was responsible for traffic infractions. *The Rag* was a constant supporter of the shuttle bus drivers, and published updates about the Shuttle Bus strike until the strike was won and celebrated.

In the fall of 1972, I returned to school to pursue a career in health care (and to recoup my karma). I resigned as an organizer, and John Kniffin became the Texas VVAW Coordinator. John continued to lead VVAW here until the end of that war. John died of Agent Orange related liver cancer in 2002. Wayne Beverly, was also

*continued on page 18*



# The American War in Vietnam

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

*The American War in Vietnam: Crime or Commemoration?* by John Marciano (Monthly Review Press, 2016)

An early review of Nick Turse's classic 2013 book "Kill Anything That Moves" suggested there had been more than 30,000 book titles published about America's war in Vietnam. Despite the "everybody knows" history of that terribly divisive time in America, a very small percentage of those books have dared to document the huge anti-war sentiments we experienced, or the terrible hard facts upon which the peace movement was based.

Our country's future will be determined by today's young people, students, who are coming of age in a time of unprecedented militarism and glorification of all things related to war. Our children are taught, both in school and in their communities, that military force is the answer to all problems. Presidents and politicians heap endless praise upon our military, "the greatest in the world," despite the fact that they are hugely overfunded, wasteful, bloated, corrupt, and incompetent. Our Pentagon has not won a single significant conflict since World War II, which ended back in 1945. For the next nine years, a heavily-funded White House and Pentagon "Commemoration" of the

50-year anniversaries of the war in Vietnam will sponsor thousands of home-town events designed to convince the American people that the Vietnam War was a noble undertaking. This book dares to challenge the need for such celebration, and it argues with hard facts.

In this age of the all-volunteer armed forces, as the longest wars in our history continue to destroy American lives, I suppose the military recruiters need all the help they can get. No one ever accused America's military recruiters of being factual in their presentations to impressionable young people. The Commemoration is a tool they will adore. Because very few Americans actually have a loved one, neighbor, or acquaintance in uniform, and even fewer know anyone deployed to the war zones of the Middle East, the Pentagon's marketing and merchandising folks have turned our attention from the cruel and destructive strategies and tactics guiding our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and focused us instead upon "our troops," the brave and sincere young folks who have enlisted, usually for the very best and admirable of reasons.

The sad truth is that our current wars are not one bit more genuine, necessary, nor focused upon the welfare of the common people of

the Middle East than was our war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In the current environment of "embedded" journalists, the truth about our wars is difficult to discern, but the history of the Vietnam War is well-documented and certainly provides evidence of the deadly, viciously destructive mind set of America's political and military leadership since World War II. It is difficult for a high school student to accept that his or her country would tell boldface lies to lure them into enlisting and deploying to areas devastated by almost fifteen years of desperate war. As Vietnam veterans, we have tried to suggest the truth for decades. Now we have a compact, well-documented, and most informative little book we can suggest they read before enlisting. I can't help but imagine a lot of heavy, fact-based conversations will result.

John Marciano is a Professor Emeritus from SUNY Cortland, and a lifelong anti-war and social justice activist, author, scholar, and teacher. He has crafted a marvelous book, nothing too laden with dates and numbers, but a very realistic skeletal picture of the mass destruction and tragedy that was America's role in the war in Vietnam. Toward the end he offers an array of topical comments to flesh out the reader's understanding of the historical implications of many aspects of the war. He reviews a variety

of textbooks, and the mis-information being fed to our children, and offers some challenging contradictory facts. This is not a big, intimidating book that would scare students away, but it contains a wealth of thought-provoking facts that should encourage lots of conversation in America's classrooms and dining rooms. While I don't completely agree with all of author Marciano's analyses, I admire his ability to present a complex subject in a concise and very readable manner. He is a teacher, and he demonstrates his craft very ably with this book.

Want to "make America great again?" I suggest we all try to get John Marciano's "The American War in Vietnam: Crime or Commemoration?" onto the shelves of every high school, college, and community library in the land. This is a potent dose of the truth our candidates, teachers, and too many authors have studiously ignored, and in the wake of the recent election America desperately needs some truth.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "... AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM". FIRST PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 1985, IT IS STILL AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES.

## The Rag, the American War in Vietnam, and VVAW

continued from page 17

a Vietnam veteran Marine, now an expat living in Thailand. Others who were very active in the Texas VVAW were Bill Patterson (El Paso, also died of Agent Orange related cancer), John's wife Cathy Kniffin and Kathy DuBose. John and Bill were both members of the "Gainesville 8," the eight VVAW members falsely accused of a conspiracy to violently disrupt the Republican Convention in Miami, Florida, in 1972. Wayne Beverly was an un-indicted co-conspirator jailed along with three others who refused to testify before the Grand Jury. US Supreme Court Justice, William O. Douglas, released them. John and the Gainesville 8+4 were represented pro bono by the Austin law collective, Simons, Cunningham, and Coleman.

Simons, Cunningham, and Coleman represented many Austin and Texas war protesters and other cases for social justice. These included 118 jailed veterans, Ft. Hood GIs, and Oleo Strut staff for parading down a Killeen sidewalk with anti-war banners. All charges were dropped after they broke up the protest march. This was a common practice of the police in the day - arrest the leaders, hold them a few hours until the other protesters disperse, then drop the charges because no laws were broken, except for our First Amendment rights to assemble and free speech.

The second siege at Wounded Knee in November, 1973 lasted 71 days. Oglala Lakota and followers of the American Indian Movement (AIM) were protesting corruption by the leadership of the tribe. There were many VVAW members, including Wayne Beverly, at Wounded Knee in support of the Indians through several skirmishes and firefights. The National Lawyers' Guild national office contacted Simons, Cunningham & Coleman in the spring of 1973. Jim Simons and John Howard (an associated attorney) spent most of the summer defending some AIM members. Again, the court ruled dismissing the indictment, not guilty.

Fast forward to today and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. From this older war protester, the Afghanistan War seemed to come out of a societal

neurotic paranoia after 9/11. However, the Iraq War was a bad decision by about five or six men in Washington; Cheney, Bush, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and others. The American War in Vietnam had evolved out of French Colonialism in Southeast Asia and French Indochina (1870s). Rubber had been a huge issue of rationing during WWII, and after the war the USA wanted Europe back on their feet economically and the Michelin Group back in Southeast Asia harvesting rubber (the USA paid Michelin a royalty for every rubber tree damaged until 1965 when synthetic rubber became widely available). The Vietnam War occurred before the end of the Selective Service System (draft) for military service. With the wars in the Middle East, Ft. Hood again played a major part for preparing soldiers to go to and return from the Middle

East. And a new anti-war coffee house and organization (IVAW - Iraq Vets Against the War) arose in Killeen outside the Ft. Hood gates, the Under the Hood Café and Outreach Center.

While trying to relate to the anti-war movement at the Under the Hood, it became clear that organizing anti-war efforts with an all-volunteer military is very different from protesting the Vietnam War. I think this is because of the possibility of being drafted stimulated the students to join the Vietnam War protests. While participating in discussions at Under the Hood, it became clear to me that the draft is now very unpopular among the "professional" soldiers in our all-volunteer military. The New Army seems to think all draftees were misfits and losers who are just trouble makers that do not want to be in the military - true, for the most part when

fighting unjust wars. This brings up a serious question about a professional, mercenary, volunteer military versus a citizen military with a draft. I won't pretend to resolve this issue, but it seems that a citizenry, including our legislators and leaders, that have some "skin in the game" (children and grandchildren) would be less likely to invade another country without more serious consideration than we had before Cheney-Bush invaded Iraq. More discussion/debate is needed.



TERRY J. DUBOSE, VIETNAM, 1967-1968, VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE AND TEXAS STATE COORDINATOR, 1970-1972.

**THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER, 1971**



Loren

If you are a veteran and are interested in joining Vietnam Veterans Against the War write for an application for membership to:

**VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE W**  
Texas  
P.O. Box 12966  
Austin, Texas 78711

If you are a veteran and cannot devote any time to working for the organization or if you are not a veteran but want to support VVAW, you can support us by sending a check to the above address.

In the struggle,  
Terry J. DuBose  
Texas Regional Office

The same administration(s) that sent us to war leaves us with a situation where the largest number of unemployed are veterans. 22% of all unemployed are veterans of this war, and of these 33% are third world.

We must undertake one last mission in the service of our country - we have earned the right to have our say.

6

# Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties

BRUCE HYLAND (REVIEWER)

*Kent State: Death and Dissent In The Long Sixties* by Thomas M. Grace (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016)

Thomas M. Grace, historian, scholar, professor, social worker, labor union leader, student, and shooting victim at Kent State May 4, 1970, has now written an all important historical chronology concerning student activism at Kent State University during The Long Sixties. The book, like the term "The Long Sixties," focuses on the period of the late 1950's through the early 1970's dispelling the myth of dissent and activism dying on May 4, 1970.

The book prologue and early chapters provide a great overview of

the Labor Union, and Civil Rights movements. Then into the Anti-War activism during this period of history in Kent, Ohio. Tom Grace's fine abilities as a historian, and a former Kent State student allow him to provide in magnificent detail the specifics of these movements, and various activism of this time and place. The book not only provides much information on individual historical events, but tells the story of the people connected to them.

The middle chapters of the book start the heavier focus on the Vietnam War, Black Student Movement, Students for a Democratic Society, New and Old left groups, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and other factions. A rich analysis of these

various groups' activism, and student dissent in the cause of social justice is juxtaposed to state reaction. Tom Grace recounts his own personal experiences, along with others from the period including May 1 through 4, 1970. Those VVAW members who maybe don't know the whole Long Sixties history at Kent State, and the VVAW connection, I believe will find the book quite illuminating.

The later chapters of the book cover the all important aftermath years of May 4, 1970. The aftermath coverage along with the great early historical information, and middle analytical research is what makes this book pre-eminent on this subject matter in my opinion. The later chapters also continue to look at

Student and VVAW activism as the Vietnam War moves toward its bloody conclusion. So much interesting historical ground from that era is covered by this book, a review is hard to do it justice.

This important scholarly work is not only a informative read for all wanting to learn more of this time in our country's history. It is a most valuable learning tool for our High Schools, Colleges, and University's. I encourage all who are interested in this history, and even those who are not, to read this book. You will not be disappointed.



BRUCE HYLAND WAS AN HONOR GUARD Co 1/3 US INFANTRY REGIMENT TOG USA.

## Witness To Revolution

DAN LAVERY (REVIEWER)

*Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost its Mind and Found Its Soul* by Clara Bingham (Random House, 2016)

"Witness" explores how the killing of four Kent State Students, maiming of nine more, by Ohio National Guardsmen, President Nixon's invading neutral Cambodia, widespread anti-Vietnam War protesting, and Seymour Hersh's explosive reporting on the My Lai Massacre, shattered an enormous number of American's support for prosecuting the Vietnam War. Clara Bingham's unique enlightening interviews of 100 activists, vets, and officials, who pushed our country towards what Mario Savio called a revolution against "The Machine" referring to Henry David Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." "There's a time when the operation of the Machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, you can't take part. You can't even passively take part. And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop!"

David Harris, one of many activists interviewed, explains everything "grew out of the Mississippi taproot, when white college students went south to help voter registration and witnessed the heroism of the black people of Mississippi." Other interview topics included drug use, Woodstock, the Black Panthers, SDS, feminism, and Nixon's lies. These issues stabbed most every thoughtful person's conscience by

the time Daniel Ellsberg published the "Pentagon Papers." These policies caused the largest student strike ever with 2.5 million refusing classes and 700 colleges shut down, including Kent State. While an historian might question whether this massive civil disobedience constituted a revolution, this powerful book shows that a major shift in thinking occurred when so many resisted the draft. It would have been unthinkable to the servicemen or public during World War II, however, that resisting the draft would be the favored choice of many of their children.

This disconnect is present today with the Trump supporters living in an alternative universe from that of Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton. For example everyone in the Madison Police Department near Kent State when they heard of the shootings, assumed the students were at fault from statements Spiro Agnew and the Ohio Governor made that vilified the protesters and urged the Guard to deal with them as scum. But the evidence was clear that the Guardsmen had violated their obligations to never fire on peaceful protesters even if someone threw a rock or shouted obscenities. Allison Krause was killed by a bullet fired 343 feet away and while she took 45 minutes to bleed to death at the medics that were reserved for the Guardsmen ignored her! Although no Weatherman were present, elsewhere they had developed a strategy that included symbolic destruction of property like a Capitol bathroom with no one present. But it escalated into more serious bombings, hiding on the lam, and violence at demonstrations. Bingham says, "The sixties crested

in 1968, with the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Dr. King, the Tet Offensive and Nixon's victory."

Nothing is more chilling nor remarkable than Seymour Hersh's ferreting out the truth about the My Lai massacre by tracking down eye witnesses to that horrendous war crime. Vietnam Vets like Nick Turse submitted proof of at least 300 similar massacres. Many occurred in "free fire zones" where they killed anything that moved. "The Village of Ben Suc" by Jonathan Schell told of another massacre that made Jane Fonda say, "I was one person before I read it, and another person after I finished...that was the beginning of my outrage." Hersh visited Calley's attorney in Salt Lake City who called it a mistake as he was told defending Calley accused of killing 109 "Oriental human beings." Over a few beers Calley called My Lai a "setup, just a firefight." Ernie Medina, a Captain, refused to agree with Calley "how I had nothing to do with it!" Barry Romo explained the body count was "close to 500" with American casualties only one self-inflicted." Hersh learned of a photographer, Paul Medlo who told him of three pits containing "hundreds of people," and that Calley brutally killed a small child. Medlo admits he and Calley "Shot and shot" at the unarmed people. Medlo, one of "McNamara's Folly," who would have never qualified in the past because of tests he could not pass, the next morning had his foot blown off by a mine! He felt God punished him and would punish Calley. His mother said, "I sent them a good boy and they returned him a murderer." Hersh found photographer Ron Haerberle who

saved photos of the massacre reported by Ron Ridenhour who broke the story a year before. His graphic photos have been circulated worldwide.

At Calley's court martial he was sentenced to life imprisonment and hard labor at Fort Leavenworth. The next day Nixon ordered him transferred to house arrest at officer's barracks pending appeal! His habeas corpus petition was granted by Judge J. Robert Elliot because of pre-trial publicity prejudice, refusal of the House of Representatives to release testimony taken in executive session, and inadequate notice of charges. Bingham's focus is 1969-70 the "crescendo of the sixties, when years of civil disobedience and mass resistance erupted into anarchic violence." Government sabotage as well as surveillance, theatrics in courtroom trials, massive police misconduct, and President Nixon's late-night Lincoln Memorial meeting with protesters as he, while under the influence of alcohol, tried to make them understand he wanted to end the Vietnam War. However, when he created the plumbers his days were numbered and brought his rapid much deserved downfall with Watergate.



DAN LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A JET, THEN A SHIP TO VIETNAM. HE RESIGNED, JOINED VVAW, AND BECAME A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW, THE ACLU AND IN PRIVATE CIVIL RIGHTS PRACTICE. HIS MEMOIR, ALL THE DIFFERENCE, DESCRIBES HIS CHANGE FROM A PAWN IN THE MILITARY TO CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE. [HTTP://WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM](http://www.danielclavery.com) (AUTHOR WEBSITE)



Long Island, New York street theater demo, September 1971.

# American War in Vietnam

AL DONOHUE (REVIEWER)

*The American War in Vietnam: Crime or Commemoration?* by John Marciano (Monthly Review Press, 2016)

This book is great! It should be in the library of every high school and on the reading list of every college American History course. Many will already be familiar with some of the books referenced in the 27 pages of Notes or the 6-page Selected Bibliography in this concise 160-page history. But for whom the war was not personal, this is the book to read.

The late Professor William Griffen and Mr. Marciano did a

study of how the war in Vietnam was presented in high school textbooks in 1979. It is an obvious tragedy that their insights and awareness contained in that book, "Teaching The Vietnam War," were not more widely disseminated.

"The American War in Vietnam" is comprehensive, from the first anti-war protest in 1945 (US sailors spoke out against being ordered to transport French troops to Vietnam), to the current propaganda campaign to justify the war. To quote W.D. Ehrhart, author of "Vietnam-Perkasie: A Combat Marine Memoir," the book "provides analysis and perspective on

how the war ought to be remembered - and how it is being misremembered and misused."

The author cites H. Bruce Franklin, who has written on the POW issue in "MIA, or Mythmaking in America" and agrees with him that, "The main competing American stories of the war are the Noble Cause, the quagmire, and Imperialism." For Franklin, Marciano, and this reader, the imperial explanation is the only one that makes sense and can reasonably account for America's "half century of military, political and economic warfare against Vietnam and the hostility toward every other colony

and former colony that resisted its aggression."

P.S. Half way through the book I thought of that movie scene where Jack Nicholson playing a Marine officer in a court room drama says "the truth, you want the truth? You can't handle the truth!" It's time for America to "handle the truth." I'm sure it can.



AL DONOHUE, MEMBER OF VVAW,  
SERVED IN THE INFANTRY IN 1966.



Harrisburg, Pennsylvania march to base, July 4, 1972.

## Vets Must Realize We Can Forgive and Be Forgiven

MICHAEL PETERSON

*It's been over twenty years, but I feel that this article is more relevant than ever.*

Another Vietnam Vet has committed suicide. I do not know the particular demons which finally drove Lewis Puller, to kill himself. I do know I have a few of my own that propelled me to the edge in 1975.

Vietnam must be the craziest war in history. More veterans, perhaps even twice as many, have committed suicide after the war as died in the war. It is as if we Vietnam vets are being damned for our sins.

What are our sins that push us to an act the Catholics call a mortal sin?

Lewis Puller, Jr., son of the legendary Marine General Lewis

"Chesty" Puller, was in a lot of pain because of his loss of both legs, his terrible addiction to drugs, perhaps mistakenly prescribed, and, worst of all, a failing marriage to a wife whose past support had been vital. In my own case, I felt guilt over having inadvertently walked our patrol into an ambush of friendly fire. But I believe those may be superficial demons. Something more fundamental is going on.

I think that one of the biggest demons is what I will call justifiable guilt. Everyone likes to say, "That's war. It's not your fault." Yet other veterans of other wars have handled worse and not blown themselves away.

In her seminal book, "Long Time Passing," Myra MacPhersen noted the

parallels between Vietnam veterans and German veterans of World War II, particularly in the high rates of suicides in both groups. I believe she was on to something, that we as veterans and Americans have missed or, worse, denied and repressed: the sin of participating in a bad war, and the very real need to atone for that sin as a psychologically healing act.

I am not speaking in terms of religious or spiritual mumbo-jumbo. No matter how noble our intentions, Vietnam was a very bad thing. There was an almost cosmic level of damage inflicted between two societies. Damage to them and damage to us; the statistics are so often recalled. But look at them again through the prism of humanity and dwell on the pain behind the sterile numbers.

Fifty-six thousand Americans were killed. Over 2,500 are missing. At least 1.4 million Vietnamese were killed. Two million were wounded, in a country with no medical facilities to care for them. Ten million were driven from their homes. Thirty million gallons of Agent Orange poisoned the soil of Vietnam, and 14 million tons of explosives, not counting napalm and phosphorous, ripped the land apart.

In the south of Vietnam, the land of our supposed allies, 9,000 of 15,000 hamlets were uprooted or destroyed, more than 20 million acres of cultivable land were bombed, and the soil ruined by the resulting compaction of bomb impact craters. Over 10 million acres of forests were defoliated. The result was perhaps the most environmentally destructive war ever waged. America did all that. We did all that. And when we veterans juxtapose that waste with our suffering and that of our buddies, we face the chasm of madness and yes, evil.

How do we bridge that chasm? What good is to be found in a world so full of evil, especially if we see it in ourselves? I can't speak for Puller or anyone else but myself, and I hope it can help. I am not overly religious, but after my own near-suicide, I forced myself to believe that it IS a mortal sin, if you will, and that self-imposed hangup has clicked in as a useful devise when I am hit with despair. It helps me to get past the immediate crisis.

I am not saying suicide is a mortal sin, or that I found the Lord, but I can assure fellow sufferers that help and comfort can be derived by behaving as if it were so. And when the crisis passes, I usually find that life is worth going on after all. Then I can address the meaning of what happened and, more important, transcend it.

I was very lucky. I not only found a "trick" in coping with my despair, I've had a loving wife and family. Also importantly, I was able to meet with and found a lot of forgiveness from those whom I victimized, the Vietnamese.

After all the spiritual talk, it also comes down to a sense of maturity in facing up to ones errors or sins, and to realize, truly understand, that we can forgive and be forgiven. The victim and the victimizer can find atonement. Lewis, may you find peace.



MICHAEL PETERSON OF EUGENE HOLDS A MASTER'S DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF "THE COMBINED ACTION PLATOONS: THE U.S. MARINES' OTHER WAR IN VIETNAM" (PRAEGER BOOKS, 1989). I ENLISTED IN 1967; "CLOSE ENOUGH FOR GOVERNMENT WORK"?



# Red Boots Rebel

BOB MARION (REVIEWER)

*Red Boots Rebel by Lawrence Drake*  
(Outskirts Press, 2016)

"As much as I hate war, I understand there are times when defending our country, friends, and family is a necessary evil. But what about those times when it is for politics or power or just plain stupid? As a military person, am I still obligated to give up my life without question?"

These are the questions Lawrence Drake takes on in "Red Boots Rebel," what he calls a fictionalized biography. It chronicles his transformation from a naive Air Force recruit to a young man whose conscience rebels against his growing awareness of the brutality and senselessness of the war in Vietnam. He was not asked to kill, at least not directly, or to risk his own life. He was in the Intelligence sector, tasked with transmitting the realities of the war up the chain where it would be sanitized for public consumption. Subtitled "Keeping Secrets," this book is particularly relevant now in the age of Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning.

His father was a pilot in WWII, and Drake recalls how as a child he would look through the war memorabilia stowed away in a large cedar chest. "Those flight manuals, navigation manuals, cadet class books, Air Corp magazines, uniforms, ribbons, medals, flight computers and instruments....had become a part of me." (Throughout the book he compares WWII, which he considers just and necessary, and the Vietnam War, which he reckons to have been neither). It was with those

memories, along with his Dad's tales of adventure flying B-24 bombers into Burma, that Drake arrived for Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio in October of 1966. But he quickly discovers his wide-eyed optimism is no match for the "brainwashing that comes with becoming a G.I. Joe." "The program was designed to keep the immature little minds and bodies of new recruits sleep deprived, exhausted, broken and confused. Break a person down, take away his dignity, strip away family, exhaust him physically and mentally, and make him totally reliant on the military. That is the way the military builds men."

Though he had dreamed of being a pilot, it was determined he was best suited to serve in data processing. So in the spring of 1967 he was transferred to the 6927th Air Force Security Squadron and the Joint Sobe Processing Center (JSPC) in Okinawa, officially working under the National Security Agency. There he processed secret coded messages regarding troop movements and body counts in a "windowless, air-conditioned compound filled with electric gadgets and computers, surrounded by guards and barbed wire." He sets up an interesting dichotomy between his double life on Okinawa, working in that windowless room while living in a tropical paradise, and his involvement in and distance from the harsh realities of the war: "Those guys on firefights in the jungle were reduced to magnetic oxide on a reel of computer tape. Bombs fell on real people from our B-52s, and we punched the results

into holes on a paper card."

And the secrets became harder to bear: "With a top secret crypto clearance, we saw bits and pieces that only the very elite were privy to, and it wasn't pretty." He and his fellow processors discovered bombing runs that ended up in the DMZ or in Laos (which was out of bounds for US bombers at the time). They saw how, as reported in the press, body counts were altered from what they knew them to be; ours much lower, theirs much higher. They saw the first reports of the USS Pueblo and of the My Lai Massacre. Drake slowly came to realize the government he had trusted and believed in was involved in propaganda, something he had believed was only done in communist countries to control their people: "trying to convince us that this war was worth fighting and that we were winning."

The incident which finally pushed Drake over the edge is described in a chapter titled "The Unthinkable." His Sergeant asks him to deliver some reports to the Briefing Room, where men with "little silver and gold emblems on their collars" are standing around a map watching B-52 bombing runs. Their attention was focused on one particular run deep into North Vietnam. Suddenly, the line ended but it didn't turn back to the south, which elicited cheers from half the room. Drake then realized there was a pile of money on the table, which the cheering officers grabbed up and stuffed into their pockets.

"Wait a minute. I thought...Didn't we just see a B-52 get shot down?"

Didn't we just witness six of our guys die? And here are a group of officers betting on the outcome? I couldn't believe what I had just seen. How was this possible? I was in total shock."

Drake later learned the B-52 had been hit, causing total hydraulic failure. Though the crew was able to fly the plane back to Danang, the damage to the hydraulics left it without brakes. After the plane landed it ran off the runway into a minefield. Half the crew was killed.

After Okinawa, Drake was transferred to Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio where he was required to sign a security oath. But after all he had been through, all he had seen, he could no longer be part of a military that had such disregard for human life and for the values he'd been raised to believe were American values. He refused to sign the oath, which effectively ended his military career.

This is not the story of a whistle blower. Drake was able to convince his superiors that he had no intention of going public with what he learned and was later relieved from active duty. But this is a compelling story of a young man whose faith in America was broken by the knowledge of the ugly realities of war that are hidden behind patriotic gestures. And his example of refusing to salute and follow blindly is a powerful reminder of the truly patriotic duties of all citizens.



BOB MARION LIVES IN PITTSBURGH, PA  
WHERE HE WORKS AS A LABORER.

# Hurricane Street

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

*Hurricane Street by Ron Kovic*  
(Akashic Books, 2016)

Fully forty years after his best-selling book "Born on the 4th of July," more than a quarter-century after Tom Cruise starred in a movie of the same name, Ron Kovic has released a new book! While I know that Kovic and VVAW had their differences back in the day, I would be hard-pressed to name another American, and especially another Vietnam vet, who has done more to attract attention to the plight of seriously wounded vets systematically mistreated by the Veterans Administration and far too many of the nation's VA hospitals. To those of us who don't know him personally, Ron Kovic is a PR genius, an attention-getter, and a genuine American hero.

Kovic's new book is titled "Hurricane Street" after the address of an apartment he rented in Marina Del Rey, back in 1974. It is a curious title, because very little of the action took place in that location. Hurricane Street is about the VA hospital in Long Beach, California back in the early seventies, and a group of severely disabled veterans who were patients there after, for most of them, being wounded in Vietnam.

I must admit from the outset that I have previously read about Kovic's American Veterans Movement and the occupation of Senator Cranston's office in Gerald Nicosia's great book "Home To War: A History Of The Vietnam Veterans' Movement." 1974 was a troubling time in America, with the war winding down, but its passions bubbling over, the emerging Watergate scandal, and the American public's range of political frustrations erupting in the form of groups as diverse as the Black Panthers, the Weather Underground, the president's Plumbers, the unprecedented Vietnam

Veterans Against the War, the "Hard Hats," and even the Symbionese Liberation Army. To most of America the "protest" by a group of disabled vets from the Long Beach, California VA hospital was at best a footnote of history, and one far less memorable than the photo of Patty Hearst holding a machine gun during the robbery of the Hibernia Bank in California.

There are too many typos and misspelled words in Hurricane Street. That's the editor's fault, not the author's, but it is a shame. Nicosia's book is a comprehensive history almost two inches thick. Hurricane Street is a small book in every dimension, but not in content. It will fit comfortably into the thighside pocket of a pair of 21st century cargo pants. That's great for the reader, because this is a book you won't want to put down. Ron Kovic tells one hell of a story, rich with all the raw passions and the emotions that our wounded veterans felt as they were blatantly and obscenely mistreated by the government and its VA system of medical malpractices. Kovic describes the desperation and utter despair of the maimed and helpless, imprisoned in a surreal landscape of overflowing bedpans and piss bags, of zombie-like fellows kept numb on Thorazine, and of amputees and paralyzed guys suffering from bedsores, boredom, and anger at the way their government treats them after they have given so much. But there is also ample testimony of the touching cooperation, humor, and compassion that allowed those severely wounded vets to help each other through the tough times. Back in 1974, all of these sensory overloads inspired Ron Kovic to organize a rebellion.

Now, in 2016, the memories of those horrors are still so vivid, so important, that he is inspired again to tell us the true story of the time a few brave, desperate American veterans

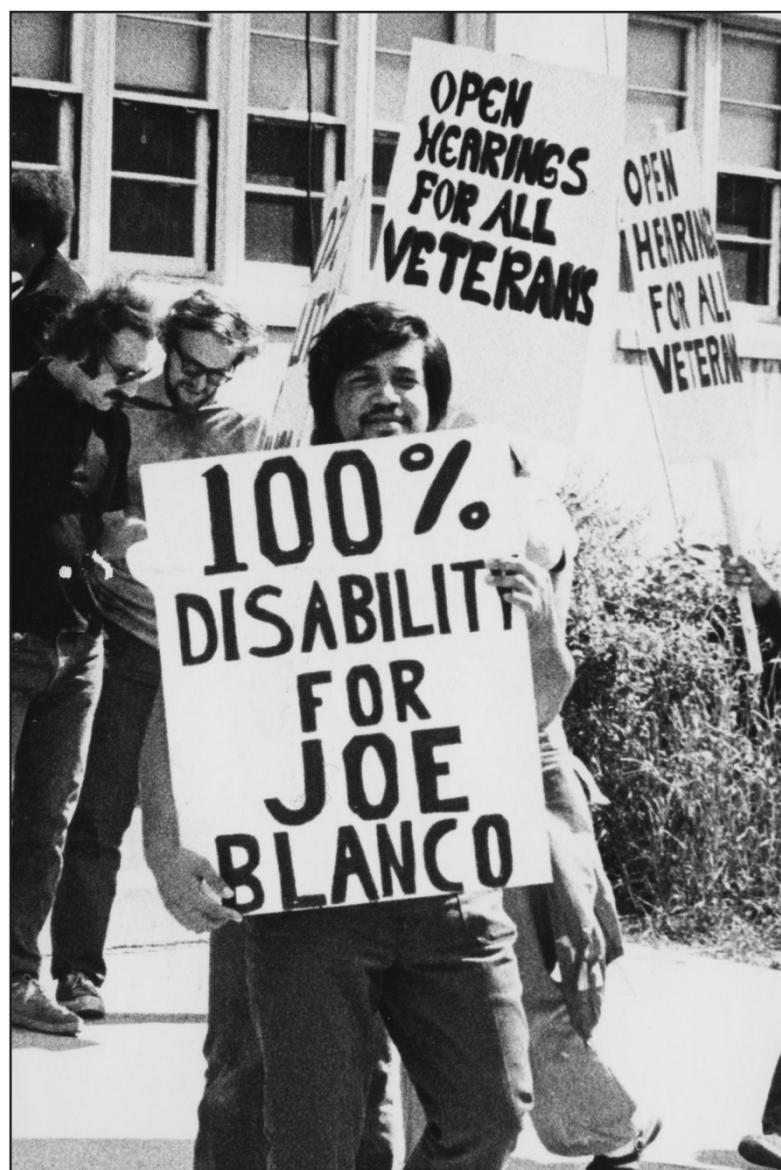
dared to protest, to rebel, and to break out of their prison for a few days. They didn't expect much. The head of the VA flew to LA from Washington just to disrespect them from a distance, and shit upon their hopes. Still occupying the Senator's office suite, the vets staged a hunger strike until that same head of the VA was forced to return to Los Angeles and meet with them. No, the Veterans Administration was not significantly changed by this action, but it was changed a little, and the American public became aware of the

plight of the veterans.

High school students today are beset with military recruiters, and Ron Kovic has once again challenged the system with the raw and ugly truth. No other American has done more.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "... AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM". FIRST PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 1985, IT IS STILL AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES.



Chicago VA Demo, 1975.

# War Is Beautiful

BEN CHITTY (REVIEWER)

*War Is Beautiful: The New York Times Pictorial Guide to the Glamour of Armed Conflict* by David Shields (powerHouse Books, 2015)

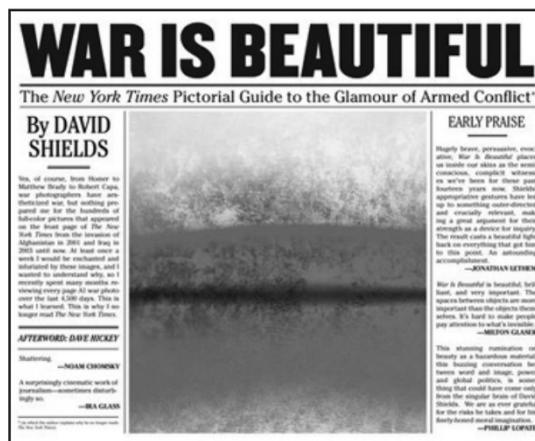
So, why should anyone outside the War Department (or a Legion hut with an open bar) want to produce a coffee-table-sized book called "War Is Beautiful?" Author David Shields explains: "For decades, upon opening the *New York Times* every morning, and contemplating the front page, I was entranced by the war photographs." On reflection, he realized that the function of these photos was "to sanctify the accompanying descriptions of battle, death, destruction, and displacement." After gathering and contemplating hundreds of these images, he confirmed his intuition: "the governing ethos was unmistakably one that glamorized war and the sacrifices made in the service of war." It turns out that this book does not just reproduce beautiful photographic images captured during our post-9/11 wars, it indicts the *New York Times* itself for complicity in the crime of war.

In the history of human art, war or combat photography is a very recent category. Matthew Brady's photographs of Civil War battlefields created the genre; Robert Capa's

photos from the Spanish Civil War and WWII set the modern standard. Conventions changed over time as photographic technology changed. As Susan Sontag observed in her essay, "Looking at War" (*The New Yorker*, December 9, 2002), early photographs were posed and almost painterly in their composition, while later lighter cameras permitted candid "action" shots, which were widely understood to be closer to the reality of the immediate moment, and somehow more truthful. Since battles and wars had traditionally been depicted in literature and art as noble and heroic, these photographs could be quite subversive.

Television coverage of the American war in Vietnam created another change in war photography. Mobile movie cameras brought the war into the living room on the nightly news. The political effect was significant enough to teach the War Department that one lesson learned from Vietnam is to censor media coverage of wars, a strategy developed for invasions of Panama, Kuwait, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

*The Times* made itself a player in this propaganda campaign; in short, the "newspaper of record" has lied about all these wars, and still lies.



Some are lies of commission – the repetition of fraudulent intelligence about weapons of mass destruction, for example. Some are lies of omission – how would a *Times* reader learn that NATO is moving military forces up to Russia's borders, or that the elected government of Ukraine was overthrown by fascists with State Department connivance?

So what about these beautiful pictures? They treat themes ranging from evocations of Michelangelo's Pietà to Love and Death, and quite beautifully indeed. It is especially interesting to compare the published captions with the photographers' descriptions of the image as recorded in the images' metadata. It is even more astonishing to contemplate the endpapers, which display all 64 front

pages where the images appear above the fold and almost always centered. The takeaway is expressed in the book's subtitle: "The New York Times Pictorial Guide to the Glamour of Armed Conflict (In Which the Author Explains Why He No Longer Reads the New York Times)." Check out how the author glams up "glamour!"

This is a coffee-table book. It lists for \$39.95. Buy it if you will, but then give it to your local public library.



BEN CHITTY IS A SHELLBACK NAVY VETERAN OF TWO DEPLOYMENTS TO VIETNAM, A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, AND A LIBRARIAN.

# VVAW Patch

STANLEY CAMPBELL

I was in Vietnam, stationed with the 67th Medical Group, just south of Da Nang, from October of 1970 to Oct. '71.

In late October of 1970, shortly after arriving, I visited the Red Cross drop-in center in China Beach, Da Nang, and saw these patches being sold by the American volunteers there. Most were sown peace sign patches, with the statement, "Southeast Asia War Games" or "I served my time in Hell."

But one set of patches showed the VVAW insignia and spelled out their name. I lit into those poor Red Cross volunteers, called them commie supporters, and stormed out.

After three months, I came back, apologized and purchased all the patches they had. I'd changed my mind about the war, and saw it as destructive, not only of the bodies of so many young men, but of their souls as well. The mission had been to stop the commies. The mission became: killing all the Vietnamese and letting God sort them out.

This one patch of VVAW had been on my cap that I wore around the compound (I operated behind a LMD - large metal desk), at Team C's MedCom Headquarters, really a Quonset hut in the middle of a large supply depot.

I still have one of the patches in excellent condition among my collection, but this one was given to me by my sister, who, out of kindness, de-stitched it off my old cap. The cap was in bad condition, but...

Anyway, I sold this on eBay just to get it out of my sight. They're worth \$50! But I'm still glad I served. If I hadn't, I'd probably be raising money for Ollie North.



STANLEY CAMPBELL IS PRESENTLY THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROCKFORD URBAN MINISTRIES IN ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS. HE RECENTLY SHUT DOWN A PORNOGRAPHIC BOOKSTORE, TURNED IT INTO A FAIR TRADE GIFT SHOP, AND PUT A WIND GENERATOR ON THE ROOF.



# Red Boots Rebel

RG CANTALUPO (REVIEWER)

*Red Boots Rebel* by Lawrence Drake (Outskirts Press, 2016)

Revolutions begin with small acts of defiance: Rosa Parks sitting down in the front of the bus next to white people; the "Unknown Rebel" standing in front of a line of tanks during the "Tiananmen Square massacre;" Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists as a sign of Black Power during the 1968 Olympics; Colin Kaepernick (and now others) kneeling during the playing of the National Anthem; and six Vietnam veterans marching together in a peace demonstration in New York City in 1967 (the origination of VVAW, still going strong after 49 years).

I don't mean bloody revolutions or violent confrontations with the police or the military to overthrow a tyrannical regime, but a revolution in consciousness. For us, veterans who served either in combat, or in some foreign or domestic military base during the ignoble American War in Vietnam, small acts of rebellion

and resistance eventually led to entire infantry platoons and combat companies refusing to fight, thus effectively forcing an early end to the war.

Larry Drake's new memoir, "Red Boots Rebel," tells the story of one such courageous act of defiance and should be added to the must-read lexicon of Vietnam remembrances. Similar to Kaepernick, Drake's rebellion was a refusal to take an oath of alliance during his four-year military commitment in the United States Air Force. And like Kaepernick, his act of rebellion was soon joined by four other soldiers, who became known as the "Red Boots Rebels."

The book is well-written and documents Drake's changing attitude toward the war, the military, and ultimately alters his consciousness toward the United States Government and particularly the military. It testifies to his changing attitude during a very volatile time, 1966-1970, and describes the many experiences that ultimately led up to his act of

defiance. Some of these experiences are humorous, absurd, and typically military SOP, and sets the book apart from other Vietnam memoirs. It's not the violence or the mistruths perpetrated by the military and the government, but the absurdity, (like Catch 22), that is at the heart of his rebellion. The Air Force doesn't know how to deal with him and his small band of rebels, which leads to more small acts of rebellion and confounds the establishment's often hilarious and non-effective responses.

The book also records the beginning of the military resistance that was documented by the terrific film "Sir! No Sir!" and that has been intentionally omitted by the historical revision of the American War in Vietnam so lavishly perpetuated by the Vietnam War Commemoration. Drake's recollections and individual perspectives are important and essential because so much of this history has been lost or glossed over to create new "ignoble" wars. Significantly, the book was written

at the urging of Drake's daughters, and it's something that we as veterans should all be mindful of.

If we leave "our" history in the hands and minds of the war "revisionists," our children and grandchildren will end up fighting similar ignoble wars like the one we resisted and rebelled against. It's something that each of us must take responsibility to dispel. Like Drake, we all must continue to be "Red Boots Rebels."



RG CANTALUPO IS A POET, PLAYWRIGHT, FILMMAKER, NOVELIST, AND DIRECTOR. HIS WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED WIDELY IN LITERARY JOURNALS IN THE UNITED STATES, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRALIA. HE SERVED IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION AS AN RTO FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY FROM 1968-69 AND RECEIVED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR UNDER FIRE. HIS BOOKS CAN BE PURCHASED THROUGH NEW WORLD PUBLISHERS OR THROUGH THE AUTHOR AT RGCANTALUPO@GMAIL.COM.

# Chilling Journey Into Torture at Abu Ghraib and A Man's Battle with Guilt

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

*Consequence: A Memoir* by Eric Fair (Henry Holt and Co., 2016)

"Consequence," by Eric Fair, is a dark, chilling memoir. Fair held fundamental Christian beliefs, was determined to become a minister, but also serve his country. He joined the Army and learned Arabic at Monterey Airborne and Special Ops in Egypt. He married and became a Bethlehem Police Officer, but a heart defect ended this stint and, without having to take a physical, he became a contracted interrogator for CACI at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Under Dick Cheney's deranged torture tactics, he was ordered to find Saddam Hussein's WMD. His victims were mostly by-standers found "leaving after an explosion," and occasionally a terrorist. His Arabic became a tool used for the unspeakable acts at the prison and led to his feelings of guilt and loss of integrity. He began returning innocent captives to their

families despite the danger. His guilt drove him to take risks to free innocent Iraqis caught in the net. For those killed by torture he sought out their grieving parents who adored this unique and conflicted American.

Soon alcohol became a new demon that numbed him when needed. He married Karin who bore him a son, but they had their troubles. He tried to deal with his anger and guilt demons as this confessional memoir unfolds into a difficult nightmarish story. Finally CACI sent him home but soon he regretted not being with his buddies with whom he developed a strong bond. After a second tour much like the first but heavily redacted by some intelligence censor, he entered Princeton Theological Seminary where his guilt stabbed him. He had nightmares of the "Palestine torture chair," the broken bodies, the stench of war, and his remorse.

After a heart transplant in his 30's, he switched churches to a

more liberal one and found meaning while he rejected stilted hard line fundamentalist views. He even made a strong friendship with a gay Jew who introduced him to a Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, who required the transgressor to engage with the aggrieved persons, actively seek their forgiveness, a lifelong pursuit. This was no miraculous instant solution like confession, or the blood of Christ that left Fair's unique spirit unchanged and wanting a more meaningful method to pursue as his morality demanded.

"Consequence," is a moving and necessary read to understand the consequences of US torture policy in Iraq, and to appreciate a thoughtful and moral man's struggle to overcome depression rather than end it in suicide. One cannot help but wonder that one of the reasons contractors like these used torture as instructed in Iraq was because they were highly paid civilian employees not subject to the

UCMJ's rigid requirements that apply to the military. Perhaps because many indoctrinated in the military would not follow these unethical torture policies as did the contractors removed from the daily reminder in the military influence. But then there is always the Vietnam debacle to remind us how quickly a My Lai could spring up from some of the incompetent soldiers mentioned in McNamara's Folly.



DAN LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, AND THEN A SHIP TO VIETNAM. HE RESIGNED TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST AND BECAME A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW AND ACLU. HIS MEMOIR, ALL THE DIFFERENCE, DESCRIBES HIS CHANGE FROM A PAWN TO AN ADVOCATE CRUSADING FOR JUSTICE. [HTTP://WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM](http://www.danielclavery.com) (AUTHOR WEBSITE)

## I'm Sorry

WILLIE SCHATZ

Four decades on, at last the chance to say, "I'm sorry," in person.

Sorry that "my country" ruined yours.

Sorry that "my country" dropped three times the bomb tonnage on you than the Allies dropped on Japan.

Sorry that Amerika demonized you as gooks, slants and all the other dehumanizing, degrading, racist, demeaning descriptions I cannot - or, more likely, WILL not - remember.

All this, then more. And more.

Yet your people are kind, sweet, gentle. They smile, they laugh, they wave, as though we have been best friends for days, months, years, decades. Rather than shun us as the warmongers we were (are?) they welcome us with open arms.

The letter "S" and the number "21" are darker, more foreboding, more terrifying and more fearsome now. A genocide museum can do that.

Its name is Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. But that phrase takes too long to say, so most people call it S-21. It was the most gruesome of the Khmer Rouge's 196 prisons.

An electric fence with barbed

wire. Cells with very little light and barely large enough to stand in. Barbed wire at every window "to prevent the desperate from committing suicide," said an information sign. Pictures of the tortured and the murdered - thin, hollow, shrunken, withered, empty, soulless. Literally, no there there.

The chill, the fear, the fury, the anger, the helplessness and the HOPELESSNESS seized me, shook me, owned me. Taking pictures is difficult when you can barely breathe. I hope the few I took honor the victims.

Shattering as this was, I wanted to stay. But time waits for no one, so we motored on to Choeng Ek.

Compared to what I saw there, S-21 is a country club.

I was in the killing fields. I repeat, because I must, THE KILLING FIELDS, where innocent people were butchered, slaughtered, tortured, murdered and executed. I saw the weapons - bayonet, iron stick, axe, knife, hoe. Why shoot when you can prolong the pain and the agony with a more medieval method?

Rows upon rows of skulls with colored dots indicating the

weapon used to execute the deceased. Excavated bones. A tree used as a whipping post for children. Rags of clothing saved and recovered...for what?

I didn't want to look. But, I had to. As my spouse Molly said, "how can you come to Cambodia and NOT go here?" You can't. So we did.

We left our Buddhist monk-blessed red protection strings on a tree shrine in front of a killing field. In those circumstances, it was the least we could do. It was also the most.

*Full disclosure: I am NOT a veteran. To quote Paul Wisovaty, I am one of "[T]housands of otherwise draft-eligible, white, upper middle class males [who] avoided the draft by joining the reserves." If that blows my cred with you, so be it. I do, however, donate to VVAW.*

*I also read every issue of The Veteran thoroughly. (I was about to write "religiously," then thought that would be unwise.) Your writers move me, shake me, motivate me. They make me FEEL as though I were in the fields, the foxholes, the jungle with them. I*

*cried when reading Sherwood Ross's "The Epiphany" in the Spring issue.*

*The issue commanded me to send you the attached piece. I wrote it during our National Geographic-Lindblad Travel January cruise down the Mekong. You can shred it, burn it, share it--maybe even publish it! (Please, please do NOT napalm it.)*

*We thought we knew the war before we embarked on this trip. Now, after S-21, Choeng Ek and the War Remnants Museum, we know we didn't have a fucking clue. Coming up close and personal-NOT as your members did, of course-changes one's moral and intellectual compasses.*

*Thank you for your courage and your bravery. Thank you for standing tall for your principles. And thank you for making reading a joy, a pleasure and a learning experience.*

*Write on, and on, and on...*



WILLIE SCHATZ IS A LECTURER IN LEGAL WRITING PROFESSIONAL WRITING PROGRAM UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK



Vets Day Demo, Long Beach, California, November 11, 1974.

# Exiting the Extraordinary

GERALD R. GIOGLIO (REVIEWER)

*Exiting the Extraordinary: Returning to the Ordinary World after War, Prison, and Other Extraordinary Experiences* by Frances V. Moulder (Lexington Books, 2015)

So, let's talk about "past lives." No, not the once trendy, new-age "past lives regression" stuff where you try to get in touch with a "you" from a bygone era. But your existing you — the one that had a life before you were drafted or enlisted, before you trained to "be all you can be," before you went to war, immigrated to escape the war and/or spent years trying to end one. Or, addressing a larger audience perhaps before you went to prison, escaped from a cult or commune, survived a natural disaster or other traumatic event. That's you, with those past lives. Ever get that former life back? You just "built a bridge and got over it," right? Right? I didn't think so.

In "Exiting the Extraordinary" Frances Moulder suggests that you are not alone. Her book goes beyond helping survivors of traumatic events reflect on what happened to former selves to a concern for the larger cultural context; that is, how vast numbers of people in the modern world attempt to return to normal life after living through what she calls "extraordinary experiences."

Moulder points out that at any given time, millions experience wars, holocausts and genocide, revolutions, terrorism, natural disasters and more. Despite the ubiquity of all this misery the author suggests that we do not know enough, nor do we do enough, to help people navigate a return to normality. More, we really do not know what the impact is on those societies that have "large numbers of people facing the struggles of returning to an ordinary life."

Writing from a sociological perspective, Moulder believes that having deeply traumatic experiences and attempting to return from them shapes a person's life much in the same way that we are shaped by other social and cultural structures and forces. She encourages us to use what we are learning about combat related Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to explore the "commonalities" in extraordinary experiences and to strive for a deeper understanding of the process of returning to the ordinary world.

Folks who suffer from PTSD understand when Moulder explains: "Many people who return to the ordinary world after an extraordinary experience... feel they have been forever changed. Many even exit extraordinary experiences only to find that their ordinary world is gone... they endeavor to resume an ordinary life in an unfamiliar milieu. While some returnees grow and thrive... it is not unusual for returnees to live lives that are deeply trying and unfulfilling."

Moulder's compact and meticulously organized work is geared mainly toward academic readers and students in the social sciences, social service and medical providers, policymakers, and of course, those who themselves have exited an extraordinary life experience and their families. Be assured that it is far from a highly technical read, but rather a gentle, enlightening piece of work accessible for all interested in this topic.

"Exiting the Extraordinary" includes six chapters in two parts that define and discuss extraordinary experiences and why people are transformed by them; also included are sections on challenges and strategies for "returning to the ordinary world" along with implications for public policy. With a nod toward accessibility, methodology and theoretical treatments are set aside as appendices along with a valuable and helpful list of References.

The author admits that this book is an exploratory work. That means it looks into a topic that is under-investigated and identifies areas that would benefit from further examination. In doing this Moulder used several research techniques. For starters, she read a variety of published material (memoirs, oral histories, etc.) from people who had a wide range of extraordinary experiences. Here she looked for things that people and their

varying experiences had in common and discovered that there is a dearth of material on the ways returnees navigate the return process. The author also reviewed a variety of scholarly works from varying disciplines that looked at specific categories of unusual experiences. In addition, Moulder interviewed nine people who had gone through some sort of extraordinary experience including: four veterans of various wars, two survivors of the Holocaust, an undercover police agent, aid workers with experience in war zones, and a former Catholic nun who left the church before it liberalized conventions within religious orders.

Along the way we encounter some familiar names including Ron Kovic, Eli Weisel, and the spiritual author, Karen Armstrong. Other contributors, named and unnamed, provide additional testimony. Here we find stories about civil rights activism, surviving a horrific plane crash and more. These examples enrich the narrative and underscore ways in which people cope with the experiences, how they are changed by them and how they attempt a return to normal life.

It was exciting and refreshing to see Moulder recognize peace and other social justice work as extraordinary experiences. Let's face it, that work changes people—the drive to see immediate changes, the pressures, frustrations and politics can wear people down—we have seen activists come undone, leave the cause or worse lose their commitment to nonviolence, sometimes becoming what they hate. As uplifting as peace and social justice work can be—"blessed are the peacemakers" and all that—let us recognize that such work can take a toll on emotional and psychological health, relationships and families. Frances Moulder does us all a favor by pointing to the extraordinary nature of this work and by recognizing that there can indeed be dues to pay for doing it.

Moulder also points to problems associated with mass incarcerations in America. Here she discusses the multitude of challenges confronted

by former prisoners and their families. Importantly, she considers implications for a society that continues to punish prisoners long after the returnee has served time in jail through discrimination in employment, loss of voting rights, and the dearth of quality programs to assist in reentry.

Her chapter, "Implications for Public Policy," gives an overview of public policies or programs that now exist as well as suggestions for programs needed to assist people returning from extraordinary events. These would include recognizing the broad array of returnees that might need assistance, advancing policies that reduce stigma, providing basic benefits (housing, health care, etc.) during periods of transition and improving programs to help returnees reconstruct self and identity.

Reading these policy suggestions made me think of the nobility of giving people a "hand-up, not just a handout." If only we could find the heart and political will to do so. A dream perhaps, but also a noble one. I would argue that the best sociologists not only help us find meaning in data and in patterns they discover, but they also help us to dream and challenge us to act. In exploring the extraordinary experiences of others and promoting better outcomes for those returning from extraordinary events Frances Moulder helps us advance that noble dream.

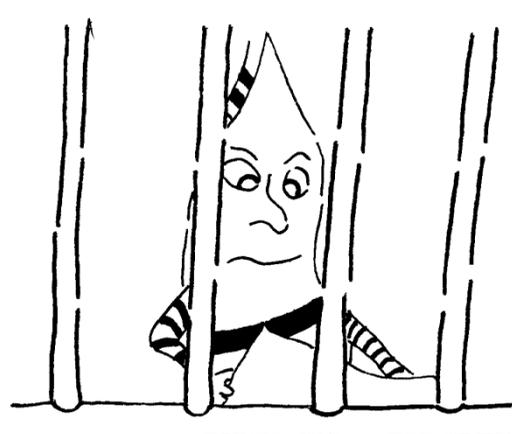
*One last note. Full disclosure: your reviewer met Professor Moulder a number of times in the 1970s while a student at Livingston College at Rutgers University. I feel privileged to become reacquainted with her work and grateful for the opportunity to introduce you to this noteworthy title.*



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



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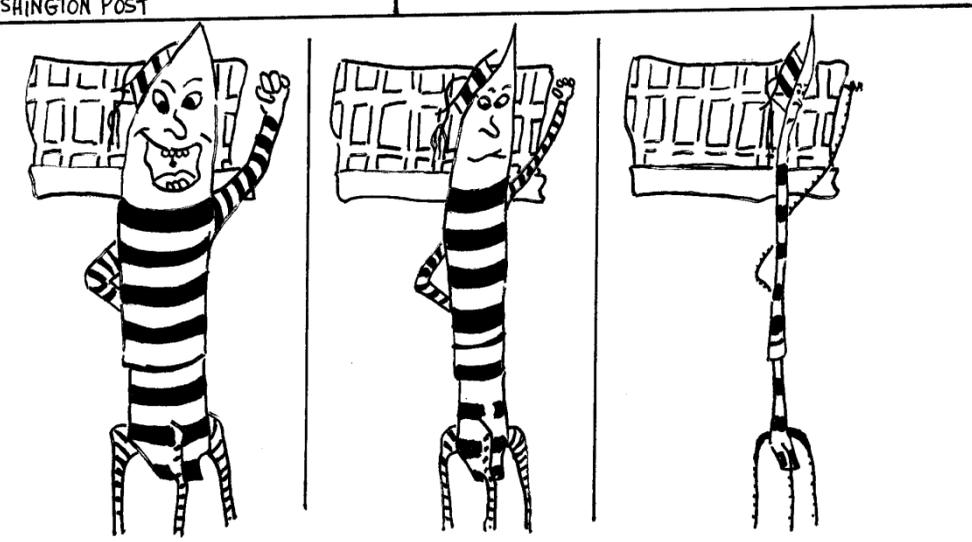
THE FED HOLDS POT ON "SCHEDULE 1" IT STYMIES RESEARCH. BY 2013, 17 MEDICAL MARIJUANA STATES FOUND:

ON AVERAGE, DOCTORS PRESCRIBED FEWER DOSES OF OTHER DRUGS: 1,826 FEWER PAIN KILLERS, 265 FEWER ANTI-DEPRESSANTS, 562 FEWER ANTI-ANXIETY, 541 ANTI-NAUSEA AND 486 ANTI-SEIZURE DRUGS EACH YEAR. — THE WASHINGTON POST

MEDICAL MARIJUANA IS OFF-LIMITS TO VA PRACTITIONERS EVEN IF IT COULD REDUCE SUICIDES, OPIATE DEPENDENCE ETC. THAT'S WHY I GREW IT. THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.



IT'S JUST THE MILITARY, INDUSTRIAL, CORPORATE, BANKING, WALL STREET, PHARMACEUTICAL, STUPIDITY COMPLEX, I'M FRUSTRATED, I'M PISSED.



FED RIGHTS. STATE RIGHTS. MY RIGHTS? YOUR RIGHTS? TIME FOR A HUNGER STRIKE???



### VVAW Member Ages Well

JOE MILLER

On November 28th, we mark the 100th birthday of one of VVAW's oldest members and supporters. Eleanor M. Wayman was born in Chicago in 1916, one of four siblings (an older brother and sister and a younger sister). Her father served in the Chicago Police force for some time. Her mother died at the age of forty. Of the four siblings, Eleanor and her older brother James served in the military during World War II.

As she tells it, Eleanor just decided to get away from home and away from an uninteresting job, joining the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in March of 1943 at the age of twenty-six. Within that year, the Army had decided to disband the WAAC and replace it with the Women's Army Corps (WAC). So, Eleanor and others in the defunct WAAC were honorably discharged "For the convenience of the Government" after serving only four months and twenty days. They had the option of joining the WAC, but Eleanor decided to wait on this. For the next year and a half, she went

to work as a file clerk for the Hartford Insurance Company in Chicago.

She got restless again and decided to join the WAC in March of 1945. She received better training than had been the case in the WAAC, and she was able to travel to different parts of the country as a Company Clerk. Her final duty station was with the WAC Detachment 9955th Technical Service Unit at William Beaumont General Hospital in El Paso, Texas. She was separated from the service with an Honorable Discharge as a Tech 4 (Corporal) at Fort Sam Houston on 29 October 1946. She then joined the inactive reserves and returned to Chicago to work.

Four years later, on 20 October 1950, she received "Orders for Extended Active Duty" from the Headquarters of the Fifth Army in Chicago. She was to report to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, no later than 15 November. During this next period of active service she was posted to Tokyo for about four months in 1951. By 22 November 1951, she was back

in the US and separated from active duty once again. She remained in the inactive reserves until her final Honorable Discharge in August 1952. So, she is a veteran of both World War II service and Korean War service.

Upon her return to Chicago, she went back to work at Hartford. She also became active with her local American Legion post, being chosen as Post Commander sometime in the late 1950s. She never married and has remained independent to this day.

Eleanor became an active supporter and member of VVAW in the early 1990s. She attended Chicago VVAW's Memorial Day and Veterans Day events every year while she could still get around. She was honored with a standing ovation at VVAW's 40th Anniversary Event in Chicago in 2007.

Over the past couple of years, as her physical health has weakened, she is unable to participate in our events, but she proudly carries her lifetime membership card in her wallet. Her mind is still very sharp, and she follows politics closely. We wanted to



Eleanor Wayman, 2012.

give her some recognition here in *The Veteran*, as a comrade and friend for many years. We salute you, Eleanor!



JOE MILLER IS A NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER OF VVAW. HE SERVED IN THE US NAVY FROM 1961 TO 1968 AND IS A VETERAN OF THE GULF OF TONKIN "INCIDENTS" OF 1964. ELEANOR WAYMAN IS HIS AUNT, AND THEY BOTH LIVE IN THE CHICAGO AREA.



Eleanor with WAC comrade, 1945.



Eleanor on the night of her installation as American Legion Post Commander in 1956.



Eleanor (Aunt Shorty), Joe Miller, Dorothy Day, and Meg Miner at a Chicago Memorial Day event, 2007.

# "But the War Ended 25 Years Ago" Vietnam Veterans Talk To A Civilian Nurse

JEHNANA BALZER

Working as a registered nurse for 30 years in a large urban teaching hospital, I listened to countless fascinating patient histories. Our night shift crew never knew who we would tug off the gurney next: poor people and rich, sane people and psychotics, prisoners, cops, undocumented immigrants. Many of their tales still linger in my mind, but Vietnam veterans told the most unforgettable stories of all.

For them that horrifying war had never really ended. We nurses cleaned and bandaged physical injuries that were freshly layered onto old unhealed psychological wounds. In the 1980s and 1990s, I was reading memoirs and fiction by American and Vietnamese soldiers who describe how persistently the war still haunted them. Philip Caputo, Bao Ninh, Tim O'Brien, Tobias Wolff, James Webb, Stephen Wright. Their words carried my imagination backward in time to distant battles in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

But then I would clock in for work, meet my new patient, discover that he was a Vietnam vet, and suddenly the war became real, immediate, palpable. Sometimes I recorded their conversations in my nursing journals. Those impressions are edited here for length, clarity and HIPAA compliance.

By 1993, I had reached my own conclusions about why so many vets landed on our trauma/surgical floor. One night I confided this theory to a kidney transplant patient from the Lakota tribe:

## Winter 1993

He remembers the battles between the FBI and the American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee in the 1970s and argues that young hoodlums should all be drafted. "They must learn that people have fought and died for American values!" Though I did not ask about his time in Vietnam, he used his experiences there as an excuse for laying about in bed, "I know how much I can take. I have been to the wars. I have been to the rodeos." "Were you happy when YOU got drafted?" I asked. "NO!" He did not reply when I insisted that Vietnam had permanently damaged a generation of American males. If we take care of a guy aged 40 to 50 who is in the hospital because of ETOH abuse or suicide attempts or violence, there is a 50/50 chance he is a Vietnam vet.

During that war, young males from poor and minority communities were disproportionately more likely to enlist or be drafted than were middle class whites. My own patients demonstrate the accuracy of these statistics:

## Spring 2001

Last night when I admitted a stab wound to the neck patient from the emergency room I took one look at him and asked: "Which tribe do you belong to?" "Hualapi! From the Grand Canyon!" Pointing to old scars he mumbled an alcoholic boast, "I am a MARINE! I been to VIETNAM! I am a WARRIOR! I want to kill that guy!" He couldn't or wouldn't tell me more about his assailant and did not answer when I asked, "What were you guys fighting about?" Like the ghost dancers Bill Miller sings about, this Native American has been destroyed by homelessness and unemployment. "My wife don't want me no more. My mother told me to join the military, she is dead now. I can't quit drinking. I don't take my insulin because I am too drunk. I am going blind ... I just get mad at myself."

## Spring 1996

This evening his niece came to visit my Black gun shot wound patient.

She told me: "He won scholarships in high school and we were all so proud of him. Then he signed on for 7 years in the Army and came home a completely different person," withdrawn, paranoid, drinking port wine alone in his room. According to the psychiatric nurse practitioner, my patient has "the bizarre notion that his parents are not really his parents. He thinks they are doppelgangers."

What happened to this man during his time in the military? The trauma doc and the social worker and the nurse practitioner and I all try to answer that riddle so that we can get him the VA benefits that he clearly needs. But he speaks only if we question him directly. And he asks us for nothing. I took care of many soldiers who felt neglected and wronged by the Veterans Administration. But they did not always get real help at the hospital where I worked either, and my colleagues occasionally expressed callow attitudes toward the vets.

## Spring 1990

Yesterday I listened to a medical student denounce the Veterans Hospital. "You draw your own labs because if you don't they never get done." "Yah!" I agreed. "The Reaganites go on and on about honoring veterans yet they cut back on funding until the veterans hospital is almost nonfunctional!" Suddenly a gulf opened between this aspiring young professional and myself, an old 1960's anti-war demonstrator. Rather than utter a word against Reagan or Bush, the doc blamed the veterans instead. "Some of those old guys just want 3 squares a day and a warm bed. If you check back through their history you find that they have had themselves admitted 30 times in the past year for the same complaints."

## Autumn 1990

My patient last night was admitted with seizures after a two-week-long vodka and beer binge during which he vomited any food he tried to eat. "He has a strange affect," said Jane during her report but there is nothing strange about this patient at all. He is simply a victim of USA policies in SE Asia. "I have had seizures ever since I got injured in Vietnam. I was a fool. I just wondered if I could try alcohol again after no drinking for 3 years but it only makes things worse." I plugged AA and warned about cirrhosis and pancreatitis but mostly we discussed his depression and his antagonism against the Veterans Administration. "I will go to court and ask for reparations. I was exposed to Agent Orange, you know. And now they are doing the same thing to these guys ..." In the darkened room his voice was more hopeless than angry. "Spending hundreds of billions of dollars a day to keep those troops in Saudi Arabia but when the guys come home they will say, we can't afford to help you, we need to cut back expenses!"

If Bush institutes the draft again my patient's two sons will be eligible. "It may not be patriotic but I told them: Don't go!" Were you melancholy before you got sent to Vietnam? I asked. "No! I was the life of the party!"

He thanked me for talking to him. "Hell!" I replied. "I am from your generation too and what happened in Vietnam was not your fault. You guys did what you thought was right, what you were told to do. Don't let the bastards get you down." Sadly he answered, "But the war ended 25 years ago." He is disabled by despondency so deep that he had to quit selling the Encyclopedia Britannica though the work is gratifying and earned him \$80,000/year.

When I described the bureaucratic hassles of getting an appointment for

my mother-in-law at the VA hospital he said, "I don't let them tell me there is no record of my appointment. I stay until they see me!" Never once did he blame war resisters nor even the country at large for his predicament. He holds the USA government itself responsible.

## Autumn 1992

Another vet was a pulmonary fibrosis patient so near death that he conferred with lawyers about his DO NOT RESUSCITATE orders while I cared for him. "If the government finally acknowledges that Agent Orange scarred my lungs do you think I will still be alive when they pay compensation?" as he challenged me when I suggested that he seemed depressed about his deteriorating respiratory condition. The man could not even pull up his sheet without getting winded. "How long did it take them to compensate the Japanese who were incarcerated during WWII? Forty years? The VA gives me medical care but won't admit that Agent Orange caused my disease. So I won't get disability payments and anyway I do not want to lie in bed for years and years."

## Spring 1991

This is a story about the irrationality of the US medical system. Last week we saved the life of an alcoholic Vietnam vet found comatose on a sidewalk, dying of heat prostration and seizures. While still groggy with fever, ETOH, and post-ictal lethargy, he had called me a bitch and a cunt. Then he woke up and explained that he had been "living on beer and cigarettes for the past week." Though the medical resident and I both questioned this patient's capacity for change, we agreed that we should give him the benefit of the doubt. But we could not find him the medications he needed to weather his withdrawal from alcohol. He was discharged on Saturday afternoon and could not cash his check until Monday, so how was he supposed to pay for the Librium that would prevent delirium tremens during those 36 hours? The resident tried and failed to procure Librium pills for him, calling Mercy Clinic and the emergency room in vain. I violated hospital policy by handing him a sack containing the four 25 milligram tablets of Librium that I found in his medication drawer, but he needed 6 or 8 doses of Librium 50 milligrams.

"Your social worker's notes say you can get seizure medications at the VA hospital," I told him. "Yah, but he does not know the VA like I know the VA!" replied this lost soul, bruised and unwashed, who hadn't even one friend to visit him in hospital. I did not pretend that his cynicism was unjustified.

I did not always see eye-to-eye with the veterans I met in the hospital. Vietnam opened fissures in this nation that never really closed again.

## Summer 1992

In the past fortnight I have cared for two different guys who went to Vietnam. The chronic kidney stone patient warned us nurses that "I can get violent if you wake me up without warning!" When I muttered, "Oh shit!" while fixing his IV he assured me that he believes in freedom of speech. "The only thing I do not believe in is freedom of choice! If you kill a pregnant female in a highway accident you are charged with 2 counts of manslaughter but they say abortion is not murder?" I wondered why he went to Vietnam if he is such a pacifist? But our incipient argument was defused when he agreed with my reply, "Letting males decide whether or not women must bear children is

like letting women decide whether men should be sent into battle!"

## Autumn 1989

I am caring for a guy of my generation who is long since destroyed by the Vietnam war and his subsequent drug abuse, bad temper, political ignorance. He enlisted for that evil war, which he tells me he is unwilling to discuss. Then he signed on with Soldier of Fortune magazine to fight in Zimbabwe against the Africans and Mugabe, a scheme he never actually carried through on. When he pulled a gun on the police twice they shot him in each shoulder after a chase. His wife had called the cops because he was trying to assassinate her and now he will probably go to prison. Because of the damage to nerves and muscles in his upper extremities the poor bastard won't be able to defend himself against other jailbirds.

I feel pity for him and do not question this society's obligation to heal his wounds, pay for his occupational therapy and drug rehab and give him a fair trial. Still, I balk at feeding him and brushing his teeth, placing and emptying his urinal, washing his hair and his ass. I wonder why I should minister so intimately to a guy who killed Vietnamese peasants and volunteered to murder African freedom fighters?

Sometimes a survivor of the Vietnam war reminded me of characters I had met before in literature. I once took care of a self-described "burnt-out nurse" who could have stepped from the pages of the Sigrid Nunez novel "For Rovenna," about a military field hospital nurse who kills herself after returning from Vietnam to the USA.

## Winter 1994

My patient's numerous medical issues include 5 years of heroin addiction which she did not mention to me. But she did tell me that her two brothers, both of them Vietnam vets, are dead of ETOH abuse. Never graduating from any nursing school, she learned on the job in country how to care for soldiers burned by napalm, legless, armless, guys who died in her arms with blood seeping from their ears and noses.

This patient sees herself as a comforting mama-style nurse. "One boy said to me: hold me as if I were your son ... and then he died." But she resents male Vietnam vets who do not understand how that war affected the women who took care of them. "Nurses were their lifeline to the states, blond hair and blue eyes, brown hair and green eyes. But when we complain that Vietnam was hard for us too they say, you were never in combat! They expect us to be mothers and girlfriends, nurturing the one lone feeling they still have left."

For a while this patient worked with a nurse who seemed born for her military career, working shift after shift without a break, never flinching when burn victims screamed at her during debridement. I would wonder, how does she DO that? And then one day without saying a word to anyone she went home, drank a fifth of whiskey, and blew her brains out. She had gotten a letter from her husband, a photo of himself standing beside his new love. :Guess what? I can't wait a whole year for you to come home! I want to get laid now!"

How I wish I could write eloquently enough to transform my black and white and Apache Vietnam veteran into the hero of his very own absurd and comic tragedy!

*continued on page 27*

# A Portrait of Exile: Mauricio Hernandez Mata

CHARLEY TRUJILLO AND EMMANUEL CERVANTES MEJIA

*This is the story of Mauricio Hernandez Mata, who serves as one example of the hundreds, if not thousands of deported veterans who served during peacetime and times of war including the Vietnam war. The purpose of this article is to share his story and advocate for his rights to his benefits.*

Schofield barracks, Hawaii; it was my birthday and I had the day off. My mom called me early in the morning, around five o'clock on 9/11/2001, "Mom," I said, "It's still early. I'll call you back later and I don't have time for happy birthdays." She replied asking, "are you guys going to war?" I didn't think it was funny but asked, "what happened?" I turned on the TV in time to see the tower smoking and then after the second plane crashed, my other line rang and they called in the red alert. I hung up on my mom, kissed my baby and wife goodbye, reported in with full battle-rattle and quarantined civilians visiting on base at gunpoint.

They called all the units in. We were given a briefing, the levels were elevated on base, and everything got stricter. It may sound weird or morbid but I was waiting for my turn. I knew a lot of people were going to die but I was happy to go to war.

I volunteered to go to Iraq in 2003, but I was locked in for Afghanistan in 2004 and I entered Afghanistan with the advanced party. When the main unit arrived in Bagram Air Force Base, a two star general received them and I took what he told us to heart, he said "There are consequences for you guys

to be here. You signed on the dotted line and don't expect anyone to be grateful. No one put a gun to your head. Consider yourself a dead man. The sooner you can do that, the better off you're going to be. Look to your left and right and thank the man next to you for his ultimate sacrifice, he's probably not going to be there when you go home." If I wouldn't have taken his advice, I may not be here even after Afghanistan.

I was an 11 Charlie sixty mortar man, eager and obligated to go on over one hundred and sixty of my company's missions. The truth of the general's advice came to fruition when men began losing arms, legs, torsos and their lives mostly to improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

On every mission I always had four to six grenades, at least 6 mortar rounds, six MRE's because I was a big guy, a 64 ounce camel water bag in addition to five water bottles per day and saline solution that I would use as needed.

"I'm going to smash these people and ask questions later." I had a reaction, mainly out of anger and some self-preservation. I didn't think of them in a friendly manner or to free the local population. I was there during the first presidential elections and I saw one hundred candidates on the ballot and everyone checked one box. "That's not democracy. That's manipulation at its best." I knew people who got blown up or were getting sent home and all this turned me into a savage and all I wanted to do is kill people. It got to a point when there wasn't any value,

it wasn't fun or dull. It was a surprise to me what the human mind and will, can get used to. I forgot the emotion and the value of another human life unless it was the men fighting there right next to me and when they were killed it was like "sucks to be you guy."

To me, I would like to believe it was America kicking ass for the twin towers and letting terrorists around the world know that we weren't going to take crap. We were going to take it to them with an eleven-year war and do whatever it takes to strike them with the fear of God. Now, I hope and wish that this were true. There are a lot of people who say it was for oil or politics. But war is money; war is an industry. During wartime, someone gets rich and a lot of people die for that. I was there just over a year and I was sober, hating life and became angry when I wasn't on a mission. People don't want to know, Americans don't want to know the things that happen, most want to take liberty for granted. They don't think about the small percentage of Americans of all ethnic backgrounds losing their families because of war.

"Don't worry, you're entitled to all your benefits. As a civilian, that's never going to disqualify you for your benefits." That's what I was told and when I went home, I never worried to look into my citizenship. When deployed, they inquired to everyone's citizenship status and when I asked why they replied, "so you can sign it and when you die, you get your citizenship and hence, a promotion. This is for your citizenship. I believe

it is applicable to the oath you swore to the Army." The reason I'm deported is because I didn't die overseas like I was supposed to. I should be a hero, not lost and forgotten.

When I got out of the Army, I was hearing voices in my head and I couldn't look at anyone. I lived by myself, painted my windows black and got rid of all the mirrors because I couldn't look at myself. It was such an extreme, I felt everyone wanted to harm me and I wanted to kill him or her first. My life after the war led me to be arrested for possession with attempt to sell. I did do what they said I did but I paid my debt to society, I served in combat. I didn't think about the consequences and the impact that it would have on those around me and I as a person. For the last ten years I've been dealing with PTSD and the crap that has happened to me. I never took PTSD into consideration or even knew it existed. I went and fought because that's what we needed to do and I say we because I'm an American, I was born in Mexico but I grew up in San Diego, California. I'm not saying I'm owed anything; all I ask for is the benefits I was told I was entitled to.



EMMANUEL CERVANTES MEJIA IS THE AUTHOR OF "SOLEDAD AND THE SEA," AND "SHOULD I KILL MYSELF OR HAVE A CUP OF COFFEE?" CHARLEY TRUJILLO IS VIET NAM VETERAN AND THE AUTHOR OF "DOGS FROM ILLUSION," AND "SOLDADOS: CHICANOS IN VIET NAM." BOTH RESIDE IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

## "But the War Ended 25 Years Ago"

continued from page 26

Spring 1990

Big hullabaloo last night when my patient threatened suicide. I had gotten fond of this guy though I also understand why his ex-wife distrusts his drug addiction, his gun collecting, his Harley-Davidsons and his frequent suicide attempts. "One day I put a straw hat on her and opened fire." "What do you mean, a straw hat?" I asked. "And black pajamas, man, I thought I was back in NAM!" Though he does not blame this woman for leaving him, she was the immediate cause of his talk about jumping from the 7th floor.

"I do not see any other way out. My old lady cleaned out the \$2,000 from our bank account. I got no way to pay the rent and my daughter is out on the street ... If I jump my girl will get my life insurance money from the Veterans Administration." The night shift supervisor was not sympathetic, "Tell him that when you commit suicide in a Catholic hospital all your money goes to the pope!"

My patient expresses no qualms about his participation in the war. "I have a machete I took off an NVA soldier I killed. Hell, he was a

communist! And he did not need it anymore." He had conned the Army into letting him enlist, "I could not pass the test cause I did not finish school so another guy wrote the exam for me."

He wanted to go to Vietnam to avenge the death of "my brother." Abandoned by his white biological parents, he had been adopted by a black family and raised on the San Carlos Apache rez. "I don't belong to any race!" He lost most of his intestine to a gun-shot wound when he taunted a stranger in a tavern. "You're just a pussy! You ain't got the balls to shoot me!" For 6 years he has been kept alive intravenously by total parenteral nutrition but his prognosis is not good. "I got no more veins man! This is my last portacath and now I got this abscess in my brain because the cath is infected. I'm a mess!" When I offered to cut the long hair that he is too weak to brush anymore he protested, "No! That is all I got left! Apaches never let their hair be cut!"



JEHNANA BALZER WAS A REGISTERED NURSE FROM 1984 TO 2013.

## Her Hands V2

Arrived at RVN field hospital number nine  
Riding shotgun in ambulance number six  
Three wounded soldiers in the back  
To be discharged for surgery

She stood outside the tent, dark eyes  
alive to all around, black hair piled in a bun.  
Starched white dress reaching to her knees,  
Sleeves three quarters long, then I noticed her hands

There are some hands so beautiful, so soft;  
Slender like hers, long thin fingers  
Embellished with no varnish red or pink,  
yet all aglow and full of gentle grace

This woman has vowed to get involved, to care.  
Her hands will be the tender touch required  
They will bring balm, assuaging aches and pains:  
will bind and bandage healing hurts and wounds.

They're treasures lavished on the battleground.  
They're treasures spent to praise a fighter's pluck.  
They're treasures symbolized by this one sign  
a cross bright red beneath the golden sun

Compassion here enfolds the field of war.  
Here they sustain and nurse a hero's will.  
Here soldiers, stricken down, for comfort lie.  
Held in arms covered in brilliant white.

—David Sandgrund



VVAW at 1972 GOP Convention.

## Portrait of a Young Boy At Dawn

The green metal bird shimmies  
North along the muddy banks  
Sweeps south, flying high, low  
A risky business feeling them out  
The tall slender reeds bowing  
Beneath us.

We bank hard right, dip again  
Blowing the green curtain down  
The boy equally stunned  
His mud laden AK no match

In the forever time  
His astonished face, his forever No!  
When brrraaapp flips him backward  
His starry cartwheel a bloody splash  
Dissolved in mud.

In the cool morning air we nose up  
Thankfully pull away, his immense  
Frightened eyes follow me  
Forever wake me at home.

—Marc Levy

## Portrait of a Young Girl At Dawn

In the breeze  
The sudden quiver and sway  
The shadow of bamboo leaves  
Twirling onto the hot dry earth,  
The squad standing quiet  
Over the stiffening  
Man, made headless  
By the machine gun team.  
Weapons and water  
Scattered about,  
The twice shot girl  
Reaching for my canteen.  
What to do? What?  
I patch her wounds,  
Splint her legs  
With rotted bamboo.  
There is the sudden sound  
Of yellow smoke.  
The medivac dips,  
Kicks out a litter.  
We lift her up,  
They haul her in.  
Beneath the whirling blades  
She is spinning, spinning  
She is floating away.

—Marc Levy



Medic walking toward wounded NVA female. Song Be, 1970. Photo by Jeff Motyka.

## Good Morning Vietnam . . .

MICHAEL NELSON

It was hot. Really hot.

I was sitting with my class from Chaplain Assistant School. Yes, there really is such a thing as Chaplain School. We were gathered around a picnic table in Saigon.

The chaplain in charge was pointing to a large map of Vietnam as he told each of us where we were headed. I was patiently waiting for my name to be called.

But it wasn't.

About half of us were staying in Saigon, which he said, "Was like duty in the World, shined boots, starched fatigues and lots of saluting."

He would occasionally comment

on the assignments, like Cam Ranh Bay and Qui Nhon as "resort" duty.

As he said a name and pointed to the map, he was moving further and further north.

Finally...and it really was final...I was the last person not called.

He pointed to the DMZ.

He said, "This is where you're going Nelson."

My immediate response was, "Am I a prisoner of war?"

Everyone chuckled...but everyone knew I was going too far north.

He said, "The chaplain at Dong Ha is having morale problems and

requested someone who plays the guitar."

I said, "I played bass in a band in high school, but we only knew 4 songs and they all had the same chords and we played each one for 30 minutes."

Everyone chuckled again...because they really knew I was going too far north.

He replied, "Well, you checked the guitar box in basic training."

I said, "I checked every box that would indicate I had no aptitude for the infantry."

Again, chuckles all around. I didn't mean to be the class clown, it was forced upon me considering the

situation.

As I looked around the picnic table, I could see the look in my classmates' eyes.

You know the "look," its the "sorry you're going to die" look.

I thought to myself, "How did I get here?"

My next thought was, "Perhaps I should take notes."



MICHAEL NELSON WAS A CHAPLAIN ASSISTANT WITH THE 212TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION STATIONED AT DONG HA AND MARBLE MOUNTAIN IN 1971.



Barry Romo at Chicago VVAW Memorial Day Event, May 30, 2016.

# Upside Down: The March on Washington April 24, 1971

JOHN RETALLACK

Just published: "Upside Down" is a book of 26 photographs from the March on Washington held on the Mall in Washington, DC on April 24, 1971. As you probably know, VVAW's Dewey Canyon III had just completed. Saturday, the following day, 200,000 civilians from all walks

of life including veterans from World War II and Korea joined the remaining VVAW veterans. The pictures were taken that Saturday. The book is available at Blurb.com. 10% of all sale income will be donated to support VVAW.



JOHN RETALLACK WAS IN THE ARMY MEDICAL CORPS STATIONED IN GERMANY 1962-1965 AND IS CURRENTLY A VVAW MEMBER. AFTER DISCHARGE, HE STUDIED PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND MOVED TO NYC TO PURSUE A CAREER IN ADVERTISING. IN 1980, HE BEGAN TEACHING AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

STARTING AT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS IN NYC AND ULTIMATELY AT THE SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS & SCIENCES AT ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. HE IS NOW RETIRED AND WORKING IN FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY. MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT WWW.JOHNRETALLACK.COM.



**UPSIDE DOWN**



## Don't Be Fooled Again

RENÉE CHEVALIER

Before 1964 I was upset with the way all Veterans were treated in VA hospitals that were and still are underfunded.

I was formed, or as I like to say programmed, by our teachers and the law. When we were in Public School we were required to say the pledge of allegiance and it was against the laws of our land to refuse to have the pledge of allegiance said at the start of any school day.

The lessons in school as well as the movies we saw growing up were all about freedom and what our fore fathers and mothers experienced during our past wars and our war for freedom from England. I remember at a young age before I went into the military, my mind being formed by romantic novels of men and women who went to war and suffered through the perils of war. Suffering but overcoming the hardships of war.

We all seem to feel that romantic urge that pushes us toward the idea of the romance of war—it certainly is not. There is no romance in being blown out of your bed into a wall in the middle of the night. Nor is there any romance in having to sit up all night long straining your eyes and ears for sounds or sights that might indicate a push to over run the first line of defense by the enemy.

Where is the romance in hearing a room full of ill and mostly injured men and women groaning or screaming out in pain? Where is the romance when wives or husbands see that partner in bed unable to turn over because they are paralyzed from the neck down or from the waist down? Where is the romance in listening to Veterans complaining that they will be in the

hospital for the rest of their lives because of the injuries they received in this or that action?

Romance should not be any part of consideration for going into the military, or supporting your country.

Induction physicals were not done by doctors. They were done by a sergeant who would have inductees walk away from him to a line on the floor and back. If they were able to walk then the next part of the physical was to look at their hands and see if they had a trigger finger on the hand that would be used to fire the weapon. The biggest thing at the time was did they have teeth on the right side so they could tear a paper cartridge end to put the powder and bullet into the weapon to load the weapon.

Most of the stories we heard and read in our history books lead us to believe that our government played fair. But when we find out they did nothing fairly it outrages us and makes us want to protest our government and tar and feather the representatives who gave their own children a way out of war and the military. They got favors from the draft board, had money to pay a doctor to lie about a son's medical condition or send a child of theirs to a school for a deferment. They also got their sons into the reserves or the Coast Guard. So they didn't have to go to war. A good example of the aforementioned is G. W. Bush getting into the Texas Air Guard (National Guard).

Seeing the numbers of people who were able to avoid going into the military I became disillusioned with our government and the people running the country from the President down to the people in a job working for the government. And that goes

back to my tender age of 20 while first in the military and reading about our government and the crooks and thieves who run it. Disillusion with the government is very serious, especially by people who joined the military to enforce the government and its rule. They dream of serving their country only to find out the officials, even the president of our country, are crooks and thieves.

George W. Bush came into office and cut billions out of the VA budget, so veterans who were promised lifetime medical care from the VA Hospitals only to find out the budget cuts put through by the Republican President cut funds to care for them. To make things worse, he reinstated a few million to the budget that he cut just before his election was to come up so he could get Veterans to vote for him. This happens all the time with Senators and Congressmen, as well as many elected officials who run for town, city, state and even state governor.

What can we do about it short of a revolution? Nothing, because they write the rules and even vote themselves raises and refuse to be part of the herd and use the same health care we all are forced to use, or the same laws we are forced to follow, or even the same prison system we are forced to be a part of. Why is that? Because we allow the liars to lie and the thieves to steal from us without consequence.

What must we do?

We must insist on a blind justice. We also must insist in government by the people, not by the corporations or the rich. We must elect hard working people who have served

their government and people before they become an elected official. By serving the people and government we must insist that those servants of the government are vetted and their claims are proven. And that they are not posers like Clinton, Trump, Bush, and Obama, just to name a few.

Our system of government is broken. The people who are running the country are not the people elected to do the job. They are huge corporations or extremely rich people. Those front men, like the carpetbaggers who invaded the south after the civil war, are just window dressing to make you feel like you are being treated fairly.

We could revolt and tear down the government and rebuild it. But would that work? People are gullible and believe others, the wrong others.

So what happens when we have a military that is leaning towards a Christian Army of God not the people? With ministers and priests and others in the Religious community forcing the military into an "in God We Trust" scenario not in our government. Why?

Because fat old men who wear dresses have a voice in our government. Those fat old men condemn women and want the people of the world to look at women as the problem.

Women need the same rights as men. They have to have the choice or the freedom to choose as we are reported to have, and men have had all their lives.



RENÉE CHEVALIER IS A VIETNAM VETERAN 1968 – 1969 WITH COMBAT RELATED DISABILITY FROM SERVICE. SERVED IN CAM RANH BAY, VIETNAM, LONG BINH, VIETNAM AND THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM.

# Father Daniel Berrigan - Presente!

LOUIS DE BENEDETTE

Father Daniel Berrigan - peace activist, writer, and friend of VVAW.

Father Dan energized the movement against the Vietnam war. He was a member of the Catonsville 9, that burned draft files with homemade napalm in 1969.

Howard Zinn and Father Dan flew to Hanoi and brought home three US pilots, but not without observing the US bombing.

Father Dan came to our VVAW anniversaries in New York. He thought highly of VVAW, as many of us did of him.

Father Dan was a member of the Plowshares 8, which hammered on nuclear shrouds at the plant in King of Prussia, PA.

Father Dan never ceased resisting evil.

He died April 30, 2016. He was

94.

His brothers Philip and Jerry have also died.

Presente! Daniel, Philip, and Jerry.



*LOUIS DEBENEDETTE IS A LONGTIME ACTIVIST AND MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN ITHACA, NY.*



## Vietnam Remembered

I rose from the seat that hot March day,  
To a strange, foreign land a half globe away.  
I thought to myself, "This place smells like shit",  
But too numb to say or think more on it.  
The air was heavy, so humid, so thick;  
I feared I'd collapse before walking a click.  
Departing the plane we were ordered to stand;  
Forming two ranks by a shouted command.  
"Attenn-hut! Salute!" Came the ordering cry,  
We snapped to respect without knowing why.

Facing the gangplank, in withering heat  
Wondering what "lifer" we'd been pressed to greet.  
Fighter jet banshees screamed by so loud;  
As we sweat in silence, our minds in a cloud.  
Trucks moved in slowly and stopped near our plane;  
We stiffened salutes knowing we're in the game.  
Men jumped down quickly to the loading prepare,  
No lifers? No hotshots? No big-wigs were there.  
Only just boxes... handled gently with care.  
Long wooden boxes took the seats we left there;  
As we watched and saluted and stood there steadfast.  
The boxes were carried, through our vigil they passed.  
We all too soon knew without uttering a sound;  
The reason our lines were formed and held this ground.

Our brothers were leaving.

They are going home.

Not to hear speeches or fanfare or praise;  
Not to hear taps as they're placed in their graves.  
Not to get married, have children or dreams fulfilled;  
But wait in our shadows, their gardens untilled.

Sleep well my brothers, your hell is over.

"Atten-hut! ..... At ease, men!"  
Gasping for breath and sweating like rain;  
We heard a voice call out a sardonic refrain:  
"Welcome to Vietnam, gentlemen."

So many years have passed since that day;  
I boxed up those memories and stored them away.  
Many worse memories are packed along side;  
I wonder what's real and what still I hide.  
Long wooden boxes locked up so tight;  
But magically open on some sultry night  
They dance in my visions, they screwed with my head;  
They shriek in my nightmares, their screams I so dread  
Blurred faces, names forgotten, emotions that died;  
I walk through life feeling nothing inside.  
Dreams were a cursed, wretched array,  
Parades of dead warriors I've packed away.  
Their faces sometimes vivid, their names on a wall;  
I try to keep moving in spite of them all.

I hope they know the prayers said in their name;  
I hope they look fondly of the man I became.  
Their life was sadly taken for some senseless cause,  
Their spirit lives on and their love gives me pause.

They sacrificed their all for us...  
We must live our best for them.

Sleep well my brothers, 'til we meet again.

—David Sandgrund



Gainesville 8 Demo, Gainesville, Florida, August, 1973.

## 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

## A Load of Stone

STEVE GEIGER

I grew up on a farm in east central Ohio. It was 125 acres, at the time, small to average. Most farmers supplemented their income with some other work: in the local paper mill or driving a school bus. During WWII a farmer could get a deferment because farms = food and it doesn't matter whether the produce was food or fiber or tobacco, the product was needed for the people as much as bombs were for the machine. I assume his father got one a generation before during The Great War. Mechanization meant farming was no longer a horse drawn activity so a male was needed to get it done. What this all meant was I did not come from a military tradition. When the time came, I would be the patriot in the family, either by default of being the second son who didn't get a deferment (one son could get a deferment for the same reasons as the father) or by naïveté.

But in the early 50's on the school playground the military played its role, a sort of trickle down effect following the war. First grade was a blur. Later there were discussions around "What did your father do in the war?" This often featured the accusation that if your father didn't serve he was somehow not as patriotic as the accuser's father who had gone off either to Europe, the Pacific or later Korea. This came of course from someone whose father was in the Army. After a consultation at home over this question, "What did you do in the war, Daddy?" I was told to point out that somebody had to grow food or the Army wouldn't be able to fight. But my defense always seemed to ring a little hollow with the kid whose father was in the Army. After all, no one got shot plowing a field.

Flash ahead to 1966 and college and the draft and I was lobbying for AFROTC as a way to do my part. Being loving parents they didn't want their last born to be turned over to the dangers and unknown ways of military service, so there was the admission of fear on their part, and on mine, the first recognition that joining was not an entirely positive thing to do. They feared the worst. I was blind to the protesters on Ohio State University's (OSU) campus, perhaps I was in

denial; it did seem to me that there were no commies lurking off the Pacific coast and my course in the history of Vietnam taught me there was a civil war there. I only knew airplanes were a way to get out of there.

Their fear seemed a little overly emotional to me. What the fuck did I know about emotion? Looking back now—I clearly should have listened to them, but today I understand I should have been motivated by understanding the lies more than a fear of the unknown.

There was one farmer that I knew who was brave enough to voice the opinion that he wouldn't blame anyone for not sending his son off to this war. I do not know if he suffered anything more than whispers behind his back, but he was the only one that I heard voice that opinion. My parents neither defended him nor criticized. In Fairfield County, other than this dissenter, who now seems like a towering intellect, most defectors only spoke in whispers and only to those who they knew were in agreement. My memory is that only the youth were creating dissent to this war. Open dissent on campus was part of what only those radical Ohio State students did, but most in the countryside were not in favor of that "free speech" movement at OSU which was opposed by Ohio's Senator Bricker. He carried clout mostly because state schools received financial support from the government. Draft cards were being burned on many campuses, and the power structure saw that as a slap in the face, if not cowardly. Bricker tried to prevent the commie Herbert Aptheker from speaking on campus. Seems the First Amendment is subject to some limitations on state property. But Aptheker spoke and draft cards were burned.

So flash ahead further to 1973, a few months after I returned from flying missions in the B-52 and resumed civilian life. I was home on a visit, probably the first after leaving the service and I accompanied my father to the local quarry to get a couple tons of stone for the driveway in our two-ton '55 Chevy dump truck that was still in service hauling wheat to market. The quarry was a good 40

minutes away in that under-powered thing that could barely muster 45 mph when fully loaded. The quarry was a small operation, probably only two men, one front end loader and one guy on the scales. My dad was a township trustee and knew them from years of pothole maintenance that required a supply of stone each Spring, but those were brief encounters and as we shall see, didn't go very deep. They could easily go a year or two and not cross paths. Maybe they would say "Hi" at the county fair.

As the stone was being tended to, I'm hanging off one of the sideboards of the truck body looking into the bed as they dump gravel into it. Stone being dense, you couldn't fill that truck bed, only a couple cubic yards at most and it would be flat on the springs, literally groaning under the weight; by volume it was probably half full. There was an air of caution not to overload it. So my father and I are both watching and thinking about hills on the return trip and whether the truck could handle it and when to stop the loader. A bit of guesswork here, this was not a measured or practiced operation.

"That's enough!" And while the quarryman idled the tractor at the side of the truck, my dad said "This is my son, he just returned from Vietnam." The quarryman nodded and said . . . NOTHING. He may have grunted. Now I had plenty of anger at being "had" for the last 5 years, but I was simultaneously proud my dad identified me and surprised he had said anything at all about where I had been. And I was silently burning at the lack of enthusiasm I was getting from this guy, Perry County's representative of the Silent Majority. Not a "yea," "nay" or just "how ya doin'?" My father may have just been glad I was home in one piece, and this relative outburst caught him off guard too, but he definitely expected some approval from this guy. I think I also felt bad for my father. I felt his balloon deflate. What the FUCK had just happened?? But neither of us said anything.

This wonderful Midwestern one-syllable-jargon that passes for conversation in the mid lands and characterizes the level of political sophistication that is produced by the

local schools, is both an admission and a condemnation. In an instant I was left to wonder what had just gone down. Something surely had, but the convention was "don't make waves." My father may have had as much to be angry about as me, but he had to live with these people and frankly I only heard him cuss once in my life such was the depth emotions were buried by that society. I may have been the only one capable of speaking out, but I hadn't found my voice yet. I thought this was where the silent majority lived. It was all a lie. There was apparently no patriotism in these back woods, or this quarryman would have congratulated me.

On the other hand, maybe he thought I was one of the guys that lost this war? Maybe he lost a son or someone close and I was being ostracized. Maybe I was receiving the short end of "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." But being restrained in that Midwest demeanor—I said nothing and we returned to the task of moving the truck onto the scales and out of the stone yard. And so ended this mute stand-off.

Maybe it just caught him off guard. No. He was an asshole or stupid or both. More than likely it was an example of how unsophisticated we are as a country and how unable we are to cope with uncomfortable issues and deal with opposing views.

I don't remember what my dad and I talked about on the way back. We probably made our way home, breaking the silence with a comment on how the truck was really loaded down with this load of stone, laboring up one hill and over-revving on the downside. I do know we didn't talk about the war or the quarryman's grunted response to my dad's one moment of pride.

As I write this in 2016, I realize that I am, at age 70, still dealing with low-level PTSD.



STEVE GEIGER WAS A CAPTAIN IN THE USAF AND FLEW 225 MISSIONS FROM U-TAPAO, THAILAND AND ANDERSON, GUAM.

### The Less Than One Percent

LOOK, THERE'S LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF AMERICANS IN UNIFORM OUT HERE DEFENDING THE COUNTRY, FIGHTING THE NATION'S WARS...

SO THIS YEAR, WHEN YOU'RE CHOOSING A COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FOR US.

PRETEND YOU'RE OUT HERE WITH US.

