



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Volume 48, Number 2

Fall 2018

The River Keeps Flowing

From the VVAW National Office

"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man."—Heraclitus

Perhaps it is time to contemplate how VVAW has understood and acted in the struggle for change, our particular river.

Many, if not most of us, actually enlisted in the military, many specifically for Vietnam. The world we saw, having experienced the 1940s and 1950s, was black and white, good versus evil, communism against democracy. We, the USA, were the good guys; we wore the white hats. We were going to save the world from evil.

Then, through direct experience inside the military, the world seemed to change around us, as we came to face the reality of the lies we had been taught. We were ready to junk the old black and white way of thinking and replace it with a new black and white way of thinking. The former "bad guys" were now the good guys to us. Unthinkingly, we were still trapped in a two-dimensional worldview while the "river" flowed on. We were not the "same," but we had not yet figured out what that meant.

The world became more complex to us, and a struggle for peace and social justice was not going to be that easy - or simple. The material reality required deep analysis and flexibility in tactics and strategy, not knee-jerk responses. We owned up to the atrocities committed in Vietnam through our Winter Soldier

Investigation as a way of fighting against our war. These were hard lessons for most of us; "good guys" might not be totally "good," and "bad guys" often did "good" things.

For example, we could point to LBJ's "Great Society" in contrast to his knowingly deepening US involvement in an unjust and immoral war. Or, we might look at John McCain who used his POW "heroic" status to attain political power and push for more military conflict — "Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran" — as against his willingness to work with John Kerry in opening up diplomatic relations with Vietnam after a twenty-year embargo.

Over the years many peace groups welcomed our involvement in their efforts. Some attempted to manipulate us and pushed us to the front of the struggle, to legitimize their movements. We eventually learned that we in VVAW should determine our own level of involvement in any struggle. "Smiling faces" were not going to trap us for their own purposes. Unity of purpose, not unity for the sake of unity.

In our anti-militarism activities, we engage in counter-recruitment to expose young people to the lies of recruiters, to only join up with their eyes wide open. We use our own experiences to show what the military can be. We do not take a moralistic stance on whether or not someone should join the armed forces; That is their decision and they should make that decision only after serious thought and investigation.

In our struggles for peace and



Demo at the VA, Chicago, September 1974.

self-determination for all peoples, we sometimes found ourselves in opposition to pacifists and others on the "Left." Here is how we tried to explain our position some years ago:

"We have never cared about the so-called 'legality' of any war. If a war is just we support it, and if a war is unjust we oppose it, no matter the Constitution or the UN resolution. Korea and the Gulf War were both 'legal' by US and UN legalities, and yet no one in VVAW would have supported those unjust struggles.... VVAW has stood for a reality not tied to abstract legalisms and excuses. We have supported black people's rights even when the law denied them. We supported Native American rights at Wounded Knee even when US law denied them. Human rights, REAL rights, REAL people suffering and dying are the basis of our political reality and our social justice activism,

not the abstractions of a third year law student or some pompous academic." (The Veteran, Vol 29, no 2, Fall/Winter 1999)

Today, in the context of a racist and sexist pro-billionaire regime and its attack on many positive social programs, we in VVAW have linked up with a broad range of veterans' organizations to save the VA from privatization, whereas, in 1974, in a different set of real circumstances, we were engaged in a fight against the VA due to cuts in medical and educational benefits.

The river keeps flowing, and we in VVAW will stay true to the uncompromising struggle for peace and social justice. But we must always be aware of changing circumstances. Dogmatism and political purity will only isolate us.



My 1968: Vietnam, RFK, the "Police Riot," and Nixon's Election

JOE MILLER

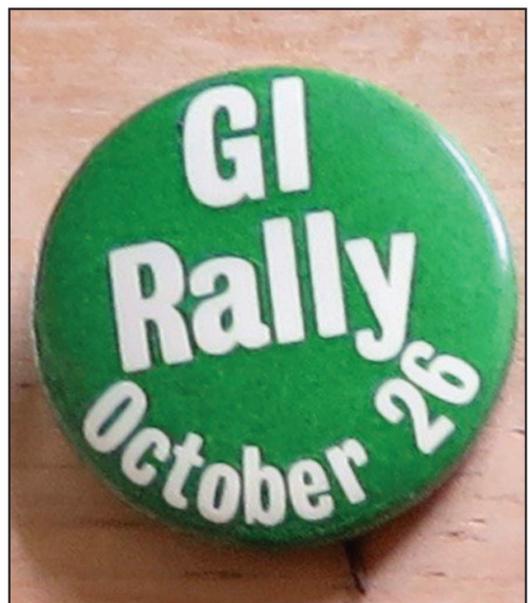
Following the shocks of LBJ's decision not to run in '68 and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination (and nationwide urban uprisings) in early spring, the April 27 demonstration in Chicago was the first post-Navy step into actual anti-war activity on my part. I would not call it 'radicalization,' since I was merely more liberal since I voted for Barry Goldwater in 1964 (that's a story for another time). Along with my Dad, I saw hope for ending the war in Robert F. Kennedy's campaign for the presidency, but I was also willing to engage in peaceful protest against the Vietnam War — which, in 1968, was still seen by too many as 'radical,' even 'treasonous.'

As I completed my first quarter of classes at Circle Campus in late May, things were heating up. The Democrats and anti-war liberals had Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy to support, even though Humphrey

had put his name into the mix in late April. The Republicans had Nixon. George Wallace was shaping up as the candidate for the white supremacist American Independence Party.

On our campus, seven student organizations had been suspended for inviting a member of the Communist Party USA to speak on campus. While those suspensions were rescinded by the end of the quarter, there was already growing student interest in positions well to the left of the Democrats. I was curious and often bought the various periodicals these groups sold at their lit tables, but remained a supporter of RFK.

I continued working the 11pm to 8am shift in the communications center at the *Chicago Daily News*. I maintained the teletype machines that brought in news from the UPI, AP, and City News Bureau, as well as our overseas reporters like Keyes Beech in



South Vietnam. Since the *Daily News* was an afternoon paper, the overnight shift was usually quite busy. On this overnight, June 4-5, however, it went to extremes.

Just after 2am Chicago time, we received the news that Kennedy beat McCarthy in the California primary. This meant he now had the lead in delegates to the upcoming convention. Within an hour, the news flash came in that Kennedy had been shot. All hell broke loose in the city room. I was trying to keep up with the incoming bulletins, while thinking, "I need to call Dad." Finally, I got to a phone and told him the news. All he said was "Oh, shit!" and he hung up. Kennedy died early the next day, June 6. My sister claims that, while sitting with her on the front steps that afternoon, I took off the peace medallion I usually wore and broke it in two. I do not recall this, but I would not be surprised. This

changed everything for me.

Events were pushing me to the left, it seemed. The death toll for Americans in Vietnam in May alone was 2,500. Perhaps naively, I believed that Kennedy was serious about ending the war. I did not believe anyone else could or would do it. It was now clear to many that Humphrey would get the nomination at the convention in August. But, the Yippies were coming! There would be a Festival of Life in Chicago! Yay!

Since 1965, I had been reading a wide range of books and magazines. In fact, even while in the Navy, I had subscriptions to *Ramparts*, *The Village Voice*, *San Francisco Oracle*, *East Village Other*, and *The Chicago Seed* (the latter few from 1967 onwards). I was intrigued by the so-called "counterculture" because it seemed to offer

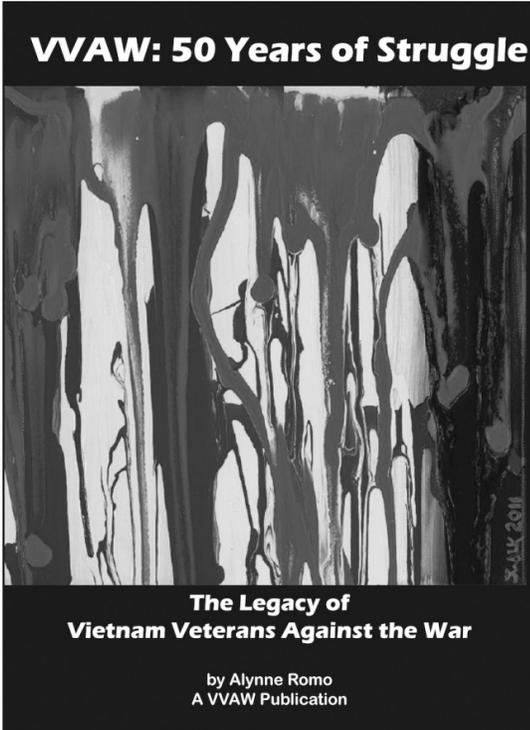
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vvaw@vvaw.org

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Available Now: VVAW 50 Years of Struggle



VVAW: 50 Years of Struggle The Legacy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

The book describes the moving history of VVAW over five decades and provides a timeline of VVAW's positions, protests, and takeovers. It also sets those powerful actions in the context of each era, starting with topics ranging from the impact of the civil rights movement, to the draft, to flawed operations in Vietnam.

By following five decades of VVAW, the reader also sees the evolution of US foreign policy mired in war crimes and domination; the intergenerational failures of the Veterans Administration; the unfolding of the story of Agent Orange; and much, much more.

The book will delight members of VVAW, but it is also written so that they may be understood—so that others can glimpse inside the world of these anti-war veterans and understand why they stood together and defied the wars, the racism, and the injustices of their times.

Published by and for VVAW, research for the book relied on VVAW archives. In addition to telling the overall history of the organization itself, it also thanks over 450 members who helped drive and inspire the organization. Fully indexed for use in libraries and classrooms.

Available for \$19.95 through VVAW's website www.vvaw.org/store/.

Truth, it is said, is war's first casualty. Memory is its second.—Tom Hayden, anti-war activist



VA Demo, Detroit.

Veteran Staff

Jeff Machota Bill Branson
Ellie Shunas Jen Tayabji

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Joe Miller, Mike Hastie, Bill Perry, Judy Randall, Ken Dalton, Marc Levy, Brian Matarrese, Michael Orange, Rick Danzl, Al Meece, Harry Wagner, and others for contributing photos.

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

**VVAW
 National Coordinators:**

Bill Branson	Joe Miller
Ann Hirschman	Meg Miner
Brian Matarrese	Marty Webster

**VVAW
 National Staff:**

Charlie Branson
 Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
 Jeff Machota

My 1968: Vietnam, RFK, the "Police Riot," and Nixon's Election

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new ways of thinking about human relationships and issues of war and peace.

Now, in mid-1968, all this seemed more relevant. To be sure, I was no "hippie," as I was still primarily into political change. Also, the fact that the underground press was tweaking the nose of the "establishment" was entertaining. The "politicos" like Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis, along with the great pacifist Dave Dellinger, were calling people to come to Chicago to demand the end of the war. As the summer went on, it certainly looked like a confrontation was brewing. Daley unleashed the Chicago police back in April. You could only assume there would be little restraint on them during this Democratic circus in August.

There are many good sources on these events. I was not in the streets. With a family and a full-time night job, my "experiences" were from afar. For example, driving to work on Monday and Tuesday nights, when remnants of the tear gas used in Lincoln Park came wafting across the Kennedy Expressway. Not in full force, mind you, but just enough to take me back to boot camp days. Then, on Wednesday night, I was working when some of the *Daily News* reporters and photographers who had been attacked by the police came back to the City Room. I recall photographer Paul Sequeira showing up with his broken hand after cops attacked him for doing his job. The "police riot" carried out its duty; it showed how painful it could be to exercise one's constitutional rights in a "democratic" society.

Daily News columnist Mike Royko and *Sun-Times* cartoonist Bill Mauldin were scathing in their indictments of Daley and the cops during this week. The word came down to the City Room from the publisher Marshall Field IV for both papers to ease off on their critical articles about Daley and the police. Royko and Mauldin both threatened to resign publicly if any of their work was pulled from the papers. They had the clout that younger reporters did not have. [Later in the year, many of these younger reporters would establish the *Chicago Journalism Review*]. Oh, and

Humphrey got the nomination, even though he did not win a single primary.

One month later, on September 28, my wife and I joined ten to twenty thousand people in a march to Grant Park to show Daley and the police that we would not give up our rights to protest in a "gestapo state." On October 26 we attended a "GI Rally" at some Loop hotel. We heard a GI resister, Howard Petrick speak, followed by Mike Klonsky of SDS. When Klonsky came to the microphone, he said: "We are moving from this [flashing the peace sign] to this [raising his fist in defiance]." It was clear that this year had been a watershed for the anti-war

and social justice movements. Personally, I was still in motion. Politically, where did I fit in?

The question remained: who would I vote for in November? Humphrey would obviously be limited in his policy toward the war while LBJ was still around. Nixon had a "secret plan," but no one could really trust him since he was there at the very beginning of the war. Some on the fringes were calling for a vote for George Wallace, which would show the country how bad things could get—then, The Revolution. Ultimately, I decided to write-in Dick Gregory, the Illinois Peace and Freedom Party candidate,

since PFP was not on the ballot. It was a gesture.

Did such gestures cause the election of Nixon and the continuation of the war for another seven years? He got 47% of the vote and Humphrey got 44%. So, who could really say? My Dad, a longtime union Democrat, voted for Nixon. What a year that was!



JOE MILLER IS A NAVY VETERAN, 1961-68. NAVAL SECURITY GROUP, 1961-64. USS TICONDEROGA (CVA14), 1964-66. HELTRARON 8, 1966-68. HE IS A VVAW NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER.



Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

As I write this in September it's been a couple of pleasant weeks of watching the days' news. That's because the bloodsuckers in Trump's orbit - his advisers and co-conspirators from his campaign, his presidency and his personal life - get exposed, indicted, convicted and sentenced. And books are appearing that show just how bad things are in the White House, making us all feel good because we told you so. It's a pleasant feeling. However, it tends to cover up awareness of greater dangers. One of the greater dangers is that the president of the United States is a fascist - in deed if not by name.

Fascism came into existence (philosophically) in Italy in the 1920's. One of the original fascists there was Benito Mussolini. He and his cohorts came out with a manifesto in 1919. It contained a lot of good stuff for working stiff and their families. Then in 1920 Mussolini and crew started to make alliances with industrial businesses. They abandoned populism and began to promote free enterprise. Over the years there developed variations in other countries. That original form of support was supposed to be a boon to the ordinary worker, farmers and everyone else as they dealt with the bosses and the politicians. With the Great Depression coming on top of the devastation of World War I, people were receptive to this new idea, especially in Europe. Fascist parties sprang up in many countries. Most of them never amounted to much, getting small percentages of the vote. In a few countries fascism prospered. Most notable were Italy under Mussolini, Spain under Franco and Germany under Hitler. Any connection with the improvement of the working class quickly disappeared. These fascist governments came to be supported by and allied with their country's capitalists. In behalf of the capitalists they eventually brought class warfare. Unions and other progressive organizations were

trashed and people's programs never gained traction.

The same thing happened in Germany. Some of the largest corporations in Germany made peace with Hitler who kept their profits flowing as he eliminated unions and lowered wages. These corporations reciprocated that support. Included were American corporations such as GM, Ford, Coca-cola. IBM, Standard Oil, DuPont, ITT, and GE. All profited and had a role in rearming Germany leading up to World War II. Relations between American corporations and Hitler soured a bit from 1938 to 1940, but they still had branch factories in Germany during the war, profiting on both sides and preparing for a return to Germany after the war.

Of course fascism wouldn't come to the United States. Could it? The idea is and has been here. Back in the time of the Great Depression fascism was a serious topic of debate in this country. Corporate leaders and individuals like Charles Lindbergh and Father Coughlin pushed it. Father Coughlin was sort of the Rush Limbaugh of that time with a radio show that reached a wide audience. Compared to Limbaugh, Coughlin was more influential because radio was then the prime means of communication whereas today we have TV, twitter and more. And then in the 1950's we had Senator Joe McCarthy and the red scare. At the time people were afraid of big bad communists infecting our society. McCarthy took advantage of this to promote himself, finding reds everywhere. There was panic as people feared all those reds that Tailgunner Joe was uncovering. McCarthy was not a veteran, by the way. Society was on the brink. Godless communists seemed to be a real threat. People rallied behind McCarthy, feeding his need to be the center of attention. (Recognize Trump?) Any kind of dissent or cultural development was stifled. Panic ensued for those to

the left of the political center. They began to hunker down and lock their doors at night. McCarthy had a run of about three years, which were three years without political dissent in this country. And that's a dangerous thing. Strains of this type of political thought have been and are here.

But it couldn't happen here in a big way. We've outlasted the Father Coughlin's and Joe McCarthy's. There's something about us that it won't happen. Right? Three years ago who would have said that a Trump would be a president. Fascist leaders seem to have certain programs to which they speak. For one they speak to the dissatisfaction of the working class. They also get over by appealing to nationalism. When times are hard and many are scuffling to just get by they come up with simple answers. Most people think their nation is the best. So the demagogue tells the people, "We will make (insert a country's name) great again." He will buddy up to and help make wealthy some capitalists in your country who in turn will financially support him. He will call attention to the real sources of our problem. That would be the communists. Or the Jews. Or the trade unionists.

As for Trump? You too can wear your red baseball cap saying "Make America Great Again" as you listen to him brag about his tax bill. That's the same bill about which he brags in private to his wealthy friends that he just made them a lot of money. You'll hear him diss Obamacare as he tries to implement his own plan that separates millions from a link to health care. He will clarify why we have the problem in the first place. It's the immigrants, of course. And while he blusters about immigrants and kneeling football players, by legislation, executive orders or through judicial appointments he guts basic protections for workers, consumers and the environment. Gains

made from the Great Society and Civil Rights advances are disappearing.

I don't think we are near to fascism in this country, although Trump makes you wonder. After all, he has brought up the idea of violence in conjunction with the elections. It's a dangerous parlay. He's going to claim elections have been stolen. He's going to blame fake news for misreporting results. And he's got true believers who will be outraged and ready to be violent. The reason I don't think we are yet near to evening is Trump himself. Compare him to Hitler. It may be hard to imagine, but Hitler had some charisma. For a few years in Germany in the 1930's prosperity seemed to be returning. Hitler was a hero, and his speaking ability was able to mesmerize. He inspired loyalty.

On the other hand Trump is such a turd. He is following the fascist playbook with the hats and the immigrants and so on while he funnels wealth to the wealthy. Yet he is transparent to most of us as he lies his way through his term. His actions may point toward fascism, but he doesn't have the intellectual capacity to carry it off. His little feet can't fill Hitler's boots. He only mesmerizes the already committed. That is part of the reason his numbers of support remain around 40%. He is too repulsive an individual to win over much more of a following. Right now I don't see that there is anyone to take over the Trump mantle although John Bolton is scary.

However, I do think that this Trump phenomena is instructive of what could happen and how it could happen. As for Trump, his only strength is that he may wear us out by his daily disregard for truth and custom - the danger is that we may stop paying attention.



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

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

Jeff Machota called me recently. Seems he got a call from Paul Wood, a reporter for the Champaign, Illinois *News-Gazette*, looking for a Vietnam veteran to interview for his weekly "Those Who Served" column. Paul has been writing these columns for a couple of years, and they're pretty interesting. They include vets from WWII all the way to the present, and it's a way of giving each of them a chance to tell their own story, as they see it, about their own war. Nothing wrong with that.

The reason that Paul called Jeff is that he was hoping to find a Vietnam vet who actually opposed the war. Apparently his calls to local American Legion and VFW posts came up empty, and I'm guessing that he may have been wondering if there really were any of "us." Yes, said Jeff, there are. And he gave me his phone number. And the following is what happened.

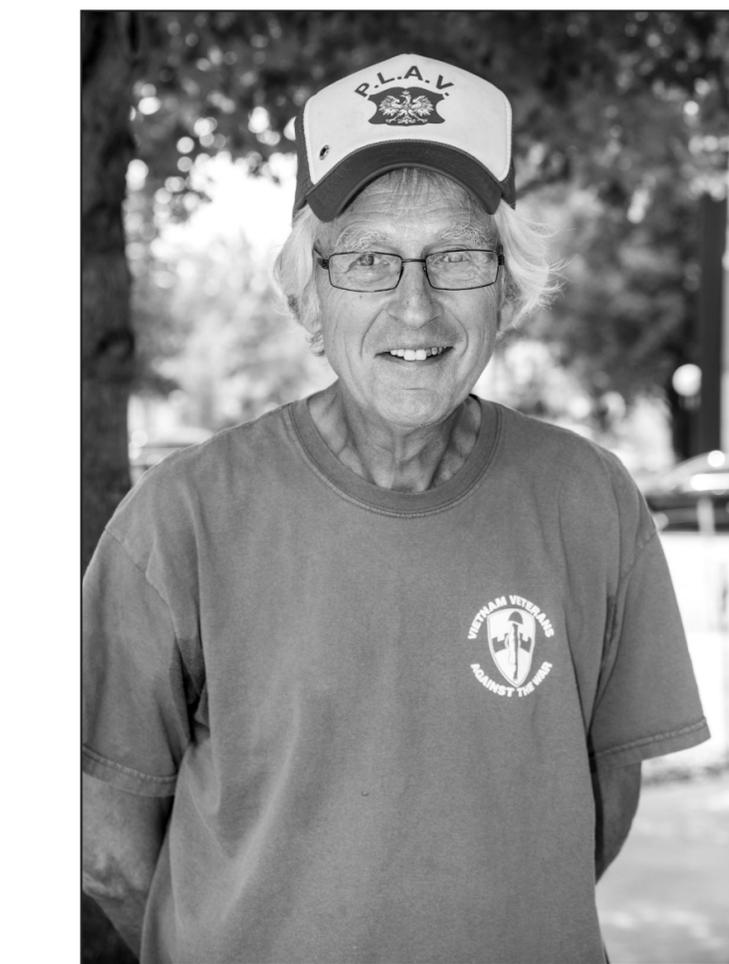
I went up to the *News-Gazette* office a week ago to meet with Paul, and we had a very good time. It turns out that we both went to the University of Illinois about the same time, both majored in history, and actually studied under three of the same professors. Fifteen minutes into the "interview," we decided it was time to talk about Vietnam.

So here's how Paul introduced his column: "No fanfare for soldiers on the streets in Vietnam." Wasn't that the truth? As I served in a field armored cavalry squadron, we didn't have a lot of contact with civilians. As a matter of fact, the only contact

we had with them was when our tanks and armored personnel carriers rolled through a small village. As we moved a lot, this happened a lot. And—as I remember it fifty years later—every single experience of doing that was the same: old men, women and children lined up along the road, just staring at us. No smiles, no waves. As Paul put it in his column, it wasn't close to our liberation of Paris in 1944. No flowers, no young ladies jumping up on our tanks with bottles of wine. Nothing. It was fifty years ago, and I remember it like it was yesterday (to the extent that someone 72 years old can remember anything).

Let's look at the other side of the coin. My last week in country was spent at Bearcat, our 9th Infantry Division base camp. I mean no disrespect to the men who served there, and quite realize that the following may be a bit of a generalization, but it seemed that these guys worked a 9-to-5 job changing flat tires or pounding typewriters, then changed into civilian clothes and headed out for the bar (or whatever activity, you know, met their needs at the time). I did some bar time myself that week, and noticed immediately how happy the bartenders and waitresses were to see me! All I heard was "GI number 1, VC number 10!" and the like. Boy was this different from the field.

Eventually I figured it out: I had just given this lady a very generous tip. Of course it was going to be GI number 1, VC number 10. I was paying her to tell me how much she appreciated



Paul Wisovaty. Photo by Rick Danzl of The News-Gazette.

my being there to save her from Ho Chi Minh. And for a while I was even buying it!

I guess my point is this. If I had spent all my time in Nam at Bearcat, or any similar base camp, I probably would have come home believing that I was on the right side. That we belonged there. That we really had God on our side.

Paul's interview can be found at <http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2018-08-20/those-who-served-no-fanfare-soldiers-the-streets-vietnam.html>



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

Should Burns/Novick's "The Vietnam War" Have Won an Emmy?

JOE MILLER

I taught two regular courses on the war at the University of Illinois each spring from 1989 to my retirement in 2013: "Politics of the Vietnam War" and "Vietnam at the Movies." I was always looking for the "best" documentaries to use in those classes to show the real complexities of the war and raise questions in the students' minds. Beginning with the notion that with nearly three million Vietnam veterans, there were probably three

million different takes on the war, I never expected to find the "perfect" film. I always thought Peter Davis's "Hearts and Minds" was among the "best," but there was also the Karnow-based series, "Vietnam War: A Television History."

Though there are certainly differences of opinion on this, I feel that the Burns/Novick documentary raised the bar, even with its flaws and omissions. There is not (and never

will be) a "perfect" documentary that reflects the total REALITY of our war. If it had won an Emmy, I would have been pleased. It would have served to legitimize just one more tool to teach about the war and open greater discussion. This is especially the case since the filmmakers have included important input from the Vietnamese themselves.

Would those who wished to deny an Emmy for this documentary have

fought against Davis's "Hearts and Minds" because it won an Oscar in 1975? What is the point?



JOE MILLER IS A NAVY VETERAN, 1961-68. NAVAL SECURITY GROUP, 1961-64. USS TICONDEROGA (CVA14), 1964-66. HELTRARON 8, 1966-68. HE IS A VVAW NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER.

Last Visit To Boonton High School

KEN DALTON

Late last spring I (Ken Dalton of the NY/NJ Chapter of VVAW & Veterans For Peace, Chapter 21 New Jersey), made my last visit to the Boonton High School (New Jersey) class on the American War in Vietnam. I have been a regular visitor to Mr Frank Dunn's course on that war. Unfortunately for us, Frank Dunn is now enjoying a well deserved retirement after many years as a history teacher at Boonton High.

Over the years, I always received a great reception from the kids, explaining that since I was in the Navy, I never shot at anybody and nobody shot at me. However, that never relieved me of the moral injury of taking part in that immoral and unjust war. In addition, having docked in Vung Tau, Vietnam and subsequently being exposed to Agent Orange, I didn't escape prostate cancer which may have been caused by that exposure.

One of the points I always brought out was how I was a fervent supporter of that war until a man by the name of Daniel Ellsberg leaked the "Pentagon Papers" to the press, an event which opened my eyes to the truth about our government, which has had a profound effect on my life ever since.

In closing, I always enjoyed



Ken Dalton at Boonton High.

helping the kids understand why I believe the war in Southeast Asia was nothing to be proud of participating in and also that military recruiters are not their friends.

Hopefully, Frank Dunn's

replacement will continue this tradition and invite me back for future classes to counter any "proud to have served" Vietnam veterans.



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

Help Active Duty GIs with Medical and Mental Health

STANLEY CAMPBELL

I invite you to look at the Civilian Medical Resources Network as a possible program that we can support. The CMRN provides medical and mental health information to active duty military personnel through the GI Rights Hotline (877-447-4487) combining the legal support network of volunteers that the GI Rights Network get via second opinion of civilian doctors and counselors who understand medical and mental health needs, especially for PTSD survivors.

Most clients who use Network services manifest psychological rather than physical disorders. Qualitative themes in professional-client encounters have focused on ethical conflicts, the impact of violence without meaning (especially violence

against civilians), and perceived problems in military health and mental health policies. Unmet needs of active duty military personnel deserve more concerted attention from medical professionals and policy makers.

Here are two examples of clients served.

A GI fell in basic training and injured his right leg and ankle. Then he was thrown on his right side during armed combat practice. With back pain radiating to the right lower extremity and numbness of the right foot, he needed to use crutches. At sick call, he was given ibuprofen and Tramadol. He felt hassled when he tried to use sick call. He had seen military doctors only but felt uncomfortable with his evaluation and treatment, so he sought



civilian medical assessment.

During his tour in Iraq, a GI witnessed the violent deaths of several close friends as well as Iraqi civilians. One of his assignments involved removal of blood and body parts from military vehicles. After he returned to the United States, he suffered from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and generalized anxiety. He entered a psychiatric hospital temporarily after one of four suicide attempts. When he learned that his unit was to be redeployed to Iraq, he went AWOL. When he contacted the GI Rights Hotline, he was living with his wife and infant son in a rural area and was working in odd jobs. He learned that military police and the local sheriff's department were trying to find him. During a phone interview, the GI expressed suicidal ideation, as well as an intent to kill specific officers if he were returned to his original unit.

The Network has grown from three participating professionals to over 85 currently, located in all areas of the country. Due to GIs' limited financial resources and insurance coverage for civilian services, Network professionals generally provide care

free or at greatly reduced cost.

For general information on services, call 815-904-6520 or email info@civilianmedicalresources.net.

For active duty military personnel or veterans in need of services, please call the GI Rights Hotline at 877-447-4487 and ask for a referral to the Civilian Medical Resources Network.

If you are a health provider or counselor who would like to join the team, please call 815-904-6520 or email info@civilianmedicalresources.net.

For media inquiries, please call 815-904-6520 or email info@civilianmedicalresources.net.

For more info: <http://civilianmedicalresources.net/you-can-help/>

There's a donate button at the bottom of their web pages.



STANLEY CAMPBELL IS A VIETNAM VETERAN FROM ROCKFORD IL. HE SERVED OCT. 1970 TO OCT. 1971 WITH 67TH MEDICAL GROUP, TEAM C, IN DANANG, AND MISSES HIS BUDDY BJ.



Maude DeVictor at Chicago Vets Day Demo, November 11, 2001.

America's Modern Military: Who Serves & Who Doesn't

W. D. EHRHART

"A standing army, however necessary it may be at times, is always dangerous to the Liberties of the People. Soldiers are apt to consider themselves as a Body distinct from the rest of the Citizens."—Samuel Adams, 1776

For most the first 165 years of American history, the United States maintained only a minimal standing army when not engaged in a war. The figures—before, during, and after each of our significant wars through the end of World War II—look like this:

1812: 6,700
 1815: 38,200
 1816: 10,000
 1821: 6,000
 1845: 8,500
 1847: 44,700
 1849: 10,000
 1860: 16,000
 1865: 1,000,700
 1866: 57,000
 1877: 24,000
 1897: 27,800
 1898: 210,000
 1905: 67,000
 1914: 98,000
 1918: 2,400,000
 1920: 204,000
 1925: 137,000
 1939: 190,000
 1945: 8,300,000
 1948: 554,000

Since 1948, however, our standing army has been considerably larger than previous peacetime periods, varying from half a million to a million and a half. When we include the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, our standing military has added up to between one and a half million and three million at any given time.

During the Revolutionary War, various states attempted to institute military drafts, but efforts were not very successful; there were many loopholes and even flagrant refusal. The burden, not surprisingly, fell disproportionately on the poor.

There was no federal national draft until 1863, but again this was only partially successful; exemptions were available by purchase or by hiring a substitute. Again, the burden fell disproportionately on the poor, and in any case, this draft was disbanded at the end of the war.

The federal government did not attempt a national draft again until 1917 and US entry into the Great War (only later called World War I). It was somewhat more equitable than the Civil War draft, but farmers, the poor, and people of color were still more likely to be drafted. Like the Civil War draft, when the Great War ended, so did this draft.

The first peacetime draft in US history did not occur until 1940; it was put in place in anticipation of US entry into World War II, and it remained in place through 1946.

As the Cold War heated up, however, the federal government instituted a second peacetime draft in 1948. This draft remained in place continuously until 1973 through both the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as periods of peace in between.

Finally, in 1974, the government ended the draft entirely and went to the so-called All-Volunteer Force (AVF) that we still have today.

Why was there a peacetime draft at all? Was the threat from the Soviet Union so dire? Or did it have more to do with the post-WWII transformation of the United States from a world industrial power to the global giant: economically, politically, militarily? Did it have to do with maintaining what had become, after 1945, an American Empire? And why disband the draft in 1973? If the reason for a peacetime draft was fear of the USSR, why end the draft while the USSR was at the

height of its power?

Perhaps it had more to do with reducing—indeed, eliminating—domestic opposition to US foreign policy and the use of the American military to enforce American will on the unwilling.

Certainly, it is well known and well documented that by the later stages of the American War in Vietnam, opposition to the draft as inherently unfair to the poor and minorities led first to a switch from the old deferment system to a somewhat more equitable lottery system, and then to an end of the draft altogether.

At the same time, by the early 1970s opposition to the Vietnam War had reached critical proportions even within the military itself. Reference, for instance, Colonel Robert D. Heinl, Jr.'s "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal*, June 1971. Resistance to the American War in Vietnam was widespread by then, and the breakdown within the military was catastrophic.

The US military and the US government both wanted (and needed) docile and obedient soldiers who would not question their role in whatever circumstances in which they might find themselves along with an American public who would not question whatever wars and adventures the government wished to undertake.

In this regard, the attacks on 9/11 were a boon to the creation of a pliant citizenry that would not question the exercise of US military might, but the process of creating a pliant citizenry and an unquestioning soldiery began in the 1970s.

Currently, the US military maintains 800 bases in 70 countries worldwide with US forces stationed in another 60 countries. What are we doing in all these places? Most Americans do not know and do not care.

Instead, we "honor our military" by having 16 Medal-of-Honor winners participate in the ceremonial coin toss at Super Bowl LII, by giving a service person his or her very own Flyers jersey at every home hockey game, by staging military flyovers at the start of NASCAR races, and all sorts of other public displays that in fact do nothing to benefit active duty military personnel or veterans.

What am I supposed to do with Delaware's Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway? I still have to pay the same \$4.00 toll everyone else pays when I use the Delaware Turnpike. We have been at war continuously since October 2001, yet who among us has sacrificed anything? For most of us, life goes on day after day without the least awareness that a very small number of our fellow citizens are at war: as of May 2016, 5,500 in Iraq; 9,800 in Afghanistan; we are not told how many in Syria, and who knows where else? Not long ago, several US soldiers were ambushed and killed while on a military operation in Nigeria. Nigeria?! But who cares?

Americans are further isolated from the military by two additional and newer developments. One is the use of mercenaries in place of American soldiers: as of May 2016, there were 7,770 hired contractors in Iraq, and 28,600 in Afghanistan (more than three times the number of our uniformed service personnel). And make no mistake, these "contractors" are mercenary soldiers, hired guns.

The second development is drone technology, which allows us to kill at will with no risk to the killers, no US casualties, no fuss, no muss, no bother. During Barack Obama's presidency, the US launched drone missiles nearly once a week, week in and week out for eight years. God only knows what's

happening during the Donald Trump presidency, but who cares?

So who serves in the US military today? Who enlists? Let me tell you about my students at the Haverford School in suburban Philadelphia. I have taught there for 17 years. In that time, approximately 1,600 young men have graduated from the Haverford School. Not one single young man has gone directly from high school graduation into the US military as an enlisted soldier, sailor, airmen, or Marine. Not one.

This year, it will cost a family about \$37,000 to enroll their son in my school for a single year of high school. And if he wants to eat lunch, that costs extra. Our clientele are generally well-heeled, educated, and focused on their own success and the success of their children.

We do offer scholarships, and nearly 40% of our boys are receiving some amount of scholarship aid, some of them up to 100%. But even the scholarship kids, once armed with a diploma from my school, have options that are often not available to many young people in the US. Every one of our boys gets into college somewhere. They don't all go to Harvard or Stanford, but they all go somewhere.

A few of them go to one of the service academies every year, where they will get a free education and a guaranteed job as an officer, not as an enlisted private starting at the bottom of the ladder. A few have opted for ROTC and eventually have been commissioned as officers. But the overwhelming number of the boys I've taught will never serve a day in uniform in any capacity, let alone risk their lives for "freedom" or the Koch brothers because they have other options.

So why should they or their parents care what the US government

is doing out there in the world in their names and with their tax dollars? It isn't their children on the pointy end of the stick and isn't ever going to be. Today's US military is largely inhabited by people who have far fewer options than my students have, who need money for college and can only get it by enlisting first, who have few prospects for any decent job that pays a living wage. A few are that much smaller number of young people who are looking for adventure and excitement ("Be All You Can Be," "An Army of One," "A Force for Good," etc.), and who have had drummed into them the ethos of the "warrior," the Band of Brothers mythology foisted on the world by England's King Henry V by William Shakespeare.

The wrong people learned the wrong lessons from the American War in Vietnam and learned those lessons very well. Today, the consequences of US foreign policy have been completely removed from domestic politics. And those who do the bidding of our policymakers and their masters come by and large from those strata of American life with the least political clout, the least voice in American affairs, the least influence on how and why they are being asked to risk their lives, or to what end.

It is a sorry situation, and with the fox in charge of the henhouse, it isn't likely to change.

[Originally delivered as a talk for the Temple University Dissent in America Teach-In Series on February 16th, 2018.]



W. D. EHRHART IS AN EX-MARINE SERGEANT AND COMBAT VETERAN, AND HOLDS A PHD FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES AT SWANSEA, UK.

1968

I lost 1968
 somewhere in the hot and moist jungles
 of the central highlands of Vietnam
 when I wasn't paying attention
 J. Edgar came out of his closet
 long enough to murder and jail
 young black leaders
 who caused his scrotum to shrivel
 afraid that someone might know that he was
 passing as white himself
 his FBI assassinated Martin Luther King, Jr.
 so that a black messiah would not lead to the mountain top
 the CIA killed Robert Kennedy on television
 LBJ allowed Nixon to commit treason
 for the good of the people
 Armstrong spent several hours walking on the moon
 a first step toward going
 where no man had gone before
 I heard that the Civil Rights Act was signed
 ending the civil war and jim crow slavery
 people of color would have control of their lives
 able to be free and equal citizens of these united states

when I returned to the world in 1969
 it was a whole different thing

—Larry Kerschner



Operation Blanket Hill, Kent State, 1990.

Defense and the National Debt

JOHN KETWIG

Do you remember, back in early 2016, when the sixteen Republican candidates seeking the nomination to compete for President debated on TV? It seems a long time ago, but you may recall the universally hysterical warnings that our "National Debt" would soon exceed twenty-one trillion dollars. Well, as of July 31st, that formidable obstacle to our nation's future stands at \$21.3 trillion.

We haven't heard much about that debt since Donald Trump took office. There was some nostalgic mention of the figure during the debate of the President's tax program. Once that "tax cut" was passed, we have heard a few random mentions of cutting "entitlements" like Medicaid, Medicare, or Social Security. However, the atmosphere in Washington has been clouded by issues such as collusion with the Russians, payoffs to Stormy Daniels, denuclearization of North Korea, economic "foes" in Canada and the Economic Union, and a series of weather-related disasters all across our nation.

One interesting news item has slipped under the evening news radar. In 2016 (when Obama was still President), Mark Skidmore, a Professor of Economics at Michigan State University learned that a Department of Defense Office of Inspector General report had found \$6.5 trillion in unaccounted-for

Pentagon spending in the year 2015 alone! Skidmore was incredulous, as that amount is more than the gross domestic product of the entire United Kingdom. A bean-counter at the highest professional level, Skidmore did some investigating, examining a variety of government websites dating back to 1968. With the assistance of Catherine Austin Fitts, a former assistant secretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Skidmore assembled a collection of official government documents revealing that unsupported adjustments totaling \$21 trillion had been reported to the DOD and HUD through the years 1998 to 2015! This enormous story was published by *Forbes* magazine in December of 2017.

Writing for Truthdig.com last month, TV host and comedian Lee Camp attempted to describe just how much money \$21 trillion might be. He notes that the GDP of the United States is \$18.6 trillion, and the total amount of money invested in the stock market is \$30 trillion. The calculator I use to track the family bills doesn't have that kind of capacity, but Camp's tells him if \$1000 bills were stacked on top of each other, twenty-one trillion dollars would create a stack 1323 miles high! Camp also suggests that a worker earning \$40,000 a year would require 25 million years to accumulate one

trillion dollars, or 525 million years to earn \$21 trillion. I envy Lee Camp, his calculator, and his patience.

The *Forbes* article points out that "after Mark Skidmore began inquiring about OIG-reported unsubstantiated adjustments, the OIG's webpage, which documented, albeit in a highly incomplete manner, these unsupported 'accounting adjustments' was mysteriously taken down." A similar official government report can be viewed at <https://media.defense.gov/2016/Jul/26/2001714261/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2016-113.pdf>. *Forbes* points out that, with \$65 trillion adjusted out of the Army's total \$120 billion 2015 budget, the unsupported and unexplained adjustments were 54 times the level of total spending authorized by Congress! Note that these reports are only concerning the Army's missing funds, not Navy or Air Force, and Congress has ignored this incredible discrepancy.

The 2016 OIG report concludes that the unexplained and missing trillions of dollars are the result of the Department of Defense's "failure to correct system deficiencies." Next time the family checkbook doesn't balance, try using that excuse with your spouse.

Believe it or not, the Pentagon's spending has never been audited. But, back in 2010, Congress added a stipulation to the National Defense Authorization Act that the DOD would

be subject to an annual audit starting in 2017. In an audacious display of patriotism, Congress responded to the approaching audit by adding \$80 billion more to the 2018 DOD budget than President Trump had requested. We the people can only hope that the 2,400 auditors assigned to audit the Pentagon might find enough loose change under the couch cushions and behind the file cabinets to pay off our National Debt and that the presidential candidates in 2020 will have other issues to discuss.

In today's America, the ultimate status symbol is no longer a Rolls-Royce or a golden Rolex wristwatch; it is a defense contract. There is little hope that the audits will end the Pentagon's hemorrhaging of taxpayer dollars, or that any responsible individuals will be put behind bars. Those Rolls-Royces and Rolex watches won't go out of style anytime soon.



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. A NEW BOOK, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE SPRING OF 2019.



New York, 1971.

Better Policy Starts with the Veteran's Voice

BRETT W. COPELAND

Special interest groups like the Koch Brothers-funded Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) will spend millions of dollars trying to use veterans as a wedge issue at the ballot box this November. CVA in particular has thrown down \$6 million dollars in TV ads against several lawmakers. What's missing from these relentless attack ads and tremendous amounts of money? An actual plan to tackle the real problems veterans face.

Political rhetoric usually turns into bad policy. And despite all that political cash flying around, the voices of real veterans is rarely put front-and-center. That's why a group of veterans and their caregivers, health care experts, and journalists founded our think tank, the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute (VHPI) at veteranspolicy.org.

At VHPI we believe that veterans deserve to be the central authority in the debate about their care. We're not satisfied with the current state of research, analysis, and discussion

around healthcare. Veterans deserve evidence-based care that works. Political grandstanding isn't what solves the opioid epidemic or prevents veteran suicide. Data-driven treatment and integrated care is how we must move forward.

It wasn't politicians or pundits who identified health problems in Blue Water Veterans that resulted from the use of Agent Orange. It was groups like VVAW. Likewise, Vietnam Veterans suffering from PTSD were largely discounted after their return from war. And today's veterans have developed chronic breathing problems as a result of burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan—which they reported almost immediately but were again, silenced.

These stories were shocking when they were first revealed to the American public but they were no surprise to veterans. That's why our content, like the Veteran's Voice series, keeps veterans at the center of the story and explains healthcare through

their eyes.

We don't buy the assertion that private sector healthcare can do it better than the Veterans Health Administration. This overwhelming narrative of private sector superiority is taken at face value by politicians and the mainstream media alike. But our work at VHPI regularly shows that not only is the private sector largely unprepared to meet veterans' most critical needs, it simply does not understand the experiences of veterans.

Veterans are more likely to suffer from chronic pain conditions and traumatic brain injury than the average US citizen. Aging veterans require more complex care because of these and other injuries sustained during their service.

These are the types of stories that must be told if veterans are to ever get the care they really deserve. Our weekly VHPI newsletter collects and analyzes healthcare-related stories that don't make it to the front page or

websites of the mainstream media. And VHPI's policy analysis helps lawmakers use the actual experience of veterans to craft policy that's effective in the real world—not just some sterile laboratory or written in a stale report.

Our work is funded through small donations by veterans, organizations like VVAW, health care workers, and concerned citizens. We may not be able to afford big TV buys like CVA, but as long as we have your support, we can improve the lives of veterans through real and needed changes to their healthcare.

If you'd like to subscribe to and support VHPI's work, please visit www.veteranspolicy.org/donate.



BRETT W. COPELAND IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE VETERANS HEALTHCARE POLICY INSTITUTE, A THINK TANK THAT EXAMINES HOW TO IMPROVE POLICY THAT IMPACTS VETERANS.

Philly Area Combat Vets Have Lost a Great Ally and Mentor

BILL PERRY

We have lost Dr. Jon Bjornson, 85, of Philadelphia, a Vietnam War veteran and psychiatrist who devoted his life to counseling and healing war veterans and promoting peace. Dr. Bjornson served as a US Army flight surgeon and psychiatrist in Vietnam for a year before he was honorably discharged in 1965 with the rank of major.

Doc Bjornson was one, of only two psychiatrists in all of Vietnam, in 1964-1965.

By the mid-1960's, the US had hundreds of thousands of WW II and Korean War Veterans who were considered psychological "damaged goods", way beyond repair. They were tragic reminders of war profiteers' callousness, and they were either hidden away, if they had family, or turned out, into the streets.

The VA treated them for anxiety and depression, and then turned them loose. There was no long term therapy or treatment.

Most of these Vets often self medicated, and many died from exposure, acute alcoholism, TB, and other easily prevented maladies, but few people gave a damn. Dr Jon always cared.

Doc Jon Bjornson was so profoundly affected by his experiences that he shaped the rest of his life around counseling GIs, speaking out against the war, and raising awareness of what became known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He sat on two national panels to determine the cause and treatment of the disorder, and quietly built his reputation with his ingenious methods that included community based Peer Counseling (Vet to Vet, CBT with PE), and, encouraging Vets to grasp the tools that eased their pain.

Dr Jon "saved" scores of us, as we returned home, from Vietnam, and, over the past half century, he continued to cast his net, wider

and deeper. There was virtually no funding, in the 60's and 70's, but Doc became a national authority on this new, yet age old, school of care and treatment. Money was not important to Doc.

In 1971, Doc had a hand in both the Vietnam Veterans Against the War Winter Soldier Investigation, and a war crimes hearing called "We Accuse", both of which helped pique interest in Combat Trauma. Doc felt that most shrinks were only interested in fattening their Curriculum Vitae, as they wrote and studied ways to return combat Vets to their units, as viable cogs in the War Machine. This was virtually the only route where government funding was available. Dr Jon didn't play that.

Doc Jon Bjornson, to help us heal, used 360 degree global assessment of what our wars are REALLY about. Lessening guilt was one of his priorities. He was a national authority on PTSD. Doc wanted non-Vietnam veterans to understand that stress disorder patients are still fighting the war within themselves, years after it has ended. "Just learning how to talk about their experiences can be a breakthrough." They numb themselves to deal with the horrors of combat. When the numbness wears off, they may experience flashbacks and nightmares, and may be unable to show warmth or tenderness, or respond to it. Doc developed a multitude of ways to deal with these common symptoms.

When Dr. Jon Bjornson got out of the Army in 1965, he immediately started to lobby other psychiatrists and mental health professionals to recognize that an illness existed amongst most people who experienced dramatic trauma. In turn they lobbied veteran organizations and together they lobbied congress. He also formed the Philadelphia chapter of VVAW, and financed the Delaware Valley



Jon Bjornson and Bill Perry.

Veterans of America, and other anti-war groups, right up until now.

As the members of these groups became politically active, they also lobbied congress.

Finally in March of 1980, 15 years after he began the campaign, the American Psychiatric Association at their annual convention recognized Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS). Due to Dr Jon's proselytizing, and their groups' organizational work, there were finally enough members of congress ready to instruct the VA to recognize and treat it. The VA did so the following month.

The official 1980 findings were listed in the bible of Psychiatric Studies, known as the DSM III—Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (now, updated into the DSM V)

God only knows the secrets Dr. Jon Bjornson has heard from countless veterans throughout his life. This had to have been a very heavy emotional burden to carry. He knew the truth like very few did. He had heard things about the realities of war in private counseling sessions that would have sent patriotism to its death. Americans would have had panic attacks if they had been observers in Dr. Bjornson's private or small group sessions.

Talk about top secret—the

absolute truth has the power to dismantle long held core beliefs that societies hang on to for dear life to protect their identity. "Thank you for your service," would have been one myth that would have died a sudden death. "God and Country," would have been another one that would have taken its last breath. "Home of the brave and land of the free," would have been another slogan that would have been put to death. The word, Democracy, would have been executed. True emotional freedom has a very powerful and painful price tag.

I and many VVAW brothers, veteran brothers, and tens of thousands of people throughout the world have benefited from Jon's loving efforts to identify, expose, and treat PTSS/PTSD.

Dr Jon ALWAYS had time for us.

"The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away."—Pablo Picasso



BILL PERRY IS A MEMBER OF DELAWARE VALLEY VETERANS FOR AMERICA, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERAN, VVAW, VFP, VFW, AND VVA.



Dr. Jon Bjornson Walkin' to New Orleans, 2006.



Answering a Question

The first man I killed was small and hidden in the tall grass.

Being a killer forever changes you. Even if you learn to be kind and considerate and civilized that part of you is always there hiding down inside awaiting a chance.

A normal person does not want to kill and will avoid it at all costs. The military won't allow you to remain normal. It doesn't matter if you think you are smart enough not to get caught up in their lies. They will change you.

Don't be sucked into the biggest myth and lie that killing and dying for your country is somehow heroic.

Really be all that you can be.

—Larry Kerschner



How King's Words "Lived" in Chicago, 1968

DAVE DELLINGER

From Fall 1998 issue of The Veteran.

I was asked by *The Veteran* to write about my memories of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Let me say that two factors contributed to the atmosphere at that convention: first, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. about four months earlier; second, the new-found radicalism of King, which probably caused his death.

In response to his assassination there were widespread Black protests, including riots. Apparently the police in Chicago understood the reason for these activities and were more human and lenient than the reactionary Mayor Daley desired. So Daley berated them and issued orders that in any future disturbances the police should "shoot arsonists and looters - arsonists to kill and looters to maim." In the months between this order and the convention, the City kept asserting plans to shoot any violators of the City's streets, even nonviolent ones.

The Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam and the Yippies tried for months to negotiate permits

for nonviolent demonstrations. We were constantly denied the permits and threatened with extreme violence if we demonstrated without them. By contrast, a permit was issued to Senator Eugene McCarthy for a large-scale rally by his supporters. But as the time approached, the City used so much violence against local and regional anti-war demonstrators that McCarthy and his lieutenant, Allard Lowenstein, cancelled the rally and urged all demonstrators to stay home "in order to avoid bloodshed."

In April 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. for the first time spoke and marched against the war in Vietnam. By making this step and having been attacked for it by Ralph Bunche, a top Black American official at the United Nations, by the NAACP, the *New York Times* and many others, he radicalized the relatively conservative, top-down, mostly exclusive anti-racist approach that he had felt necessary to follow earlier. Now he began to organize a radical Poor People's Campaign that involved all oppressed peoples and called for radical changes in the elitist money economy.

Here are some of the statements that he made during that Campaign; I cite them here because I referred to them every time I could during the 1968 convention:

"For years I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions..., a little change here, a little change there. Now I feel quite differently. I think you've got to have a reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values."

"We can't have a system where some people live in superfluous, inordinate wealth, while others live in abject, deadening poverty. From now on, our movement must take on basic class issues between the privileged and the underprivileged."

"Something is wrong with capitalism as it now stands in the United States. We are not interested in being integrated into this value structure. Power must be relocated, a radical restructuring of power must take place."

"The evils of capitalism are as real as the evils of militarism and evils of racism."

"Nonviolent protest must now

mature to a new level....mass civil disobedience....There must be more than a statement to the larger society, there must be a force that interrupts its functioning at some key point."

Before the 1968 convention I did not know how many Vietnam veterans would be there. And I had hardly heard of VVAW. Its glory days began in the Spring of 1971 when members threw away their medals onto the steps of the Capitol. But we soon discovered our joint solidarity, not only against the Vietnam War but also in solidarity with the recent anti-capitalist views that King had articulated shortly before his assassination. Ever since, I have treasured VVAW and love to work with it as much as I can. Veterans have special insights that all of us need in our work for justice, human rights and an end to militarism.



DAVE DELLINGER WAS A LONGTIME PEACE AND JUSTICE ACTIVIST WHOSE BOOK "FROM YALE TO JAIL" (PANTHEON, 1993) RECORDED HIS ALWAYS EVENTFUL LIFE. HE PASSED AWAY IN 2004.



Long Island, New York, 1971.

VVAW in Chicago, 1968

ANDREW HUNT

Reprinted from Andrew E. Hunt's The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (New York University Press, 1999) pages 28-30.

Activists began trickling into Chicago the weekend before the convention, with a steady stream arriving on the opening day, Monday, August 25. A pugnacious Mayor Richard Daley vowed that he would not tolerate unrest in his Chicago, "As long as I am mayor," he proclaimed before an American Legion meeting, "there will be law and order in its streets." Authorities guessed that fifty thousand, perhaps as many as one-hundred thousand, activists would come to Chicago. Ultimately, ten thousand did. The mayor placed his twelve-thousand-man police force on twelve-hour shifts and stationed six thousand Illinois National Guardsmen outside the city. Authorities warned police to watch for hippies, the flamboyant Yippies led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, SDS militants, and anyone who appeared subversive. An estimated ninety million Americans watched on television what seemed a city under siege. For the Vietnam veterans who drove, hitchhiked, flew, or traveled by rail to Chicago, the troops, with their rifles, gas dispensers, grenade launchers, .30-caliber machine guns, and bazookas, served as stark reminders of the war in Vietnam. Some veterans, including Bernard Harrison, a twenty-three year-old Philadelphian who went to Chicago to support McCarthy, had fresh memories of the Tet Offensive revived on the streets of the Windy City.

The veterans hoped their unique status would help them influence delegates, yet they went to Chicago with few expectations. Before the convention began, John Talbott, a physician who served in the Army in Vietnam and joined the pro-McCarthy lobbying effort in Chicago, wrote an open letter to the delegates expressing his pessimism. "I feel that the Democratic Convention is all but over, that Humphrey has all but taken control of the convention delegates and there is no way for the electorate to be heard." He concluded his letter on an even darker note: "I see us heading down the same old road to more disasters, more aluminum caskets, more craters in rice paddies, more murdered leaders, more 'blue-ribbon' commissions on riots, and more dehumanization of us all.

The convention was a disaster for the Vietnam veterans. The Democratic Party, still under the firm control of Johnson, Daley, and Humphrey, adopted a decidedly pro-war statement by a decisive vote of 1,567 to 1,041. The anti-war platform went down, and with it went McCarthy. In the streets of Chicago, meanwhile, police turned on protesters with clubs, tear gas, and mass arrests. Mike McKusker recounted:

"It was Wednesday night in Chicago. Sometimes I thought it was as bad as anything I'd seen in Vietnam, except they weren't popping rounds at us. But they came at us and they came at us hard, those Chicago cops, man. It was kind of funny, I had a friend who was with me almost the entire time. We were in Vietnam together and

he had no sympathy for my anti-war attitudes. He thought I was an idiot. At the same time, he also thought I was being an idiot (for) sticking my neck out around the Chicago cops with whom he grew up. It was one of the worst police forces in the world. And so he was out there with me almost every damn day to make sure I don't get hit, so he's out in the middle of it, too."

On Thursday night, August 28, following Hubert Humphrey's nomination as the Democratic Party presidential candidate, the battle moved from the convention auditorium to the streets as many of McCarthy's young campaign workers joined the militants in battles with the police, McKusker and other Vietnam veterans found themselves in the midst of the chaos. They had received an invitation to attend a function at the home of the comedian and activist Dick Gregory. "If you were in the streets, and you moved, you were a Yippie," Gregory later said. The police arrested Gregory and a group of pro-McCarthy delegates, then teargassed McKusker and other observers. Along the way, McKusker "got clubbed in the ribs by a National Guard rifle butt." "If they hadn't gassed us, I thought some of us would've been killed," McKusker remembered. "The mob pushed in one direction, then being pushed back in another, people were going to get trampled. Then they (the police) hit the gas and everybody turned around and walked away, so it saved a lot of lives, at least."

A former helicopter crew chief and VVAW member who went to

Chicago hoping to persuade a few delegates to support McCarthy found himself in the middle of a street battle, complete with a police helicopter buzzing overhead. He later recounted:

"Seeing those guys up above, looking at the troops and the cops, and knowing they were against me—for me this was as terrifying as anything in Vietnam. Somehow I had become the enemy, the Viet Cong of the United States, when all I am is a human being that wants to be human. Just because I hate this war and the kind of things that forced us into it, they've made me the enemy of my country."

The veterans left Chicago feeling depressed and powerless. Their nonviolent efforts were completely overshadowed in the press by the battle in the streets. After the tear gas cleared, a frustrated Carl Rogers dumped a large box of campaign literature out of a high office window in downtown Chicago and watched it flutter through the air to Daley Plaza below. Several dedicated VVAW activists simply disappeared following the convention and never resurfaced. "That was like the end of it for many guys. They were angry about what happened in Chicago," Rogers recalled. Sheldon Ramsdell decided to "lay low" after the convention, and others did the same, "I tried to forget Chicago," a VVAW member later said, "I never really expected anything else, anyway. America has a cancer." Jan Barry remembered that VVAWers returning home from Chicago "were totally discouraged."



Oleo Strut

PAUL DONAHUE

I was not a witness to 1968; my view of the world from Chu Lai as a guest of the US government that year was quite limited. I was not a witness to anything in this story. In fact, I had no idea it happened at all for 50 years. Tom Cleaver, aviation historian and Tonkin Gulf explainer, who was there, first brought it to my attention. Through his and others writings of it and searching the archives of places like *The Rag Blog* I've attempted here to tell the story of how some active duty GI's resisted a war they thought was wrong.

At the height of the Vietnam War in the late 1960's and early 1970's the mood of the country changed, and the attitude of war-weary GI's in the field changed also. There were increases in the incidences of fragging along with refusals to engage the enemy. When these exhausted soldiers rotated out and returned to "the world," some brought a new anti-war sentiment with them.

If the soldiers had just a short time left to serve they were simply discharged, like me. If not, they were sent to posts around the country and given something to do to occupy their time. Thousands were sent to Fort Hood in Texas, where this story takes place.

In the summer of 1968, the Army began training the returnees at crowd control. The guys didn't know or care why. They were just killing time, decompressing, it was fine with them. Off post, there was almost nothing to do. The locals in the town of Killeen, Texas didn't like or trust the GIs much. For the black guys, it was worse—the KKK was active there.

One of the gathering places for these soldiers was a newly

opened coffee house. There were GI coffeehouses springing up around the country at the time, and they became the center of the anti-war movement within the military. There was one called the UFO (think USO) outside of Fort Jackson in South Carolina and others outside Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri) and Fort Polk (Louisiana). The coffeehouse outside of Ft. Hood was called The Oleo Strut. The name came from a helicopter shock absorber; they thought it was appropriate.

Late in the summer, somewhat before the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, word had it that they were to ship out to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center and ordered to crowd control for the thousands of anti-war protesters that everyone knew were coming. These vets were in no mood to crack the heads of "hippies and commies" who were protesting against a war that they knew was wrong. Some thought about fleeing to Mexico; they thought about desertion. And one night at the Oleo Strut they cooked up a plan.

They thought about printing yellow 2 x 2 cards with a white hand showing the peace sign and backed by a black fist. They printed 1,000 of them. The plan was to put the cards on their helmets to show the protesters that as soldiers they understood and shared their struggles. The command structure caught wind of their plan because they had, you know, spies.

In the Deep South, the Army sort of self-segregated; about 100 black soldiers gathered in a field on post to talk it out. They decided that they weren't going at all. By morning some still remained, waiting for answers on their demands from command. Those that chose to stay all had either



a purple heart or a bronze star; they were not going to be called cowards for not deploying. Their answer came when they were ambushed by MPs, beaten, and arrested. As a result of taking a stand, 43 black GIs faced courts-martial for their actions and were all punished with dishonorable discharges, or worse.

The rest of the GIs didn't know the fate of their black brothers and were sent to Chicago. The Army was afraid of the spectacle that would be caused by soldiers switching sides and joining the protesters. The thinking was that if 1,000 of them were deployed and only ten or twenty defected on live TV, it would have been disastrous for the Army. The GIs were never used for crowd control. Without military backup the Chicago police took things into their own hands and produced their own disaster as the nation witnessed the broadcast of police riots outside the convention. Inside the convention, the audience was treated to Senator Abraham Ribicoff denouncing from

the podium, "...Gestapo tactics in the streets of Chicago." Sitting in the front row, Chicago's Mayor Daley in response shouted obscenities in reference to the Senator's religion.

In the years after the war's end, the GI coffeehouses began to close, one by one. The Oleo Strut closed in 1972. How much the activism born in them aided in ending the war can be debated, but the search for peace never ended for some of those who were there.

Many of their brothers carry that spirit to this day. Stories like this, though sometimes, unfortunately, lost to history, still contribute to the arc of the peace movement of today, fifty years later.



PAUL DONAHUE WAS BORN AND STILL LIVES IN SCHENECTADY, N.Y. HE IS RETIRED FROM GE GLOBAL RESEARCH WHERE HE WORKED FOR 38 YEARS.

Each and Every Day, A Soldier's Lament

What can I say?
How can I put it into words,
proper words,
its urgency?
its mind-branding enormity?

My best friend – a bond forged in incoming fire
and very literally tempered in the blood of those better than I.
He kept me alive, I kept him out of cells.
He thinks he owes me. I know he's wrong.
He's the best man I know.
Old now, growing older at an increasing rate.

But alive, mostly.

Seven of them there were,
in a place nobody should ever,
ever have had to go,
Such was their innocence that
those grey-eyed professionals
didn't think twice beforehand.
And they got the job done, so that's something, I guess.

The scenes we are occasionally called on to wade into
are things no man – or woman –
with any humanity can take home to those they love.
we love them and we know that nobody should open
the curtains on some things.

So you push it down,
pretend to yourself that you're tough enough
to carry it all another mile.
There's really no other option, is there?
Not one you wish to contemplate.

And it doesn't even matter what the mission was.
That's the saddest thing about it.

Seven of us forty odd years ago.
Since then,
three suicides,
one's fallen off the face of the earth,
A sixth lies mindless in a hospital ward following
a suspected drug overdose
(he didn't leave notes)
and my friend, gentle citizen.

the last US troops left Vietnam
almost half, a memory-clad, slow-march, century ago
still today veterans are committing suicide every day.

Five deaths in the stillness of your sleep
before you slap your bedside alarm for its impudence.
The last sip of your breakfast coffee
commemorates another name's ink drying on the list.
When you finally get to work, add another -
and two more by coffee break,
another by lunch.

When you finally go to sleep in your own soft bed,
so many soldiers will have died by their own hands
and more before the day itself is finally permitted to die.

And tomorrow's another day.

—David Sandgrund



Washington, DC, July 4, 1974.

Back in the Day

DENNIS RANDALL

Back in the day, I was an active member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I was one of the voices of the unwilling forced to fight another man's battle. Why should I wage war to oppose a person's choice of government? Political systems come and go, but nations endure. Freedom includes the right of a people to choose their own tyrants.

Uncounted vigils and protests later, the war ended. I set aside my colors, but not my values. I did my best to blend-in politically as I campaigned successfully for political office in my dark red town.

A few weeks ago my son took me to the old Weymouth Air Station a few miles south of Boston, Massachusetts. He wanted me to visit "The Wall That Heals," a scaled-down replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. I could not stop my tears as I stood before the display of names. Such a waste of beautiful lives. And for what? Was that war even necessary? I feed my family with products from Vietnam.

Today, at the age of seventy, I am a one hundred percent disabled Vietnam veteran (Agent Orange). I've reached the point in my life where there is more scenery in the rearview mirror than there is road ahead. For the first time, I can see the setting sun, and I realize my day on this pathway will end.

This is a good moment to pause,

turn around, and appreciate the view. From half-a-world away and fifty years in the past, Vietnam looms like a dark mountain on the horizon of memory. From time to time, I've returned my mind to that place in search for answers. I have found only questions. When I look at that wall, I see a monument to a mistake. What kind of mistake is different from one person to another. It depends on our perspective, where we're viewing it from. But the one thing we know about mistakes is they're wasted experiences unless we learn from them.

We live in difficult times. Once again the drums of war sound and folly rules the land. I've self-declared as a Vietnam veteran. I display the Vietnam service ribbon. However, if I'm going to talk-the-talk, it's also time to walk the walk and tell the whole story.

I ordered a new set of buttons, pins, patches, and bumper stickers from the VVAW website. I display my history as a testament to the folly of war. I urge my brothers and sisters to do likewise. Silence is no longer an option.



DENNIS N. RANDALL WRITES UNDER THE NAME OF NATHAN WOLF. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF "SECRETS OF LIBERTY MOUNTAIN," THE POST-APOCALYPTIC SAGA OF A DISABLED AND HOMELESS VIETNAM VET. AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.



Closing ceremony for the "Wall that Heals," a mobile three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. The traveling wall honors the more than 58,000 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.



1968 Tet Offensive

STEVEN CURTIS

I couldn't have arrived in Vietnam at a worse possible time: just twelve hours before the start of the Tet Offensive of 1968. After a harrowing three-day journey up Highway One, which is another story in itself, I was assigned to the command bunker at the Quang Tri airport perimeter. Our job was to keep in phone contact with the twenty or so bunkers stretched along a riverbank defending the eastern side of the airport.

Although I had been "in-country" less than five days, I felt like I had aged ten years. The base I left a day earlier had been overrun the night after I left. The rear of a convoy that had brought me to Quang Tri had been hit hard; the front of the convoy, where I had been, went through with nothing more than a few random sniper bursts in our direction. Thus far, I had not received so much as a scratch, but I was terrified my luck was about to run out. I had a nagging feeling something was going to happen that night, and it did.

Less than thirty miles south of us in the city of Hue, some of the bloodiest fighting of the entire war was taking place. Intelligence reports had come into us that morning warning of substantial enemy build up in our area and a virtual certainty we would be hit. Most of the experienced "grunts" had been sent up to Khe Sanh two weeks earlier to help defend against an expected attack leaving the perimeter security at Quang Tri to mostly new arrivals like myself. We had spent the daylight hours frantically

strengthening our positions as best we could and now as the darkness of the evening engulfed us, on full alert, we waited.

It was an incredibly dark night and a heavy fog had rolled in off the South China Sea adding a claustrophobic effect to an already nightmarish situation. About midnight, our worst fears were confirmed when a call came into us at the command bunker that communications with Bunker Four had been lost—an ominous sign. Had the enemy begun to penetrate our lines and cut communications in preparation for an all-out attack? Someone from command would have to investigate. I volunteered.

Not until I was outside alone in that suffocating darkness did the enormity of what could well be in store for me begin to register. I started my way up the river bank with my only guide in the nothingness around me being the wires connecting the radios between bunkers which I let slide through my free hand. As I worked my way along, pausing every few feet to listen carefully for anything unusual, the buildup of terror at times seemed as if it were going to incapacitate me completely.

Just as I was sure that I could stand no more, it happened. The radio wires which I had clung to so tenaciously to guide me were suddenly jerked right out of my hand. No question, there was movement, and it was close—possibly within a matter of feet. Was I to be the next victim

of the Viet Cong's uncanny ability to penetrate our lines, to meet my maker with my throat slashed from ear to ear?

Surprisingly, my intense fear was soon displaced by something much larger, deeper and absolutely profound. Suddenly my mind became amazingly clear and my terrible fear, although still present and undiminished in its intensity, became manageable—in fact an ally.

As I crouched there in that small ravine, my M-16 on full automatic, I got in touch with the enormous investment the primal human spirit places on survival. There were no "thou shalt nots," only a fierce and clearly focused determination to survive at any cost. In the long seconds that passed as every cell in my body was euphorically committed to my survival, my ears listened with unprecedented acuity, my eyes—unable to see even my hand in front of my face only moments earlier—could now see the ground below me.

The wires tugged again, but my mind was in complete control now. My thoughts were racing. I no longer had a death grip on my M-16; I held it effortlessly as if it were an extension of my own body. Again there was movement of some sort very close by. I strained to listen. In my heightened state of awareness, I could hear whispers, but they were not those of the enemy but those of my fellow Marines in Bunker Four. The relief I felt was overwhelming. I tingled from head to toe, and I just

wanted to laugh. They were unshaken as I whispered out to them, unaware that communication with them had been lost. The four of us laughed nervously as they explained that the tug I had felt was from a puppy—a gift from one of the "zoomies" in the air wing—pulling and chewing on the wires. Another round of nervous laughs greeted my attempt to recount to them how frightened I had been and the transformation I had undergone only moments earlier.

My return to the command bunker was on the order of a religious experience. I felt god-like as I effortlessly glided through the same foggy darkness that had caused me so many cuts and falls earlier, my mind intuitively knowing the direction and my feet seemed to know exactly where to land. It was an overwhelming reaffirmation of my own right to live, that I had just as much a right to life as any of God's creatures and equally as great a right to protect it by whatever means necessary. But above all, I had the distinct feeling that some greater force had been at work testing me and that I had passed.



STEVEN CURTIS WAS A MARINE CORPS PHOTOGRAPHER FROM 1968-1970. PHOTOS AND MORE INFO ON THE BOOK THIS STORY WAS EXCERPTED FROM CAN BE SEEN AT THEVIETNAMIREMEMBER.COM.

My Memories of Tet

MICHAEL PETERSON

I had just arrived in-county around the last of December, '67- early January of '68, so I was an F.N.G. My MOS was 2531 (Field Radio Operator), and was assigned Communications Co, HQ Bn, 1st Marine Division. But I didn't have the heart to be stuck in Headquarters 1st Mar. Div. Combat Operations Center, so I volunteered for guard duty whenever possible. We (Radio platoon) had "the duty" of guarding behind Division C.O.C, occupying the stretch of land between Hills 200 and 244 (for those of you in "the know," that same complex of hills was behind Hill 360, "Freedom Hill," the site of vast P.X. complexes including Freedom Hill Theater).

The upshot was, I was on guard duty in late January. Each "mount" of the duty lasting a day. I was off guard duty for two days when either VC or NVA sappers attacked us and we suffered one KIA and two WIA. But the surprising thing was (and only later I learned of it) that the VC/NVA in the Da Nang area were mistakenly alerted a week early from the nationwide "General Offensive" later. If the higher-ups at MACV had their shit together, the Da Nang experience would have given them a clue. This was confirmed by the 2nd Combined Action Group's (Da Nang Tactical Area Of Responsibility) heavy action throughout the Da Nang

general area. I learned of this MUCH later, when I was writing my thesis on the "Combined Action Platoons: The US Marines' Other War in Vietnam." My memories of Tet itself are disjointed and fragmentary. For example, I have the memory of sacking out on guard mount several days later (it must have been!). All was quiet then. I awoke to sheer cacophony: Every rifle and M-60 on the hill had opened up, including a .50 cal. heavy machine gun. Eventually things quieted down (I think: My memories are THAT disjointed), and my memory fades appropriately. My most vivid memory of all was that the VC/NVA had overrun

Hue city, and they held the "Citadel" (Hue city's old Imperial Capital, home of the Nguyen dynasty). I remember thinking: "What the hell (or the F-word may be appropriate) is going on here..." The Third Marine Division was located six miles to the south, at Phu Bai. If the enemy can come so close to an American division--an entire DIVISION--things must be very bad indeed! I held on to my rifle very close at that time!



MICHAEL PETERSON IS A VIETNAM VET AND MEMBER AND SUPPORTER OF VVAW.

In the Chaos of Tet

HARRY WAGNER

I was in Vietnam working out of the Embassy and with Military Intelligence on January 30, 1968. With the impact of the Tet attack and until MACV could get reports in from all their deployed units, the military grounded all aircraft. No helicopters were flying for two days. Apparently, some military-CIA outposts were running out of supplies by the second day and needed to be resupplied before the air cover would resume. Two Air America helicopters were going to fly the second night of Tet after dark to deliver supplies to several of the outposts. The Air America craft had no guns or armor plate. They were loaded with 15 cases of ammunition and two drums of gasoline and medical supplies. Two flight crews volunteered to fly the very risky flights but needed someone to push the cargo out on delivery. They had few choices since everything was closed down, so I went with one of the crews for two flights. I knew the Air America crews were the best and I also knew what would happen to the outposts if not resupplied. I was into my second day without sleep and don't remember much about the airtime except it was uncomfortable on the long ride trying to sleep on top of two drums of gasoline. We were flying with no lights and on a compass

heading; the crew was in contact with the outpost, and it had been attacked repeatedly and was out of supplies. The flight crew said they were to approach the outpost above 10,000 feet; the outpost would blink their lights once, and we would align to a touchdown position. He said he would drop straight and stop two feet off the ground. I had 15 seconds to unload, and on departure, prepare for serious evasive maneuvers. I understood, unloaded out of both sides and just as I felt lift-up, a man appeared and I handed him the medical supplies, which included whole blood. The second flight was about the same, how the aircrew could stop the descent I do not know. It felt like we were at terminal velocity, free falling. I checked the next day, and military relief got to those outposts. The two flights, it seems, violated a general order restricting all flights, but the CIA and Special Forces weren't about to lose four outposts. What a night, the second night of Tet. We got back to Saigon at 4:30 am, and I was called back to the Embassy. They sent me out to report on the progress of the Vietnamese police who were in a house-to-house fight with a large VC-NVA force in Saigon, less than a mile from the Embassy. I had Vietnamese Special Police Branch ID and could get through their perimeter

checkpoints. I reported back that the Vietnamese police were pushing the fight and the VC were getting hit hard. The bombing by the Vietnamese Air Force was generating thousands of refugees leaving the combat area, and they were creating a lot of confusion. I was then assigned to expedite the deluge of Vietnamese refugees trying to escape the bombing by the Vietnamese Air Force. Thousands of people were fleeing by means of one road, and it was getting bogged down. These people, who were day laborers, unloaded cargo from the ships docked in the harbor. They had been living in temporary shelters, some as little as a cardboard box. The Tet attack forced them to leave even these improvised shelters. As I approached the area, I could see that a truck parked on the bridge was hindering the flow of people. There was no other way to escape but to cross that bridge, so I went to investigate. The truck was parked across, so there was little room to get around it. An American missionary was there. He was handing out religious literature and pamphlets. I politely told him he had to move; he was blocking the way, and the refugees were not able to get out quickly enough. He refused to leave his post until all the literature had been passed out. I then told him

that people were getting killed because of this delay. At his second refusal, I had to direct him at gunpoint to move his truck; he complied. On my way back out, I saw that the bridge was blocked once again by the same truck. This time I did not ask politely or ask at gunpoint. I went to the truck, put it in gear and pushed it into the harbor. The literature that he was so determined to distribute to the Vietnamese, who only spoke and read their native language, which was preventing people from escaping the bombing and gunfire, was all written in English.

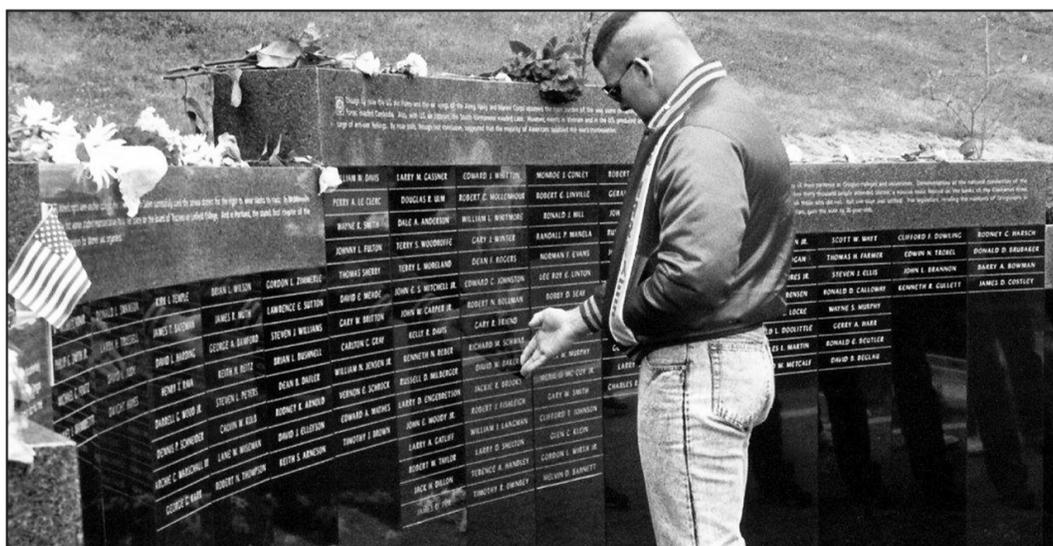


HARRY WAGNER IS AN 88-YEAR-OLD VETERAN OF VIETNAM. HE WORKED IN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS, USAID, AND WITH THE PHOENIX PROGRAM. HE HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN VIETNAM AND INCLUDES PROVEN STRATEGIES TO TRANSITION OUR MILITARY FROM A BELLIGERENT AGENT OF WAR TO AN ADVOCATE ON A QUEST FOR PEACE. THE HEADLESS SNAKE IS AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. YOU CAN FOLLOW HIS BLOG PEACETEAMFORWARD.WORDPRESS.COM AND ON FACEBOOK AT PEACE TEAM FORWARD.

Moral Injury 24 X 7

"You" are walking around in circles, morbidly depressed and withdrawn. Nothing makes any sense anymore. But, it never made any sense long before "You" ever went to war. It was simply "your" turn to find out the absolute truth, and finally realize why countless veterans throughout history wound up in suicide cemeteries. "You" never knew about betrayal, because those who went before "you" were never allowed to speak. The public just wants heroes. They do not want to know the veteran's mindfield. The magnitude of "your" illness is equal to the depth of "your" silence.

—Mike Hastie



An active duty Marine touching the name of a Vietnam veteran on the Oregon Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Portland. When he touched the name, he started to cry.

...Like a Tennis Match

JOHN DeROSE

1968...in the Navy off the coast of Vietnam...about 2 in the morning and landing on a carrier "on the line"...in the middle of a typhoon.

I'm an electronics technician and sometimes aircrew member on a C2A twin-engine turboprop with the big guppy belly and rear ramp. We carry high priority passengers and cargo from the Philippines to "the line" (the "line" is the carriers stationed off the coast of Vietnam) to Da Nang airfield in-country.

Earlier that day (back at Cubi Point in the Philippines) we got word that one of our C2's was "down" at Danang for electronics failure. They needed a number of different components to get the radios and nav gear back up. I'm an electronics technician, it was a boring day so I volunteered to go, grabbed what was needed, and hopped the next C2 heading there. We have to make a stop on one of the carriers before we go to Da Nang.

It's a good 4 to 5-hour flight to the line from Cubi Point. I'm already pretty tired, and as we approach the ship, the weather is not good, and it's been a pretty turbulent flight. Understand that the kind of turbulence that I'm talking about is probably something that most folks have never experienced. The C2A is much smaller than a 737 and, as a small aircraft, is significantly affected by turbulence. Let's put it this way, if you're not strapped in, you'd be spread like peanut butter all over the interior of the aircraft. This is primarily a cargo plane...the inside is unfinished with support struts all over the place...pretty much acting like a strainer should you hit them with any force.

Our pilot that day is probably the best pilot in our squadron. As we're on approach to the ship, it's very clear that he's having a hell of a hard time staying on the glide path. Oh, did I mention that it's the middle of the night, and 100% pitch black? FYI, on night ops on a carrier under combat watch, the deck is bathed in faint red light.

So, here we go 130 knots or so, trying to catch the hook...the C2 is bouncing around in the turbulence to beat the band. We hit the deck... HARD...missed the hook (we call it a "bolter") and off we go again, around for another pass. At this point, I'm getting worried. We're getting low on fuel and we won't have much left for too many more passes. We'd better catch the hook this next time around.

Around we come again. I'm in the rear jump seat at the right of the C2. It

has a window, so as we're approaching, I can see the dim red glow and the deck. We hit the deck again, and the view is somewhat surreal. It appears that time is slowing down. I can clearly see all the deck crew watching us. It's like watching the crowd at a tennis match, as their heads all move in-sync as they watch the ball go back and forth, but it's all happening in slow motion. Their heads swivel from left to right, watching our progress, and BAM...we bolt again as we hit the deck.

I'm 21 years old at the time, have a wife and two young kids, and now I'm plenty scared! As we're coming around for the third pass, all of a sudden it hits me, "We're going to crash and we're all going to die." It wasn't a feeling of fear or panic...it was a very calm acceptance of the finality and reality of the situation. I can remember kind of mentally shrugging my shoulders and just sitting back and waiting for the inevitable. I will tell you that it is truly amazing as to how many different thoughts can go pass through your mind in such a short period!

In we go for the third pass... another bolter...another view of the deck crew watching us. Oh, shit!! How much fuel do we have left? Around we go again. It takes about 4 to 5 minutes or so to make another approach...certainly enough time to think about many things.

On the fourth attempt, we again hit hard but...CATCH THE HOOK! Amazing!!! But, the C2 doesn't stop bouncing around. It was then that I realized that the carrier was pitching and bobbing like a cork in a maelstrom. The deck crew took over, moved us out of the way and tied us down. We lowered the ramp and began to deplane but we could hardly stand upright... it was that rough, but it was a great feeling to be able to feel how rough it was...to be able to feel anything at all! I'm the first one off the bird, and from the looks on the deck crew's faces, I'll bet that I must have had quite a shit-eating grin on my face because all I saw was nothing but wide grins all around.

We refueled, offloaded some cargo, waited for daybreak to catapult off the ship to Da Nang. I still had a downed C2 there that I had to fix. During that time, the storm moved off, and when we saw the first wisps of dawn, the sky was reasonably clear. We "cat" off the ship, and off we go to Da Nang, a very short hop, no more than a half hour or so. It's still an eerie pre-dawn when we hit the tarmac at Da Nang. The field is lit up, and there are

lots of clouds and vibrant colors in the sky. To this day I can still remember the technicolor sky. We pull the C2 in our parking spot. In Da Nang, there are "revetments" to park aircraft. Picture a big garage, without a roof, made of thick walls of poured concrete, with separate spots for each aircraft, and a concrete divider between each spot, to isolate each plane from the one next to it.

We drop the rear ramp on the C2 and begin to unload. It's still pre-dawn...this is my first trip "in-country" (into the combat zone). By now, it's been well over 30 hours since I've slept. I have two heavy pieces of electronics on my shoulders (probably 100 lbs. or so) as I wander off looking for the other C2 with problems. It's somewhat quiet, but even at that time of the early morning, there's still plenty of activity on the field.

All of the sudden, alarm sirens start going off, small arms fire erupts across the runway, and at the same time, everyone starts yelling and running everywhere. I'm standing there, with the gear on my shoulders, and I haven't got the slightest idea where to go or what to do, so I start running to...where? Beats the hell outta me, but seemed like a good idea at the time, as everyone else was doing it! The arms noise is getting more intense. I'm still less than 50 yards from our plane, and all of a sudden there's a loud "whooshing" noise, followed very shortly by an overwhelming BOOM!

It turns out to be a rocket attack and it all happened so fast, yet things appeared to be moving in slow motion! At that point, I really didn't know what to do. I still had the gear on my shoulders. I'm a big guy in good shape (6'3" 225 lbs. at the time), so it's not that I was terribly hindered by the extra weight...it just never occurred to me to drop the gear and run for the nearest cover. OK...now I'm running to...beats the hell out of me...when I see a sandbagged open shelter, head towards that, and I dive ass-over-tea-kettle into the bunker still carrying the gear, but upside down now, landing on my head. I wrenched my neck pretty good, and it later turned out that I also re-tore my left rotator cuff.

I'm now in the hole with other guys who know what is going on. It's clear we're under attack, and no one seems to be terribly concerned about it...everyone is somewhat nonchalant about it! OK, I can pretend to be cool too.

In a while, the all-clear siren sounds, and everyone goes back to

business. I'm now beyond tired. I find the C2. It takes about 2 hours to r& the gear. I check out the systems and they're all now working, so mission accomplished.

Our C2 was not damaged at all in the attack, so we prep it to get out of there. Before we can, all of us (enlisted men, that is) get commandeered to help unload a big cargo plane that just pulled in. Oh, for joy! It's now mid-morning, well over 100 degrees on the field, I still have my full flight suit on. It's freakin HOT!!! By the time we unload the plane, my flight suit is totally soaked.

We are then kicked free, get back to our C2 and get the hell out of there. Once we get to altitude, I fall into a deep sleep, totally exhausted. I wake up a bit later, pull out a cigarette, start to light it up and...aarrggghhh!!! I can't inhale!! Long story short instant pneumonia!! Off-duty for almost 2 weeks absolutely miserable. If not for the apricot brandy that a friend slipped me in the hospital, I don't know what I would have done. By the way, it didn't take very long for me to find out that the rocket attack at Da Nang that I had just experienced was the opening salvo of the Tet offensive...lucky me...being able to get outta there before the shit REALLY hit the fan.

Anyhow, I guess that's my "near-death" experience. At the time, it didn't seem like that big a deal...maybe it really wasn't. I look back at it now, and the most vivid memory of it all was bouncing off that deck, and watching the deck crew watch us bolting...all bathed in that eerie red light.

It's strange the things that stay with you.

P.S. - Both our pilot and my fellow crew member of that day were later killed in a crash as they attempted a carrier landing. One of the props came off during approach and sliced the fuselage in half...all within sight of the flight deck.

I still think about them. May they rest in peace.



JOHN DeROSE ENLISTED IN US NAVY IN 1966 FOR A FOUR-YEAR TOUR. ATTENDED BOTH A & B SCHOOLS FOR ELECTRONICS AND MADE ATN2 IN 20 MONTHS (CRITICAL RATE). DeROSE SPENT THE MOST TIME IN VRC-50 HOMEPORTED OUT OF NAS ATSUGI, JAPAN WITH DETACHMENTS IN CUBI POINT, PHILIPPINES, AND DANANG. RETURNED TO COLLEGE IN 1970, JOINED VVAW, AND SERVED AS A CAMPUS ORGANIZER AND PROTEST ORGANIZER. NOW RETIRED AND LIVING IN HARVARD, MA.

5 Dead in Ol' Maryland

Nixon's Coming and 4 dead in Ohio
Sure stopped the Burning of ROTC's and Violent Protest by the Hard Line Students and Hippies.
His Impeachment was caused by him handing over the White House Tapes.
Hitler is Alive and Well in Donald Trump.
He has some Tapes but Tweets and a Big Mouth will work to Impeach this Mad Mad Man Man as he tries to Shut Down the Freedom of the Press and TV as He hams it Up with North Korea and keeps the Mexican

Children locked Up in Wire Cages.
He has Fox News in his back pocket but even some of them are backing away like the "Fake News" he calls much of the "Press."
Russian made and If He sounds like "Yes and No" in his Crazy Talking He thinks he can weasel out Of Anything even his political promises to get elected like any cornered Political Rat would do.
just Richard Nixon.

—Dennis Serdel

A World Leader's Demise

Bolting upright, sweat pours down his brow as the nightmare, held captive by his unconscious, escapes into the night. The afterimage, still vivid behind his eyes, stalks his camouflaged conscience. Strangling back a cry, he tries to evade the figure whose words sear his psyche, "Your soldiers are on strike. No longer will they kill for your greed and pride. They are in the world building hospitals and schools. Your ships carry food to the poor, your planes medicine to the sick. Weapons have been dismantled. The world has chosen peace. We wish to forgive you, that you may join us."

He got up to turn on the light, to remove the night. In that instant, brightness engulfing the room, his heart stopped to see the figure: a woman, perhaps Viet Nameese or Latina; maybe Native American or African. She smiled and in that moment he died of fear.

He was buried, the only peace his troubled soul could accept.

—Gregory Ross

Reconciliation

MARTIN TREAT

In the summer of 1970, I came home from the American War in Vietnam. I was so embarrassed to be a returning soldier that at Oakland Army Base I changed. In the bathroom, ripping off my uniform and replacing it with thongs, shorts, and tie-dye T-shirt, sunshades and dark glasses; back to my nineteenth month ago California uniform. Then, picking up my duffle bag with all the possessions I had accumulated from the Army as a draftee, dumped it in the first garbage bin I see driving off in a taxi to meet my wife in Berkeley. Even my hair was respectfully long again as if the Army understood (maybe they did).

Melody had secured a nice little room in a vintage house in the Berkeley hills where her father used to live as a loving guest while attending school. It had a view of a large backyard garden with ponderosa, blooming lilies, grass and stone steps down the hill with San Francisco bay way in the distance as a backdrop.

A perfect setting for a long-sought reunion.

"Let's make that baby," I said.

Driving home to Redding in Northern California through the blazing summer of June 1970, I thought about seeing my parents, brother, and sister again, and Mel's family and wondered what I would say to them. During my time in Vietnam, I had become disillusioned by the war. Stopping communist aggression, the purpose of the war, I called into question. I now believed that my country intervened in a civil war, choosing one side over the other and that the USA was getting in the way of the Vietnamese to settle which government they wanted. The war was a terrible waste of lives.

My father had served in World War II and had volunteered with the men of his community after Pearl Harbor and Franklin Roosevelt's call to war on two fronts. Now, in our living room, he wanted to see me in uniform

and take a picture.

"Dad, it's not that kind of war," I said.

"What do you mean? You fought for your country."

"I'm ashamed about what I did for my country. I threw my army uniform away in a garbage bin in Oakland."

"Threw it away!? Why I wore my uniform for weeks after I got home and every Fourth of July till it fell off."

"Different war; this one is really wrong."

"Then the news and the protests are right?"

"Yeah, time to change our thinking. I obeyed the law, and now it's over, and I survived. So, let's forget about it."

We went into dinner arm over arm, and I never talked about the war with him again.

I went back to a different graduate school on the GI bill, raised our child in special housing near campus, got fellowships and jobs. And, no one

knew I had been to Vietnam except the VVAW.

I joined the protests, and they've been my war buddies ever since.

Ironic twist: I have motor neuron disease (related to ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease), Agent Orange presumed cause according to the VA. It seems that the maintenance area that I fixed choppers (at Diem west of Ho Chi Minh City) had been a base for the use of the defoliant. Safe mechanics job my ass. I'm reconciled to my fate late in life, I've had a good one, but the Vietnamese and effects of Agent Orange? More work yet to do. HR 334, Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act, will be before House of Congress next election.



MARTIN TREAT IS A RETIRED PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER AND PERFORMING ARTIST LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY. HE IS 73 AND IS A MEMBER OF HELLS KITCHEN/CHELSEA COMMUNITY BOARD AND DISABLED IN ACTION.

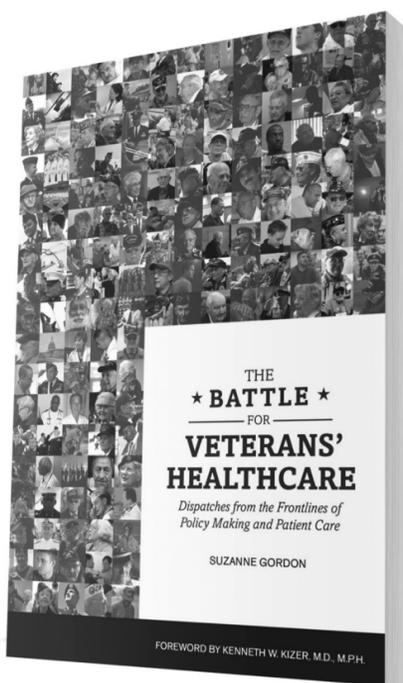
“The Battle for Veterans’ Healthcare should be required reading for the Trump Administration, members of Congress, and anyone concerned about the fate of the Veterans Health Administration.”

—Garry Augustine, Washington Executive Director of Disabled American Veterans

“Suzanne Gordon skillfully rebuts the arguments of would-be privatizers, who are trying to discredit and then divert public funding from health care providers who actually care about their patients.”

—Phillip Longman, author of *Best Care Anywhere: Why VA Health Care Is Better than Yours*

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

To My Great Uncle George

(In Memory of November 11, 1918)

Gassed in the trenches on Armistice Day,
You and your buddies huddled to stay low
With gas masks secured you knelt down to pray
One hundred years ago

And in the autumn morning sun
In a trench like ducks in a row
Each one of you clinched a gun
One hundred years ago

At the eleventh hour on that day,
The guns were silenced as you know,
And the fighting began to fade away
One hundred years ago

Fallen comrades not to ever grow old,
Always remembered their sacrifice to the foe.
Through your tears their stories are told.
One hundred years ago.

— Paul Cameron

Westchester County LST 1167: November 1, 1968

JIM WOHLGEMUTH

I want to remember the Westchester County LST 1167, my ship. On November 1, 1968, the Wesco as it was known, was anchored on the muddy My Tho River, upstream from Vung Tau, South Vietnam. At 0322 two massive explosions ripped through the starboard side killing 25 and wounding another 22, the Navy's greatest single-incident combat loss of life during the Vietnam War. Viet Cong swimmers had placed two mines on the starboard side. It could have been much worse. The tank deck of this old LST was filled with all varieties of ammunition and ordnance, vessels tied up and in the vicinity of the Wesco, we loaded with fuel. It was only the immediate actions and courage of the crew that avoided a catastrophic disaster. The Westchester County was patched up and limped back to its home port (Yokosuka, Japan) where repairs were made, compartments rebuilt and it was sent back to duty.

The Westchester County was my

ship; but not then. I would not arrive until early August of 1969. When I received my orders, I had no idea about the Westchester or about November 1 or what I was getting into. It did not take long to get filled in. There were pictures of the crushed operations and first-class compartments. There were the scattered accounts from people who had heard about what had happened. The odd thing though, I rarely heard a survivor (one of the crew that was there) talk about it. I was a radarman and was bunked in one of the rebuilt operations compartment. Was I a replacement? I was scared to ask. I do know that to my recollection there were only four survivors of the 32 sailors bunked in these rebuilt operations compartments. The rest of us were new, less than nine months after the explosion.

The interesting thing was that you could recognize the survivors. They were older, not by years necessarily, but they were older. They smiled, laughed, enjoyed liberty, but they were

different. A little more constrained, quiet. A little less willing to make fun, pick on fellow sailors, or drink up like sailors have been known to do. They spent a little more time alone. They were helpful and understanding of us new ones but very often they could show a lack of patience and even a little disdain for us. Time passed, and the survivors were transferred and discharged.

I left in 1971 after two years and some months on the Wesco. While we had spent a lot of time off the coast of Vietnam, especially off the Mekong, supporting swift boats, pbrs, Vietnamese Navy vessels, and helicopter gunships, we never went back up the rivers. Oh, we still stopped at Chu Lai, Vung Tau, Cam Ranh Bay, and Da Nang, but no more up those rivers. I was not disappointed with that.

In 1974 the Westchester was turned over to the Turkish Navy. I wonder if they knew the story? So, as we the crew of the Westchester County approach November 1 fifty years on,

that memory lingers, and I imagine it stings for many. There were a lot of tragedies associated with Vietnam on all sides, and they still continue. So many families on all sides lost so many young ones, but for just one day, fifty years on from November 1, 1968, I will remember the night 25 were lost on the Westchester County.

The Westchester County LST-1167 was my ship, but the survivors, they were her soul.

If you get a chance, please google Westchester County LST 1167 you can now find pictures and eyewitness accounts. There is also an association.



JIM WOHLGEMUTH IS A MEMBER OF VVAW WHO LIVES IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. HE SERVED ON THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY FROM 1969 TO 1971. HE THEN SERVED ON THE PT DEFIANCE LSD 31 UNTIL DISCHARGE IN 1972. HE CAME HOME, WENT TO COLLEGE GOT MARRIED HAD KIDS AND NOW GRAND KIDS.

Easy Month

MARC LEVY

"Take five," says the lieutenant.

I clear a spot, sit on my pack, slug a half canteen of water.

"Hey, Doc," says Larry Roy, "I don't feel too good." He dips his head, with his forearm, wipes his brow.

In another world, Larry Roy played golf. Here, at seventeen, he walks point. Everyone likes him. He smiles a lot. Maybe too much. But for Christ sake, not now, Larry Roy. Not now.

"What is it?" I ask in my best medic voice. "What's the matter?"

His throat hurts, his stomach aches. He coughs and sneezes.

"Headache too. Doc, I feel bad all over."

I take his temp. A hundred and three. Kneeling, I open my canvas aid, bottle after bottle, shake out pills, hand him two Tetracycline, two Penicillin, two Compazine, two Pro-Banthine, two Darvon, two aspirin, two Dimetapp, two Sudafed, two

Benadryl, two anti-anything I got.

"That ought to work," I say, zipping the canvas bag shut.

Larry Roy eyes the brightly colored pills, pops the artificial rainbow into his mouth, unscrews the plastic cap of his canteen, tilts his head back, glugs down water.

"You're all right, Doc," he says. "Thank you much." With the back of his hand, he wipes his mouth. Then he is gone.

On patrol, every grunt does his job. The lieutenant plots our course on the topo map. The RTO whispers the lieutenant's orders into the radio handset. Squad leaders push the men, push them. The machine gunner carries the bulky weapon in the crux of his shoulder and neck. Riflemen, freighted with c-rations, ammo, trips and claymores, will advance, take cover, engage the enemy, while the gunner lays down suppressing fire. The Forward Observer risks his life

calling in arty. The medic patches up those who've been hit.

Every grunt has his job, but the point is first to walk into the forbidding jungle, the whispering bamboo, the shadowy thickets of thorny vines. See him, slightly hunched, neck craning, M16 held at the hip, his eyes roving, searching for any hint of an ambush. Hear how his heart crackles like thunder inside his head. See how the sweat drips from every pore of his body. Feel how it saturates his uniform, how it clings to him, serpentine, like a second skin. Step by step, see how the pointman looks, listens, scents the air for telltale signs of enemy passage. With each passing second, he pulses with dread, steadies his fear, plods forward, alive to the sudden thrill of combat, the lawless power it bestows upon him. Larry Roy lives in a world of absolute clarity, where every step may be his last.

An hour later he returns. His eyes

are glazed. He moves too slow. Too easy. "Doc, I don't know what you did, man, but I feel great!"

"Any time," I say. "Glad to help out."

The rest of that month went much the same. Cuts. Scratches. Colds. Parasites. Fungal infections. But no howling screams from gunshot wounds. No writhing grunts sliced by withering shrapnel. No in-out or ripped apart or hemorrhaging trauma. No egg splat gray matter that won't wash off. No blood or teeth or broken bones. This month, this blessed month, none of that. None.



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 FIRST CAVALRY IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA IN 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDICINTHEGREENTIME.COM.



Going out on a minicav, 3rd squad, 3rd platoon, Delta 1/7 First Cav. LZ Compton, An Loc, 1970. Left to right-front row: Shake 'n Bake, Gary Williams, Jim Lamb, Steve Melhop. Back row: Mike Derrig, Garry Williams, Knuckles, John Roop, Joe Dorio. Photo Marc Levy.

A Fulcrum Moment

GREGORY ROSS

Upon turning 19, I got drafted. I joined the Navy. After boot camp, I was sent to Communications Technician School. Upon graduation, the Company Commander, a tough but fair, First Class Petty Officer, addressed the entire class about our Office of Naval Intelligence clearances and that adherence to confidentiality was paramount; lives depended upon it. He called out a recruit's name, then his duty station. The first names were being sent to Europe; next embassy duty in Asian countries. He was going from most desirable to least. He announced shipboard duty and Da Nang in Vietnam. As he got down to the last three; he paused and said there are things about the Military that we do not know, that no civilian, no military personnel without "Top Secret, Eyes Only" clearances are privy to. The three of us, now very nervous, have the "Eyes Only" designation. Deadly serious, he dismisses the rest of the class, closed, locked the door and announced, we were being sent to a very Top Secret, first of its kind, duty station on the moon.

You might not believe we could have been that gullible, but it was 1967, the infancy of the Space Age, our mean age was 19, and you were not in that room. He said it was a three-year deployment, obviously

without leave, that we would be able to communicate with our families but, only by mail, delivery of which would be very slow. We can not tell them of our whereabouts. He goes on to say, in case of a dire emergency, we can communicate by voice, and it is only a twenty-five-second delay between

transmissions. Then he laughed.

It was quite a surprise when he smiled and softly said, "I want to apologize to the three of you. Hazing is a tradition. This is not your real duty station." Then he told us we were going to Morocco. He reminded us of the recent "Six Day War," that a Naval Vessel had been attacked by the Israelis and many ships' personnel were killed and injured, including CT's. He remarked that it was still "hot" over there and then he turned to me and said, "Ross, is that a shortened version of some Jewish name? DOD is not sending Jews to any duty station in

that area." I replied, "No sir, Scottish."

Upon arrival, we were told to report to orientation at 0700 the next day. I was assigned to a unit of six personnel: five of us on our first enlistment and one lifer, Ray King, a First Class Petty Officer. He and I did not get along but, I never broke rank,

always treating him with "respect." I also never missed a chance to point out his mistakes, which were numerous.

One day the Chief Petty Officer told me that as senior Seaman I was in charge since King was out with appendicitis. With no further comment, he left. I addressed the others, "I am going to ask for your help. We have a chance to show the brass that King is a waste. We know how to work together. I would like us to show up King." Everyone agreed that was a good idea. We found out that in those four months we set a record for both volume and accuracy.

"Sir, I appreciate the offer, but with all due respect, Sir, I will have to turn it down. I am only putting in my time, Sir."

I was about to make Third Class Petty Officer. About a week after King returned and the unit went back to just get the job done mode, the Senior Chief came into our spaces and called me out. He walked me to his office where the LT was waiting. They all talked about what a great job I did. They were smiling in a way that made me feel both excited and apprehensive. The Senior Chief said, "The LT went up the ranks and got permission for you to skip a grade, all you have to do is take the next 2nd Class test. You have plenty of time to study."

Then I did it. I tipped this fulcrum moment. I said, "Sir, I appreciate the offer, but with all due respect, Sir, I will have to turn it down. I am only putting in my time, Sir." My fear was that if I moved up and got comfortable, I would get sucked in. The rest of my enlistment I was both proud of myself for living my convictions and regretted the loss of money and comfort.



GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY, SERVING IN MOROCCO, SIX DAY WAR (1967), PHILIPPINES (1968), AND VIETNAM, 7TH FLEET, GUN LINE (1969). PUBLISHED IN ANTHOLOGY: "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE," EDITED BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON.

An Unforgettable Encounter in the Central Highlands: A USO Girl Remembers

SUZANNE COGAN

We were flown by small plane to an isolated base on a mountaintop. The landing was hair-raising. We thumped and jittered over huge potholes and uneven terrain that served as a runway. Looking out the window, I spotted the wreckage of several airplanes.

"This runway is actually too short for this type of plane," our liaison officer said. Now you tell me?

That day we gave two shows, the last at twilight. From the scaffold-like stage, I saw a tall column of black smoke, curling in the distance. What was that?

"A plane blew up during takeoff," we were told. "It happens sometimes."

There was a noticeable darkening of mood from everyone, soldier and performer alike. We ate a somber dinner in the Officers' Club; then went to the non-coms club to socialize with the men.

I sat in a quiet corner, sipping a coke. Hanging on the wall, I saw a dark wooden crossbow and a quiver made of tree bark. The non-lethal ends of the arrows were fitted with pieces of bamboo.

"Are you admiring the crossbow?" a male voice asked.

I looked up. A middle-aged staff sergeant (I could tell his rank from his insignia,) was standing near the

crossbow.

"I like bows and arrows," I said. "Ever since I was a kid and fell in love with Robin Hood."

"Kinda unusual for a girl," he said. "Mind if I join you?"

"I'd like that," I said. The guy had a quiet, reflective energy that struck me as unusual in a non-com officer.

"Where are you from?" I asked, the requisite opening question.

"Oklahoma. And you?"

"New York." I smiled, thinking of home. "How long have you been over here?"

"Several years," he said. "I re-enlisted. This is my third tour of duty."

I didn't know whether to be impressed or to feel sorry for him.

"Do you have a family?" I asked, trying to stick to the suggested subjects.

"Divorced. Two kids. It's tough on them when you're away so long. Especially when you're working in the interior." He paused. Gave me a quizzical look, as if wondering how much to tell me. I must have passed inspection since he went on talking.

"I was a Green Beret," he said. "I lived with a tribe of Montagnards for several months. That's what the French called the non-Vietnamese. That crossbow was given to me by

their chief."

We continued talking for most of the evening. Mostly he spoke about his life in Vietnam, his concern that the Viet Cong were more entrenched than ever, that we didn't seem to be winning the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people. When I looked around, I saw that many of our group had left.

"I should be going soon," I told him.

"Wait a minute," he said. "I'd like to show you something."

He removed the crossbow and quiver from the wall.

"Would you believe this very crossbow shot down a Huey?"

"They shot down a helicopter with that?"

"You bet. It takes two men; one to hold it while the other shoots. They have bigger ones for four men that shoot down full-size choppers. They make everything by hand—bow, quiver, and arrows." He pulled out a single arrow.

"See this? The tip is dipped in strychnine, in case the enemy is still alive. It's a highly effective weapon." He paused as if weighing the crossbow in his hands

"Here," he said, handing it to me. "I'd like you to have this."

"Oh, no," I protested. "I can't take it. It was given to you by a Montagnard chief."

"Yes. As a gift of friendship."

"But..."

"This is the first time since I've been in this country that I've felt like a human being. Like—someone's friend. I want you to have it." He handed me the bow and quiver.

"Consider it a gift of friendship, from me to you. And besides..."

"Yes?"

"I don't know if I'll make it back. But you will."

He smiled. "Take good care of it. And be careful of the arrows. They might still be poisonous."

"I'll be careful," I said, fighting back tears.

"Well—goodbye." He kissed me lightly on the cheek and left.

I carried the crossbow and arrows throughout Vietnam and onto the plane that brought me home.

It hangs on my wall today.



SUZANNE COGAN TOURED VIETNAM IN 1967 WITH A USO PRODUCTION OF GUYS AND DOLLS, STARRING HUGH O'BRIEN. THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM HER SOON-TO-BE PUBLISHED MEMOIR: USO GIRL IN VIETNAM: THEN AND NOW.

Been There Done That

I have a hat I wear
Sometimes
Caked with dirt and sweat
Showing its age
Like the head it sits on
It reads
Vietnam
Been there done that
A conversation piece
But few ever notice
And fewer still respond
Perhaps the words are hard to see
The letters faded
Like the memories behind them
Perhaps the words are hard to bear
Better ignored than acknowledged
Like the plight of those
Who have been there
And done that

Some do respond
Were you in Vietnam?
A nod
Thank you for your service

Thank you for your service
I have served nothing
But a dripping plate
Of death and blood
To strangers
And a heaping bowl of grief
To the ones I love
I have served no one
But old men with fantasies
Paid with young men's lives
I am the blunt instrument of oppression
The spear point of fear
Thank you for your service

I want to scream
At the naive complicity
In the crimes we commit
But I don't
I nod and smile
And walk away
Basking in the brief distinction
Of one who's been there
And done that

—Peter Mahoney

We Did What We Could

We fired on the trees
because their shadows
looked like men.

We torched the hootches
because we saw rifles
entering or leaving

doorways in the dark.
We strung wire around
a rice paddy and called it ours

for a day. We did what
we could, what we were
ordered to do. We didn't

like it. We didn't think it was
right or good. But we did it—
what else was there to do?

Some stayed in the valley,
some on the mountain
with no name, some in

the Ho Bo Woods, some in
the jungle in Cambodia. Some
died later of internal wounds.

And some are still out there
on a street some where.
Each of us left something

we loved behind—a girl,
an unsent letter, a luckless
Saint Christopher, a purple

heart, a friend. We did what
we could, what was asked
of us. It wasn't enough.

Not for us. Not for our time.
Not enough to keep the dead
from rising with their fists

full of weeds, nor enough to stop
the living from cradling them
in their nights of terror.

—rg cantalupo



Wounds of War

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans
by Suzanne Gordon
(Cornell University Press, 2018)

Be forewarned: The rear of our family SUV sports a bumper sticker that says "If you can't afford to take care of the veterans, don't go to war.—Bernie Sanders." The following review may be colored by that pre-existing point of view.

Author Suzanne Gordon is a journalist who has written an awesome collection of books, mostly investigative in nature, about various aspects of healthcare and, a very different topic, the healthcare business, in America. Noting that there is a movement afoot to privatize the VA, she set out to investigate the facts and put together a book that would clarify what's really going on in the fields of healthcare and caring for the needs of America's veterans. "Wounds of War" is that book, just published in October. This book is a gold mine of information about the VA, or technically the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

Actually, this is a collection of numerous books in one. In his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, nearing the end of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln pledged "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan." "Wounds of War" offers a brief history of the federal government's efforts to make Lincoln's promise come true right up to present day. The Veterans Administration was first formed in 1930 by President Herbert Hoover and became the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1989. The history of veterans' benefits is colorful and fascinating, but it is far from the primary reason Ms. Gordon found it necessary to write this book.

Building from the foundation, "Wounds of War" defines the multiple missions of the VA, and its structure. The Department of Veterans Affairs is made up of three agencies. The Veterans Health Administration, or VHA, (commonly referred to as the VA), is the largest of the three. The others are the National Cemetery Administration which provides burial for eligible veterans, and the Veterans Benefits Administration which determines and administers a broad range of benefits to our vets, such as the GI Bill, housing benefits, vocational rehabilitation and employment, pensions, home loans, life insurance, and access to VHA care. The VHA is by far the largest of the three agencies, delivering care to nearly nine million eligible veterans in over 1,700 sites, including acute-care hospitals, outpatient clinics, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes, inpatient residential programs, and campus and community-based centers. With a salaried staff of 314,000, the VHA is the nation's largest and only integrated healthcare system that has full public funding.

It is important to note that the VHA is not a hospital chain competing with the for-profit system to attract customers and achieve market share. Its doctors are salaried, unlike the corporate systems where physicians are incentivized to hurry patients through or overtreat them to maximize profits. (I am often concerned that VA doctors are incentivized by the pharmaceutical industry to

overprescribe pills.) In theory, the VHA is a full-service healthcare system that uses taxpayer dollars to provide all types of care to its select group of patients.

The VHA has four primary missions. First, it delivers clinical care (medical, mental health, and rehabilitation) via 153 hospitals, 900 clinics, 300 mental health centers, and various other facilities that assist more than 230,000 people every day. I was surprised to learn that the second major mission is research. The VHA pioneered such advancements as the shingles vaccine, the nicotine patch, and the first implantable cardiac pacemaker. The current Million Veteran Program is exploring the impact of genetics on health and various medical treatments. Because the VHA has far more patients than any other healthcare system in America, and because it has established a universal communications system that allows tracking and sharing over a larger study group and area, the VHA is uniquely positioned to use its data for a wide range of research projects. In 2016 alone, VHA researchers published 9,480 papers. Today the VHA is researching the link between genes and suicide risk, prostate cancer, and the use of probiotics to treat veterans with traumatic brain injury. Because it is America's largest healthcare system, and treats more men suffering from prostate cancer, the opportunities to discover new treatments and drugs, and to communicate those findings, is unique. It must also be mentioned that the unique nature of the VHA system does not require any type of pre-authorization from the insurance industry, doctors are free to prescribe and treat their patients' needs freely and without second-guessing or denials. The third VHA mission, also a surprise, is teaching. The VHA is affiliated with the major academic medical centers throughout America, and it currently trains 70 percent of our medical residents and 40 percent of all other healthcare professionals, nurses, physicians, psychologists, social workers, physical therapists, and other specialties.

The fourth mission is emergency preparedness for veterans impacted by such disasters as fires or floods. In a disaster zone, teams of VHA employees are responsible for contacting veterans and making sure they are not hurt, that they are receiving medical care, and that they have housing, medications and medical services quicker and beyond the scope of what's available to the general population.

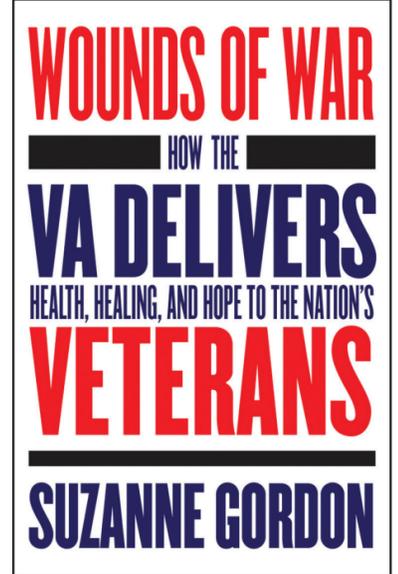
Is it any wonder that the VA, America's largest healthcare system, the second-largest branch of our federal government with an annual budget allocation of \$164 billion is a tempting target of our country's most established and greedy profiteers? Corporate medicine and the insurance industry see all those dollar signs and are using every trick at their disposal to get their share.

Simply stated, and despite many of the reports we have seen in the media, the VA's health system works far better than the for-profit corporate healthcare industry that has been shaped by the profiteers. "Wounds of War" devotes many pages to describing the various VA programs in place all across the country, and comparing their results with those of the for-profit private industry. Obviously, the real purpose of this

book by an investigative journalist with vast experience analyzing the medical profession is to combat the profit-oriented corporations and the politically-motivated conservative zealots like the Koch brothers and the puppet group they fund, the Concerned Veterans of America. The vast majority of American veterans receiving care from the VA feel strongly that those services should not be privatized or turned over to the for-profit medical industry. Kenneth Kizer was named by President Clinton to head the VHA in 1994, and is recognized for his enormous contributions. *Harvard Business Review* called the transformations at the VA under Kizer the most successful turnaround in US history, and *Businessweek* recognized the VA for providing "the best medical care in the US" Kizer left the VA in 1999, noting that "conservatives" were provoked when the nation's premier business publications lavished such positive attention upon a government program that is essentially a successful example of socialized medicine located throughout the American hometown landscape. The Republican Bush administration began to undermine the basic organization and practices of the VA, and introduce incentive programs straight out of the corporate playbooks that would ultimately lead to the types of scheduling abuses at the Phoenix VA hospital, and numerous others, that created a nationwide outpouring of scandal. Gordon suggests that the kind of supportive working environment that Kizer and his team had created has been largely replaced by a punitive one. The threats of budget cutting and mass firings as portions of the VA's activities are handed off to the private for-profit sector have sent a devastating and discouraging message to the VA community.

But "Wounds of War" is far more than a history. It is also a user's guidebook to today's VA, with in-depth descriptions of the many programs and activities offered by the VA system, often with comparisons to corresponding programs in the private, or for-profit, healthcare field. My copy of the book bristles with fluorescent sticky notes like quills from a porcupine.

Assuming that many readers of this review will be concerned veterans, this book offers abundant information on programs that should enable many of our brothers and sisters to jot down some notes and approach the VA armed with specific information about what care should be available. In that respect, it succeeds as a guidebook, a road map through a very complex system of avenues that include programs to help returning vets return to civilian life, prevent suicide, overcome disabilities, deal with trauma, reduce homelessness, deal with the police and the justice system, and locate elder care for the aging veterans community, and end-of-life care. The good news is, the facts are all thoroughly documented, well-organized, understandable, and include insightful comments from veterans and their family members the author has interviewed along the way. The not-quite-so-good news is that many if not most of the programs the author describes are not available at the average hometown VA facility, or, if they are, "Wounds of War" does not tell us how to access them. The author visited a variety of VA facilities all across America, in big cities and



small towns, but clearly the majority of her observations come from the VA's Fort Miley hospital in San Francisco. Did I mention an array of fluorescent sticky notes protruding from my book? An index, especially one listing symptoms, diseases, and common concerns with the page numbers where those problems are addressed might have made my sticky note reference system unnecessary.

I was bothered throughout the book by acronyms that were not included in the list at the front of the book. In some cases the acronym's true meaning was revealed, but when it reoccurred many pages later in the book it was assumed the reader would remember. As veterans, we are all too familiar with the government's and military's use of acronyms, but this book is intended to be a guidebook, and we could certainly use a bit more help here. Fifty years after leaving Vietnam, and never having visited the Fort Miley hospital in San Francisco, I am totally unfamiliar with a PDAT or a CIT. I have never encountered a HUD-VASH, or a PIM, OTP, CLC, ADRD, OECD, or REACH VA program, an ACE or a GECDAC. Is a BEST (Behavioral Education and Support Team), pioneered in San Francisco, in place elsewhere? Yes, there is a list of acronyms at the beginning of the book, but it is woefully incomplete. Perhaps I nitpick?

"Wounds of War" is a terrific book, and I would recommend that every veteran depending upon the VA for his or her healthcare buy it. It will be a valuable reference book, and it can provide a wealth of helpful information should you decide to contact your Senator or Congressman and convey your opinion about privatizing the VA. In these Times of Trump, it is going to take a lot of communication from the veterans community to prevent the Koch brothers and other crusaders from destroying the VA. Most of us, the nation's veterans, oppose privatization, but from any perspective there is an enormous amount of money guiding health care in the US today, and the right-wing community values money above all else. The VA is far from perfect, but "Wounds of War" will convince you that it is doing a pretty good job, and give you lots of material to help spread that message far and wide. I highly recommend this book.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A GI'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

A Shadow On Our Hearts

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

A Shadow On Our Hearts

by Adam Gilbert

(University of Massachusetts Press, 2018)

Our war in Vietnam was one of the most morally contentious events of the twentieth century, but it produced much poetry from the participants. Adam Gilbert's "A Shadow on Our Hearts" collects many poetic voices of those who fought that war contending only theirs is worthy of consideration for his thesis to thoroughly examine core moral issues arising therefrom. Gilbert, a writer and historian, earned his PhD from the University of Cambridge and was a Leverhulme Fellow at the University of Sussex.

Although many poets have written from their non-combat roles of the war and have offered their assessment in poetry, Gilbert's narrows the field for his thesis contending the other poets have been considered and do not fit his requirement of personal war experience. He even includes pilots who fought from such a distance to be hard pressed to derive poetic knowledge from the victims of their grotesque napalm bombings that paramedics and others on the ground write about filling in that gap while examining the war's core moral issues.

These poets provide important insights for Gilbert to explore their physical and psychological surroundings before, during, and after the war. Included are their profound perspectives on the relationships between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people. These firsthand experiences, reflect what it meant to be witnesses, victims, and perpetrators of the war's violence. Their vision of moral responsibility indicts many culprits for the harms caused by the conflict through the lens of morality and presents a personal, and ethically penetrating account of the American war in Vietnam. Gilbert uses a wide variety of authors of the war novel and other historical accounts to back up his thesis and provide context from them to shed light on this dark period of our history. I.F. Stone, Camus, Sartre, Hemingway, Wilfred Owen, Auden, and Frankl are early examples.

Some of his insights are strikingly unique such as the effect of climate on the endurance and lack thereof in a hot jungle environment and how it affects one's clarity of moral action with an elusive clever adversary in touch with their surroundings and used to the heat and rice paddies. David Hall points to his youth killing of ants with matches as conditioning for this and other violent episodes in Vietnam:

Now
In another country
I watch them salvage straw
From the blazing homes
Whose tenants lie
scorched
and crackling
in their yards.
Everywhere
Craters gape
In tribute
My summer of homework shows.

American football provided another conditioner "where the opponent is sort of dehumanized and you're taught basically, to fall in love with hurting people."

Peter P. Mahoney writes, "Military education doesn't teach how to think, it teaches how to obey—blindly and unquestioningly." He reflects on Lt. William Calley, the only American soldier convicted for the killing of unarmed civilians at My Lai: "The only guide that confused young men like Lt. Calley and me was morality, and the Army had done its best to eliminate such a defective idea."

Peter Berenbak indicates racial othering and the language of dehumanization were vital factors in the violence perpetrated by Americans in Vietnam and contends this "linguistic dehumanization was a central aspect of the war."

Wanting to cry out in anger!
At the racism so
Blatantly accepted as
Part of our daily existence (sic)
Black
As well as
White
Skillfully play the game.
Blacks just learning;

Whites practicing for home.
Gook,
Dink,
Slope.
Colorful words for a
Less than human race.
The stage is now set
For the triumphant third act.
Kill them all.
Everything!
Since they're not really people
It can't be murder

David Connolly writes; 'I fought to keep a nation / and people divided'; "I saw very quickly / that we were the invader" ; "I was hated / by the people I fought for."

Kevin Bowen's poem "Temple at Quon Loi, 1969" carefully describes the enmity some Vietnamese people harbored for American soldiers:

Outside the gate
The old woman
Walks up the hill
From the temple.
Her pace
Deliberate as a procession.
From the corner of an eye
She stares.
She must wish our deaths.
Beneath the white silk band
Breasts ache for a husband.
She passes in mourning,
Counting each step.
Her prayers rain down like rockets.

The use of free-fire zones—"an American term to designate a geographical area in which all life is considered enemy"—stripped away innocence and identified "legitimate" targets solely based location reinforced American suspicions and hostility toward the Vietnamese population. Perry Oldham, adopting the voice of a gung-ho helicopter gunner, reveals:

The dumbfuckers in the sampan
Who wouldn't get off the canal
after curfew-
You and me both know they're out
there
for one reason-
so we hovered overhead and sunk
their ass.

The glorification of body counts and kill ratios created a climate in which killing was encouraged leading to this grim song followed one by Jan Barry:

We shoot the sick, the young, the lame,
We do our best to kill and maim,
Because the kills count all the same,
Napalm sticks to kids.
Ox cart rolling down the road,
Peasants with a heavy load,
They're all VC when bombs explode,
Napalm sticks to kids.

Once you were a strange, alien name
Far across the seas somewhere.
Then you were a small, damp, green hostile land
where for a lifetime lived in a year
I sweated, stank, drank, struggled to survive, stumbled
and nearly died.
Now you are my foster, second home;
a place I've left forever
a part of me.
The best part: the part that cries
when your peoples cry,
that part that suffers when you suffer.
Best, you have taught me to love
those whom I fought
and was once taught to hate
and question that love
which I used to blindly obey
and to serve no one or no thing
blindly ever again
You have taught me, foster land,
to be not just a man
but a human being



DAN LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, AND THEN A SHIP TO VIETNAM. HIS MEMOIR, ALL THE DIFFERENCE, DESCRIBES HIS CHANGE FROM A PAWN IN THE MILITARY TO A CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE. WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM



Washington, DC, July 4, 1974.

Scofflaw

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Scofflaw
by Ariel S. Garfinkel
(Lucita Publishing, 2018)

Sometimes I stumble across a book which hasn't had much attention, but it is hugely important, informative, or interesting. I'm very pleased to tell you that "Scofflaw" is that kind of book, and much more. This is a study of Vietnam after the war, and the international laws and precedents that our country has systematically ignored with regard to the UXO (unexploded ordnance) and chemical damages due to Agent Orange and all the related rainbow of chemicals America inflicted upon Southeast Asia during the period known as "the Vietnam War."

Carefully researched and fully documented, "Scofflaw" is a small book that is a damning indictment of the destruction and suffering America showered down upon Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Today, as we "commemorate" the 50th anniversary of that war, the explosives and anti-personnel weapons we dropped in such profusion are continuing to kill and maim the impoverished peasants

of those countries. In total, the US dropped an estimated barrage of more than 7.6 million tons of bombs upon those countries, three times the amount of explosives utilized in World War II in Europe and the Pacific theater combined! We employed more than five million tons of explosives in Vietnam alone, the vast majority in South Vietnam, our supposed ally and a poor, rural, agricultural country. In Southeast Asia, American bombardments and artillery were the most intense in the history of warfare. Today, after decades of cleanup efforts, the Vietnamese government estimates "...350,000 to 800,000 tons of bombs and mines remain, including high explosive bombs, shrapnel bombs, penetration bombs, missiles, mines, cannon warheads, and other explosives" remain. In addition, the US deforested 4.5 million acres of Vietnam with 18 million gallons of highly toxic chemical defoliants. Initially, these chemicals were used to make the jungle vegetation shrivel and die, stripping the enemy guerilla forces of their cover. However, as the war dragged on with few positive results for the Americans, those chemicals

were employed to poison vast areas of Vietnam's agricultural capacity. The intent was to deny the enemy food, and to destroy the Vietnamese population's resolve and willingness to continue the war. Of course, those defoliant chemicals contained dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known to science. Today, children in Vietnam continue to be born with gruesome deformities caused by the permanent alteration of their parents' and grandparents' DNA by exposure to those chemicals.

Scofflaw offers a concise, accessible and thoroughly understandable discussion of international laws and protocols regarding warfare and the cleanups after war. Clearly, the vast majority of those rules, legal obligations, and guidelines have been systematically ignored throughout modern history, leaving the residents of war zones little hope that the leftover weapons will ever be cleaned up, nor that there will ever be reparations or humane assistance. American combat troops left Vietnam in 1973, forty-five years ago. Congress and the Pentagon have been terribly reluctant to help our

own disabled or poisoned veterans, let alone the peasants of Southeast Asia. The tragedy of the Vietnam War continues to today, and it will certainly continue for decades to come.

It is all too easy for Americans to ignore the suffering and misery the Vietnam War inflicted, just as our national attention is diverted away from the human toll of the seventeen-year war in Afghanistan, or the suffering we have inflicted upon the populations of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan, or many other areas of the world. If there is any hope that America's militarism, imperialism, and an economy dependent upon death and destruction might someday be refocused upon peace, brotherhood, humanity, and hope it will be books like "Scofflaw" that will inspire the changes. Highly, highly recommended!



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.



Reading of MLK's Riverside Church speech against the war, 50 years after his assassination, New York Public Library.

Dead Letter File

ART DORLAND (REVIEWER)

German Students' War Letters
by Philipp Witkop, A.F. Wedd
(Translator)
(Methuen, 1929)

This publication, *The Veteran*, has engaged my attention the past several years I've been a VVAW member. I have read its many reviews of current books on war and warfare, including one describing a volume composed by an acquaintance of mine, Frank C. Nelson. "Blind Nation," reviewed last issue by John Ketwig, documents the insidious development of an American cultural and political mindset that, escaping all notice, treacherously vacuumed this country into the Vietnam war.

But I would like to draw attention to a book long out of print and fading sadly beyond the reach of memory. This November we mark the centennial of a day that closed out the bloody record of one of the most appalling events of European history. "German Students' War Letters" published in 1929, is a beautifully humane and moving entry in that record. The tattered, disintegrating copy I read was only available at the reference section of my city library, so I sat down at a table there for a couple of days and laboriously copied into a wide-lined notebook excerpts of these letters I wished to take home. Technology be damned, this is the way we did when we were young students ourselves, gathering material for college term papers. How liberating the experience, and I recommend it to others. I have, for a few short days at least, reversed the engine of time. I have disemalmed the past.

The letters, comprising 206 pieces by 92 writers, are gathered

and translated from a larger contemporaneous collection published in Germany, that collection itself culled from some twenty thousand submissions sent in by still grieving German families. The young soldier authors wrote only for themselves and for loved ones, never foreseeing wider circulation. They were all students, many of Theology and Philosophy, and they all died in the war. Furthermore, they believed, or wanted to believe, that their sacrifice meant something. They gave their lives for Kaiser and Fatherland.

We are universally conditioned to despise the enemy, even an enemy of long ago. And here this old, neglected, worn book creates its own victory, not unintentional: try to read some of these pieces without swallowing hard, without choking up; try to picture the Terrible Hun composing such touching letters by the light of a miserable candle in a trench under shellfire. Try.

September 24, 1914

My dear, good, precious Mother; I certainly believe and hope that I shall come back from the war, but just in case I do not I am going to write you a farewell letter. I want you to know that if I am killed, I give my life gladly and willingly. My life has been so beautiful that I could not wish that anything in it had been different. And it's having been so beautiful was thanks above all to you, my dear, good, best of Mothers. And for all your love, for all that you have done for me, for everything, everything, I want to thank you and thank you. . .

Why should I have volunteered for the war? Of course it was not for any enthusiasm for war in general, not

because I thought it would be a fine thing to kill a great many people or otherwise distinguish myself. On the contrary, I think that war is a very, very evil thing. . . But now that it has been declared, I think it is a matter of course that one should find oneself so much a member of the nation that one must unite one's fate as closely as possible with that of the whole. . . For what counts is always the readiness to make a sacrifice, not the object for which the sacrifice is made.

This war seems to me, from all that I have heard, to be something so horrible, inhuman, mad, obsolete, and in every way depraving, that I have firmly resolved, if I do come back, to do everything in my power to prevent such a thing from ever happening again. . .

—Franz Blumenthal, Student of Law, killed on the Western Front December 18, 1914

You can picture the stricken Mother, this letter engraved on her heart, all the promise swept away. With trembling hands she smooths the dress tunic that has been sent back with Franz's personal effects. It is Christmas. That uniform will never need laundering again.

Many German soldiers composed last letters to their families and entrusted them to a faithful comrade in case of their death, Otto Heinebach, Student of Philosophy, wrote the following on the eve of his mortal wound at Verdun, February 19, 1916:

Farewell. You have known all the others who have been dear to me and you will say goodbye to them for me. And so, in my imagination, I extinguish the lamp of my existence on the eve

of this terrible battle. I cut myself out of the circle of which I have formed a beloved part. The gap which I leave must be closed, the human chain must be unbroken. I, who once formed a small link in it, bless it for all eternity. And till your last days, remember me, I beg you, with tender love. Honor my memory without gilding it, and cherish me in your loving, faithful hearts.

What is the sum and balance of all this loss? Like all soldiers sacrificed then and since, these young men lost their lives, their futures, their budding, carefully nurtured promise. The families, thousands upon thousands, lost what all such victims of war lose, and for which there is no compensation. More than half of all soldiers killed in WWI were never identified nor given proper burial. Loved ones beyond counting had not so much as a place to come to and lay flowers. Reading these letters a century later, we may be faintly disconcerted by the unmistakable strain of patriotic nationalism threading beneath and throughout. Yet it is hard to believe that any of these literate young men, taken so soon, would have been the sort to welcome the violent, vicious regime that entered at stage right a few brief years after. Sad to say, but maybe it is as well that they did not live to see that.

Available on Kindle and used paperback and hardback editions online. - Ed.



ART DORLAND WAS AN E-4 PLENIPOTENTIARY WITH US NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY SAIGON, 1966-67.

Cat Hunter

AL WELLMAN

I'm from a family of introverts. Our happiest hours are spent alone exploring seldom-traveled woodland trails learning the value of stealth when observing wildlife, and the importance of silence to recognize sounds. On the days when New England weather kept him indoors, my father's boyhood was shaped by reading Jim Corbett's tales of hunting big cats in India. The eastern cougar had been exterminated from colonial Massachusetts, but feral house cats still followed their larger relatives' hunting behavior where second-growth woodlands reclaimed pastures no longer grazed by the horses replaced by automobiles. House cats are very destructive predators to American small game species. So, in the days before golf replaced hunting as the preferred outdoor recreation of wealthy men, the public service message on the back of Massachusetts hunting licenses requested hunters to shoot any cats they found in the woods.

As a weapon to duplicate Corbett's feats, my father initially used loads of birdshot in the heirloom rifle his great-granduncle had brought home from the civil war. The long

muzzle-loader was a bit clumsy for a schoolboy, and the click made when he cocked it often alerted the cat to danger before he was able to aim and fire. When my father expressed the need for a double rifle of the sort used by Corbett, my grandmother recognized an opportunity to encourage her son to improve his social skills. She bought her son a double-barrel shotgun with the condition that each Sunday would be spent attending Sunday school before wandering the woodlands. When my father reached the age of 18, he purchased an M1903 Springfield match rifle from the Director of Civilian Marksmanship with which he was able to hit cats at distances as great as 100 yards consistently.

My father spent World War II as a naval officer aboard amphibious ships. During the cleanup after amphibious landings, he could not resist the opportunity to leave his crowded ship for a quiet walk ashore. On the pretense of gathering intelligence, he would board the boats shuttling supplies and wounded men between the fleet and invasion beaches. Once ashore, he would search for some quiet

piece of woodland he might explore to relieve stress. The difference from the woodlands of his youth, of course, was the probability that some enemy soldiers might have selected the same piece of woodland as a refuge. So, his first priority upon reaching shore was to search damaged landing craft to find a rifle abandoned by a wounded infantryman.

My father tried to forget his woodland encounters when he and I recounted our military adventures. Although he often retold stories of watching the explosions of an approaching stick of bombs until the last hit his ship, and later being strafed by Messerschmitt fighters on Sicilian beaches while listening to the rumbling growl of enemy artillery shells exploding in the wet sand, the memories of face-to-face combat were too painful to recall. Only once, when alcohol had relaxed his inhibition, did he recount such an experience to me, and my brother-in-law (also a Vietnam veteran). I wonder how many more he might have been able to pretend he had forgotten, as I wonder if private practice professionals

can match focused VA specialists' comprehension of the recurring anguish caused by veterans' memories of the faces of those they killed.

During the invasion of Italy my father was walking through a supply dump where crates had been stacked in a grove of trees to conceal them from aerial observation. He suddenly encountered a German scout on a similar intelligence-gathering mission. Both men immediately attempted to shoot the other, but my father's cat-hunting experience prevailed, and the German's helmet came off as he fell. My father then recognized the dead man as the boy who lived next door in Massachusetts and was stricken by the realization he had killed his boyhood friend. The German wasn't really the boy next door, of course, but rather a perception of recognition that we are all brothers.



AL WELLMAN WAS A SECOND-GENERATION UNITED STATES NAVAL OFFICER WHOSE COMBAT PARTICIPATION WAS LIMITED TO LAUNCHING GUIDED MISSILES AT RADAR IMAGES.

Kuam Yin Weeps

Imagine, then.
Fifty years ago,
a small girl child,
falls into the Mekong River.
Too young to have a name,
Too young to know, even a single word.
And as she sinks into the painful cold,
A warm white body bears her up,
A gentle white snout pushes her,
head up into the reeds and mud,
the river's edge,
brings her three tiny fishes,
one by one, and lays them near her mouth,
that cannot eat.
And stays protecting close,
Into the welcoming dark.

She dies that night,
so very cold, but not alone.
And as she dies,
The only word she ever learns,
burns in her failing mind;
"cá heo"

And, now.
An old man reads the news,
napalm covers the river
and he stops and weeps.
And as the tears run down his face,
he whispers.
"Goodbye forever to the cá heo "

—David Sandgrund



Ann Bailey and Dennis Kroll leading the march at Operation Dewey Canyon IV, Washington, DC, May 12, 1982.

The Muscle Car Wars

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Muscle Car Wars

by B.J. Miller

(Anaphora Literary Press, 2015)

I must admit that I was bitten by the car bug at an early age. I spent my professional career in the car business, and I am a total car enthusiast. "The Muscle Car Wars" is a novel, a work of fiction that takes place in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was an era when powerful American muscle cars dominated the automotive scene... and also the hopes and dreams of many young drivers and car enthusiasts. That said, I was prepared to enjoy this book, and I did. If you have ever floored the accelerator and felt a 400+ cubic inch engine roar,

you will enjoy it too.

The author has done a lot of research into the various makes and models, paint colors, trim levels, horsepower ratings and technical trivia concerning the muscle cars of that time, and he brought back a lot of memories with his enthusiastic descriptions of a young man's life in those days. This is a work of fiction, actually a coming-of-age story with the aromas of hi-test gasoline and tire smoke carefully woven throughout. The author is a confirmed car enthusiast. Still, along with the automotive nostalgia this story contains many of the standard coming-of-age dilemmas we all experienced. The young hero struggles to become sexually active. He longs

to escape the family's tombstone and stone cutting business, but he feels obligated to honor his father's artistry and help the business to prosper. The book reverberates with the popular music of the time, and many of the political situations, including the war in Vietnam. It is a good story, but could have benefitted from the attention of a professional editor. For example, that boxy area between the bucket seats is a console, not a counsel. Camaro's is not the plural of Camaro. There is a big difference between the possessive and the plural. Still, this is a very enjoyable tale about a colorful and exciting time. The author is thoughtful and often politically outspoken in ways that most readers of *The Veteran* will

appreciate. "The Muscle Car Wars" is a realistic look back at the sixties and seventies, and it will make baby boomers nostalgic. It throbs with authentic sounds, it accelerates hard and it makes the reader smile. What a time that was!



JOHN KETWIG IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM WHICH REMAINS IN PRINT AFTER 32 YEARS AND 27 PRINTINGS (MACMILLAN, 1985). A NEW BOOK, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER IS SLATED FOR PUBLICATION EARLY IN 2019. JOHN IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

The Train

BRIAN PRAHL

As soon as I saw the train, I thought to myself, "Why?" What was it doing down there, in the middle of the jungle valley floor, miles from any city, village or hamlet? A steam locomotive of yesteryear and three scattered passenger cars of the same 1930s era. At 1,500 feet they reminded me of a toddler's toy train set strewn across a playroom floor.

It was a beautiful valley, green and lush, filled with tall elephant grass with a small stream flowing eventually, I guessed, into the Mekong River or perhaps the South China Sea. The valley was surrounded by mountains and a triple canopy jungle that rose up with the terrain to 1,500 and 2,000-foot ridges.

I knew I shouldn't, as we were safe from any hostile ground fire at 1,500 feet, but I was drawn to that strange scene below and wanted to know more. AK-47 and RPGs were our primary concern when we were below such altitudes. We had just completed an air ambulance mission and were back en route to Xuan Loc to refuel. I came on the intercom and asked my crew, a medic, crew chief, and co-pilot, if they minded if I did a quick fly by at a lower altitude. They all agreed and were equally interested

in seeing a closer view.

Since we were a single "Dustoff bird" with no armed escort and we were in "bad guy territory," I decided on a "high overhead spiral approach." A tight, rapidly descending spiral that enabled us to use all three continuously changing dimensions to make it all the more difficult for any "Charlie" in the vicinity to track, lead, fire and hit our aircraft. I pulled back on my cyclic to reduce my airspeed to 40 knots, then rolled my Huey on its side while simultaneously bottoming my collective (main rotor blades' lift control) to begin our accelerating descent. I nursed the collective to keep the rotor's rpm speed from building while spiraling downwards in tight 360 degree circles towards the train. I heard some hoots in the back as the crew experienced the brief weightlessness. I pulled out of our dive at about 50 feet above the ground then eased lower until our skids were ticking through the tops of the elephant grass.

As we whizzed by the train at 120 knots (138 mph), I could see now that this wreck was the result of either sabotage or ambush many decades ago. There were bullet holes in the sidecars and some larger gaping holes from either internal or external

explosions. There were also some missing tracks that may have been part of the ambush scenario.

I pulled back on my cyclic as we came abreast of the locomotive and coal car, and just as we popped back up to 1,500 feet, I caught a glimpse of a reflection from something as we passed over the highest ridge. I circled back and alerted my crew to the location. Could it be the glint off a Viet Cong weapon other piece of equipment? Could it be a missing Army or Air Force aircraft?

It was a crashed aircraft! We could make out a wing and an insignia. "Wait a second, and I'll do another pass," I said to my crew. "It's a Jap Zero!" shouted my medic as we passed over the fighter again. There below you could make out the faded red ball on the wing of the Japanese fighter. Suddenly, it all came together for us; the train, the plane, all of these were the remnants of another war, a distant World War II event. As we banked our Huey towards home, it dawned on me that the people of North and South Vietnam had never known peace or independence in the many centuries since they were a province of China around 1,000 A.D.

First China, then the Dutch, then

the French (you could still make of French markings on the train), then the Japanese during WWII, again the French after the war, and now the Americans, Koreans, Thai, Australians and New Zealanders. I found myself subconsciously thinking of the verses to a new song I had recently heard on AFVN Radio, "War! What is it good for! Absolutely nothing!"



BRIAN PRAHL RETIRED TEN YEARS AGO AFTER MOVING TO MONTANA IN 1997. HE BEGAN HAVING RECURRING DREAMS ABOUT HIS YEAR IN RVN. AT HIS WIFE'S SUGGESTION, BRIAN STARTED WRITING THEM DOWN AND HAS NOW WRITTEN OVER 15 SHORT STORIES. AS HE MISSED FLYING, BRIAN JOINED THE MTARNG AND ENJOYED FLYING OVER THE NORTHERN ROCKIES. HE MADE THE MISTAKE OF TRANSITIONING FROM UH-1H/V HUEYS TO UH-60A BLACKHAWKS RIGHT AS 9/11 HAPPENED. HE WAS ACTIVATED IN EARLY 2003 AND WAS DEPLOYED TO IRAQ/KUWAIT IN JANUARY 2004 AS THE SECOND WAVE OF OIF. BRIAN NOW WRITES ABOUT THE COMPARISONS/ DIFFERENCES OF DUSTOFF AKA MEDEVAC ROLES IN THESE TWO DIFFERENT WARS.

Peace Warriors

JOE PETZEL

I had many difficult experiences in Vietnam. I had very little emotional reaction to any of them. I may have had a brief moment of fear, anger or sadness, but it quickly disappeared. Years later, some of those emotions expressed themselves, unexpectedly.

A fellow soldier died in my arms as the Huey helicopter we were in raced to a field hospital. We were alone, the door gunners preoccupied with our taking off. He was unconscious and as the helicopter veered to one side, he started to roll out. I had some initial fear as I grabbed him, stopping him from being ejected, but all emotion quickly left. After landing, the medics took him away. I returned to my armored infantry unit, in the boonies of I Corp. I never thought much about it, thinking it was no big deal. I never mentioned it to any of my friends, as they carried their own stories from the previous days, weeks and months in Nam. We just didn't talk about things like that.

14 years later I was lying in bed with my wife, telling her some stories about Vietnam. As I started mentioning the soldier's red hair, the parts of his fatigues that had been blown off showing his freckled arms, I began to cry, then sob. I had never felt these feelings about this incident. My sadness overwhelmed me. I had only sobbed once or twice as a boy. I began to feel guilt. I had not tried using artificial respiration. Maybe I could have saved him. I realized that as that incident began on that helicopter, I was terrified, holding him with my stiff arms. I was so distanced from that fear.

I'm grateful she held me, listened, asked questions, comforted me, telling me I was just 19 years old and had done the best I could do. I had no idea what to do as the sobbing continued. She knew how important it was that this was revealing itself. I sobbed for about two hours. The next night I sobbed again. I was not used to this much crying or any crying for that matter. I know that expressing those emotions was very helpful, relieving and of great assistance in my "coming home" from the war.

A "simple" explanation was that I had been suffering from PTSD. But the truth of the matter was that I had stopped feeling sadness, fear and vulnerability long before I went into

the Army. I had learned to not talk about those emotions years before my draft notice appeared. As I stopped talking about emotions, they receded deep inside me.

It had been an ugly day in the field. We had 2 prisoners. I was on my way to the chow line, walking into an area with a creek, surrounded by large bushes. I heard splashing and came upon a scene like no other. A Green Beret and another soldier were drowning a prisoner. I didn't have any emotional reaction. I looked on the bank of the creek and another prisoner was "secured". I remember seeing his belongings next to him. There were rubber sandals, his rifle, a bandolier carrying ammunition, his pith helmet, and a supply belt with rice, spread out on the dirt. I remember thinking how ill equipped, how little he carried compared to me and fellow soldiers. Our eyes met and I saw his fear which quickly turned to hatred towards me, I could feel it. At that moment, I had the thought that I was involved in a truly evil enterprise. That reaction quickly left as I continued on my way to chow. I rarely thought about this incident in the following years, having virtually no emotional relationship with it.

9 years later, I was involved in a summer camp for youth. This camp centered on peace, justice and progressive ideals. I was giving a talk on the war, describing this foe and the fate that awaited him. I began to cry, feeling tremendous guilt, sadness and shame. It overwhelmed me. I had to leave the building, overcome with feelings that seemed new to me. Months passed and I processed this memory. I realized I had guilt over not doing anything about this horrifying activity. I did have my my weapon at my side. I just walked past the drowning. Our eyes meeting created a human connection. He became, at that moment, a real human being to me, no longer a blurry, dangerous figure in the distance. I felt his fear and than his disgust at me for, I believe, being an invader in his country. I was hit with the big realization that I had allowed myself to be part of an evil enterprise.

All those feelings must have happened at the initial event, but I somehow didn't feel them till many years later. Before the war I had already distanced from feelings of fear, sadness, sensitivity and compassion.

This isn't a conscious choice a young man makes but the culture I lived in modeled and demanded that I lose connection with these supposedly non masculine emotions.

Years later, my sons were born. Of course it was life changing. One of the things I noticed, from the beginning of their lives, was their relationship to their emotions. They both, from birth, had sadness, fear, joy, love, anger, etc. They didn't have to learn these. They were hardwired in their bodies and minds. Their expression of their emotions was part of their birthright. I call this birthright the Emotional Connection. This made me question, what happened to my relationship with my emotions? I knew they were hardwired in me like my sons. Again the question: Why were many of them missing, blunted or repressed by the time I was drafted?

My sons, like me, also seemed to have another set of hardwired behaviors from birth I call Alpha qualities. I believe many of us men are born with these Alpha qualities. Most of my fellow soldiers, most of my friends and teammates, I believe, were born with this also.

These Alpha behavioral approaches to life situations were in stark contrast to some of the boys and most of the girls in my environment. There is an aggression that was often channeled in sports, verbal bantering and many other ways, sometimes leading to violence. This aggression would often be expressed with competitive behavior. Competition being an important part of our lives. Competition with other males in a wide variety of ways. There was a hierarchical order that seemed to arise from these aggressive/competitive instincts. We compared ourselves to other boys in a variety of venues. These behaviors were accompanied by an outward focus. We didn't check in or use our emotions as guides, we stayed focused outside ourselves. I call these behaviors the Outer Focus.

I believe these behaviors were inherited from our ancient male ancestors. These behaviors were necessary for the survival of our species. Females inherited their own set of behaviors that were also necessary for the survival of our species. Of course, the Emotional Connection was also inherited from

our ancestors.

Why were so many of us boys so disconnected from our Emotional Connection? Why did our Outward Focus take on so much more importance as we became teens?

As I look back at my childhood, I see an absence of male role models who were emotionally connected. I just didn't experience men who expressed their many natural emotions. I remember getting from adults and other boys powerful feedback, with the message to not act weak, "like a girl," "like a sissy," or other warnings. By the time I was 7, I rarely cried. By age 12, I hid my fear, sadness, sensitivity and vulnerability. I expressed anger, rage and hardness in the place of fear, sadness, sensitivity and vulnerability. Most of my friends, teammates and other boys did the same.

As my Emotional Connection lessened, the Outward Focus took on a bigger role in my life, as, I believe, it had with most of my fellow Soldiers in Vietnam.

Our culture, and many other cultures, teach and model this kind of man, who is then prepared for war. I believe that down through the centuries, as wars and organized violence have been so important in human history, a kind of natural evolution occurred, creating the qualities in men that would create the optimal warrior, a person ready for combat. Being in the Emotional Connection would create a far less effective warrior. We were molded into the most effective warrior possible. I don't believe this was consciously created. It just evolved. The societies that stressed the Outward Focus and shrunk the Emotional Connection were more successful in organized violence, war, and defense.

I believe the Emotional Connection cannot be completely destroyed or denied. It will attempt to resurface, one way or another. The triggered responses we have as part of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are examples of this attempt to resurface. Because so many veterans have a compromised Emotional Connection, when we are triggered and our initial emotional reactions from the trauma(s) surface, we have

continued on page 22

Monday, 0300, Da Nang, Republic South Vietnam

ALAN GOODIN

It was a dark, hot and humid winter night and I still had my olive-drab wool blanket, my security blanket, with US painted in the middle pulled up around my neck. I was sleeping peacefully in my upper-bunk, probably dreaming some "Beach Boy" song-scene like "California Girls," a really 'bitchin' southern California Sunset Beach aglow in glassed off waves. When the first rocket hit I awoke, not recognizing the sound, foreign of course, but yet I thought I knew it from some movie or TV show, like "Combat." It wasn't a wave breaking. Sir, No Sir, it was all of the above and not a movie.

I figured that in Vietnam accidents happen. One night, back in '66, during the outdoor movie at Phan Rang Air Base our Army Support Group, Artillery Battery accidentally exploded a hundred and five millimeter Howitzer shell over us, so, it was probably the "Same-o-same-o here." They called it a "short shot," but we called it "incoming." We were young and quite inexperienced at war. Besides, we were Air Force, not grunts. None of our Sergeants had even been in Korea, so it could be expected that some new-booty dropped a bomb, close by, in the early morning dark, but it was certainly nothing to lose any sleep over. I drifted back to Malibu or Zuma Beach with a really 'boss' three-foot, glassed-off tube, breaking under my surfboard.

This was the perfect wave, perfect form and the best ride I'd had all summer until a humongous explosion blew me off my Hobie and slammed me into the tent's floor. Wipeout! My eyes were wide open now. Forget California dreaming. The sky was lit

up with stroboscopic phosphorescence lights dancing to the beat of red flames, crossing the east-end of the louvered pine wood hooch I called home. Explosions were ripping up and down the perimeter road, across the barbed wire fence and one meter on the other side of the hooch's wall.

Even in the pitch black night, I could see the other guys—Bud Streeter, Helmke, Chi-town-TJ, Donley and "Pineapple"—scrambling for their steel helmets and whatever else would be considered sandbag bunker "fashion of the day" in late February 1967.

Da Nang had never been attacked before, unless "Charlie" hit the French there, back in '54. None of us knew what to do. Soon common sense prevailed. We panicked, tripping over each other in an orderly military fashion and ran out through the rattan and nylon screened door to the bunker. From outside the door, across the field from our bunker, I could see fires and explosions around the huge parabolic antenna at the Army's 37th Signal Battalion.

Hurriedly, we all ran into the bunker, bumping into each other in the dark, each echoing the others, "Did you see this or that," or "Do you think it's the VC or the NVA?" as if it mattered who was trying to kill us.

I stood there listening to this shit, half stooped over, half-kneeling, in the low-roofed bunker, thinking how exciting the moment was, the day I had practiced for, for ten years in my backyard with the neighbor kids while we rehearsed World War II by killing all the Japs and Krauts hiding in Southside LA—and now I was

huddled inside a sandbag prison with no windows missing the whole show. I told myself, Alan, this is history, and you're going to get some of it.

I bolted from the bunker, running like Jesse Owens going for the gold. My "gold" was my new Pentax Spotmatic camera, sitting in the tent with a fresh roll of Kodak film. I waited until I heard a large explosion and ran back towards the bunker, stopping to take a photo, but I couldn't see much from my vantage point, and except for the fire light sky, it was pitch black. From where I stood, I could see a concrete pole. When the light flashed again, I noticed that it was a telephone pole, and I figured that it would make the perfect observation point. I quickly slipped my camera strap over my head, around my neck and ran to the pole. I started climbing as fast as I could until a shattering explosion shook the pole, and stopped me, near the top. Shaken, I grabbed on for life.

I held on to the concrete pole with one arm while pointing, clicking, winding and taking authentic war pictures, with my Spotmatic. This was quite an adventure. All my buddies were huddled in the bunker, safe and sound in the dark night. Except for the frequent enough explosions, it was dead quiet.

"Hey, get off that pole," a voice yelled from the dark, shattering the brief silence between the blasts. I couldn't see anyone, so I kept taking pictures. After two more shots, I heard the voice again, "Get off the pole."

"I'm just about done," I yelled down.

"You are done. Get off the fuckin' pole or I'll shoot you off it."

I thought that was odd. I'm in a war, I'm with the "good" guys, and one of the good guys says he's going to shoot me if I don't get off a pole. Boy, war is hell! I pretended to start down, but every time I took a step I wound and clicked, snapping away as fast as I could.

When I was about ten feet from the ground, a gigantic explosion ripped the street in front of me wide open, blacktop and shrapnel flying like pieces of hot coal and white-hot meteors, into the side of the bunker, just off to my right. All I heard was yelling, and next, the muffled screams of wounded men. I did as ordered and climbed down the pole, but no one was there. I went into the bunker and waited with the others.

They asked me a million questions. What did you see? I told them I'd show them the pictures. It was some hours later when I found out that the soldier yelling at me was killed in the explosion. If I had come down when ordered it would have been me. I owed him. On a more personal note, "Love you long time, GI."

In two-inch bold-type, *Stars and Stripes* reported, "VC Mortar Da Nang, Kill 50 Viets." At the end of the front page article, in small pica type, it said, "US casualties light." I wondered if that Air Policeman yelling at me knew that casualties were "light" but more importantly I wondered if his mother thought, "US casualties were light."



ALAN GOODIN IS AN AIR FORCE VETERAN WHO SERVED FROM 1963-1967. HE IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



Anti-Nixon Demo, Chicago, April 27, 1974.

Peace Warriors

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such a hard time. We are often left between a rock and a hard place with our trauma based emotions. We just don't have the emotional practice to make sense out of it.

Qualities of compassion, empathy, vulnerability and sensitivity are the cornerstones of the healing process. Healing PTSD usually requires reclaiming, to some extent, these qualities. These are the qualities that so many of us learned to distance from as boys and teens. Without an active relationship with our Emotional Connection, these important qualities atrophy. Veterans attempting to heal from trauma usually involves a reconnection to one's Emotional Center while increasing one's compassion, empathy, vulnerability and sensitivity. These qualities go hand in hand.

So many of the world's problems are caused by men who have been distanced from their Emotional Center,

men who have lost their compassion, empathy, vulnerability and sensitivity. Powerful and powerless men create so many hardships, calamities and suffering, adding to traumas of the world. We wonder why they lack compassion, sensitivity, empathy and vulnerability? How can they be so callous to the suffering they create in so many? Where does their selfishness come from?

I believe it arises from the same process I've described. When Alpha boys are modeled healthy emotional expression, compassionate behavior and the importance of talking about their vulnerability, a different sort of Outward Focus emerges. Competition, aggression and the other aspects of the Outer Focus are channeled into a cooperative style of expression for the most part. Compassion modifies aggression and competition. Men can find healthier ways of expressing the

Outward Focus.

If we could, as a nation, create a national conversation about this problem, provide modeling, and make it safe for boys to be vulnerable the results, I believe, could be revolutionary, so very important to our families, communities as well as the world. I do not believe that this alone is a universal cure all. Racism, economic inequity, sexism and a host of other dynamics are at play. But how many of them are associated with what I have talked about in the above ideas?

There is a documentary, *The Mask You Live In*, by Jennifer Newsom, on Netflix, that directly addresses this issue. If you have male children, work with boys or male teens, or are interested in this issue, see this movie.

There is another documentary, *Miss Representation*, also by Jennifer Newsom, that addresses the problems

faced by girls of distancing from their natural selves.

Many men are learning how to reclaim their Emotional Connection, modeling and teaching boys, teens and other men the importance of this life altering journey. A new kind of Alpha behavior is taking hold. A new kind of male warrior is waging a new campaign of compassion, vulnerability, cooperation and peace.



JOE PETZEL IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, WHO SERVED AS REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS AND IOWA VVAW, AFTER RETURNING FROM THE WAR. HE WAS A TEACHER AND PSYCHOTHERAPIST. HE STILL TEACHES AND LECTURES ABOUT MEN'S ISSUES.

I Knew Him Once

I knew him in a past long ago,

When I knew him first, he was just returned
From war, thin, gaunt maybe, clean shaven
Recently married, he was in my anthropology class.
I liked him and we often dined together
Between classes. Great smile but a shadow
Behind his eyes...

When next I saw him, thirty years later
he was bearded with long curly salt and pepper hair
Just as tall but heavier,
We met at an art exhibit, he was showing
Photos of life in Vietnam 1967, we chatted
But I never mentioned our past together
Still a nice smile and now no shadow

In January, this year, I saw him
He didn't recognize me
I barely recognized him.
He's a regular in the local coffee shop,
still bearded, but now bald,
Still tall but very thin,
Like he's been ravaged by illness
Walks with a cane assisted by
Two boys, grandkids?
Still smiling but the shadow is back

There he is now in the distance
turning when he hears the car.
It's a cool spring day
Frost crusts the scrub at his feet
he is bundled up like winter
wearing a hat, wool sweater and jeans,
He looks in a hurry for warmer days

I want to stop, I really do,
but the driver, owner of car
is nervous. "Not sure I want to meet
an old boyfriend of yours."
So we sweep on by, I catch
his eye and he nods, smiling
as if in sudden recognition

Unexpected tears prick my eyes.
One day I'll stop
and we'll have coffee together,
he has stories to tell, I know.

—David Sandgrund

The Medevac

...and so we rose, finally, nose dipping
into the rotor's whirling current, then rising
a hundred feet or so above the firefight—

the AK's crack-crack-crack and the rocket-
grenades' explosions fading to lesser sounds—
the men in their shallow foxholes below

receding—no longer mine—and my body's
closer perimeter returning, head throbbing,
blood drying on my palms; rose until

the rush of terror died, and I returned, and
with me, the boy lying beside me, his ragged
breath, his eyes glazed over with shock

as the medic worked on his wounds; rose,
slowly, wobbly, an O so burdened bird,
too heavy, too full, our thin underbelly

exposed, and the riffs of bullets sparking
round us; rose, and then, fell, pilot slumped
over, blades swooshing through dead air,

the green rice sprouting up to meet us and
the grey-green faces bursting from the bush
with flames shooting out their mouths; rose,

and then fell, fell as if in a falling dream,
as if that's all there was and all there ever
could be; and so I got ready, I searched

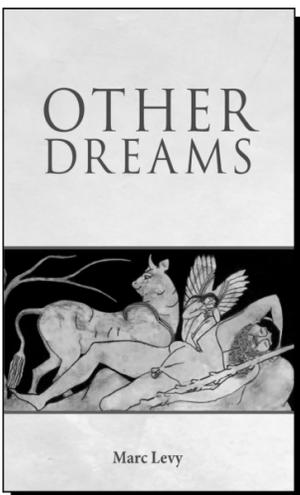
the medevac's belly for a weapon—an M-16,
a machinegun, a bayonet, anything to kill with
if I survived—no time now for prayers,

no time for the still eyes beside me—falling,
falling—until, suddenly, thirty feet or so
above the ground, a hand caught and hurled us

skyward again, the co-pilot hard at the controls
and we ascending, the hospital twenty clicks
through stars and home somewhere beyond...

—rg cantalupo

A new book by Marc Levy



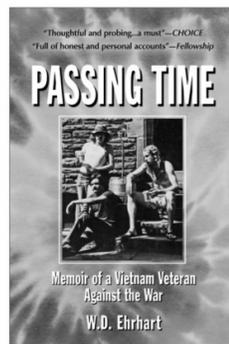
“You are about to read a rare and valuable gift to human understanding and to dream research. This book consists of several hundred dreams the author recorded from 2016 to 2017. Home from Vietnam, Levy kept a loaded twenty-five caliber automatic pistol under his pillow. Later, a meat cleaver, then a machete tucked beneath the mattress. With this volume, he has laid bare the dream experiences of a Vietnam veteran who has endured PTSD for 48 years. In the process, he may be helping others who struggle with the psychological effects of trauma. Reading this book, may you be moved, troubled, informed, puzzled. May you benefit from the privilege of reading the dreams of a man who served his country with honor during the Vietnam War, and has paid a steep price for it ever since.”

G. William Domhoff, Ph.D
Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Research Professor
University of California, Santa Cruz
Author, *The Emergence of Dreaming*

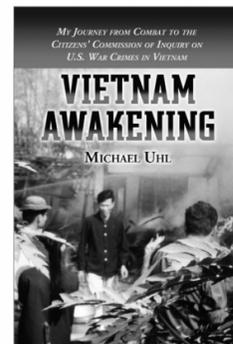
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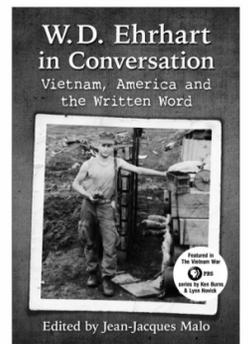
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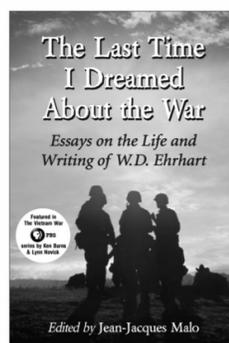
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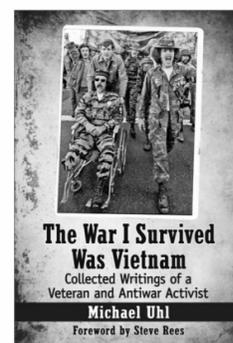
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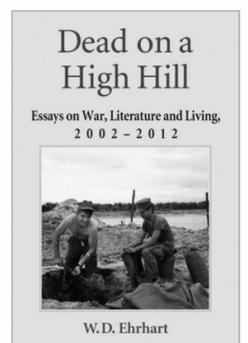
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Dreaming and Waking In A Yokohama Hospital, 1969

RG CANTALUPO

From Kill Today, So Tomorrow Will Not Come by rg cantalupo (aka Ross Canton) (currently in printing to be out in September 2018)

A moonless night, dark, so dark.
Red and green tracers streak by a few inches above my head.

Bullets smash into sandbags around our makeshift mortar pit, splash bits of sand and debris onto my face.

Mud drenches my back. Chills run up my spine.

I tear charges off a 60-millimeter mortar round, hand the cool, metal round to Baby San lying beside me.

His soft, sweaty fingers touch mine as he grabs the fin.

Mortar explosions walk toward us.

The first explodes about 30 meters away.

Then, one by one, each bursts a little closer.

The ground trembles and quakes.

Fiery clods of rice paddy mud hail down upon me.

"Two! Two!" Mike screams and sights the mortar tube toward enemy

mortar flashes flaring from the black horizon.

My fingers quicken, tear off eight charges leaving two.

Two! Fuck! Fuuuck!

Two hundred meters.

We're gonna be overrun.

I turn, reach over, slide another round out of the makeshift ammo crate.

An RPG explodes near my head, knocks me sideways into the sandbags we've stacked four high to make our pit.

Red-hot shrapnel stabs into my ear and along the side of my head.

I turn to hand Baby San the round, and blood streams down over my eyes.

"Fuuuck!!!"

"You... okay?" Baby San whispers.

"One!" Mike screams! "One!"

I turn, grab another round, tear off nine charges, and pass a bloody mortar into his hands.

Another RPG whistles past.

A mortar explodes.

Then another.

And another.

Each one walking a little farther from our pit.

Twenty meters away, on the perimeter, I hear screams.

"MEDIC!!! MEDIC!!! MEDIC!!!"

I swivel, grab two more rounds, tear the charges off with my blood-smear hands, pass them to Baby San.

I can't see.

I can't open my eyes for the blood streaming down.

I grab rounds as blood slides down my forehead, over my eyes, and onto my neck and chest.

Terror rises in my chest like a caged beast.

I tear off charges, hand the rounds to Baby San, who hands the rounds to Lee, who guides the rounds into the tube, as Mike stares out into the dark.

He sights in on an enemy mortar flash, gauges the distance, the range, the direction, adjusts the tube, shouts "ONE!!! ONE!!!"

I tear off charges and hand Baby San the rounds.

Blood trickles down my ribcage, over my belly, and into my groin.

Blood runs down the back of my neck, feels like a centipede crawling along my spine.

I wipe the blood out of my eyes, but it keeps streaming down.

I need to get Baby San more rounds.

The burning spreads from my ear to around the side and back of my head.

I bite back the pain, break off charges two rounds at a time.

I hear feet zigzag past.

Charlie?!

Fuck!

I throw two more rounds onto my belly, rip off nine charges, and pass the rounds.

"Five more!!!" Mike commands.

"Now! Now!!!"

Lee frantically throws rounds into the mortar tube.

Poomph! Poomph! Poomph! Poomph! Poomph!—muzzle flashes, and the rounds disappearing into the dark sky.

A few feet outside our pit, a mortar explodes.

Shrapnel, flesh, and debris hail down upon us.

A scream. A groan.

A long, baying moan.

Oooooooh... Oooh... Oooh...

Oooooooh....

I turn to hand Baby San another round.

A searing pain shoots up my left arm.

Darkness bleeds to dim light.

Beside me, a man moans.

He moans like an animal, like a dog run over by a car lying along the side of a road.

Two enormous purple black eyes punctuate his face.

But there are no bandages on his body, no bloody gauze wrapped around his head like mine.

Probably a percussion wound, a high-intensity explosion too close to his head. Brain trauma. Air particles propelled so fast and hard they shot through his skull and jellied his brain.

A 122 millimeter rocket exploding on his bunker as he slept, maybe.

Or a five hundred pound bomb—a 155 short-rounder—a misplaced dot on a grid—some fuck up somewhere.

Nothing worse than to get wasted by your own bad intentions.

Probably never knew it was coming.

Probably never even woke from the percussive shock, and doesn't know he's here.

Aces and eights, man. That's all this war deals—Aces and eights every hand.



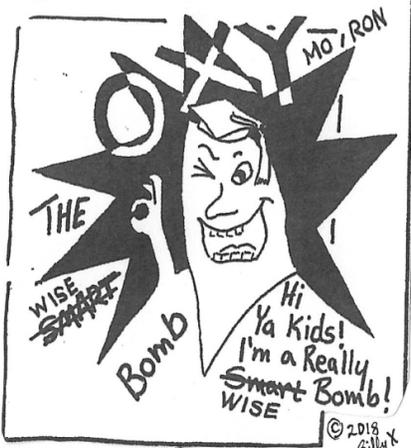
RG CANTALUPO, (ROSS CANTON), IS A POET, PLAYWRIGHT, FILMMAKER, NOVELIST, AND DIRECTOR. HIS WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED WIDELY IN LITERARY JOURNALS IN THE UNITED STATES, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRALIA. HE SERVED IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION AS AN RTO FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY FROM 1968-69 AND RECEIVED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR UNDER FIRE.

red, white and blue

is the color of our exceptions
a manly thud of marching soldiers
proudly spreads democracy
martial songs of honor and bravery
overcome the slaughtered sounds
of those who hate and try to resist us
because of the freedoms we want to share
a few dusty children may sit next to corpses
offering stunned prayers of tears
instead of greeting our boys
with the flowers and candy they deserve
but we can forgive them
when the hour comes to honor the dead
we will list the names proudly
and never look back

—Larry Kerschner

THE 13TH AMENDMENT
ABOLISHED SLAVERY...



... "EXCEPT
AS PUNISHMENT FOR CRIMES"



THE SOUTHERN PRISON SYSTEMS GREW DIRECTLY OUT OF SLAVERY.

ANCIENT TRADITIONS
TO MODERN SLAVERY—
NOW A \$150 BILLION
WORLD WIDE BUSINESS



WITH PRISON LABOR
FORCED MARRIAGES,
SEXUAL SLAVERY...

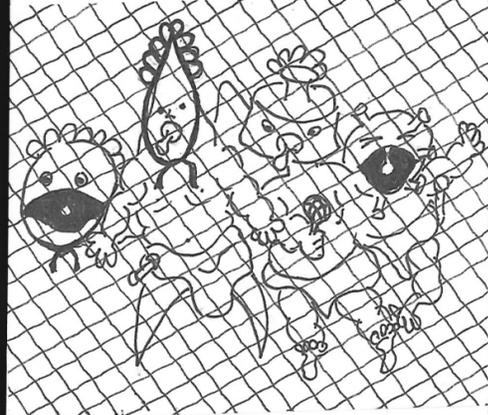
INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE
... EARNING A LIVING...
WITHOUT A LIVING WAGE!



WAR,
CRIME,
CLIMATE...
FORCED MIGRATION
AND IMMIGRATION.



CHILDREN TORN FROM FAMILIES...
FOR-PROFIT PRISON STOCKS JUMP
DÉ JÀ VU MISSIONARIES
WITH INDIAN SCHOOLS!!!



BABYS R' POLITICAL PRISONERS!



Maggot Days: Thank You for Your Service...

GERALD R. GIOGLIO

Over the years the VVAW *Veteran* has included a number of articles that address the question of saying, "Thank you for your service" to former members of the military. The works of Bill Ehrhart, Gregory Ross, and Meg Miner come to mind. Challenging us, Miner asks what is it like, "...to be an anti-war veteran?" Hmm.

Well, a mailed promotion arrived one day from one of the tool-and-garden centers. They asked folks with a DD-214 to sign up online to receive a 10% military discount card. A nice perk in this time of faddish popular recognition of former members of the military; a job now done by volunteers and those caught up in the "poverty draft."

Everyone with a DD-214 was invited, regardless of what they were ordered to do, did, regretted, decided not to do or otherwise resisted. These resisters—past and present—find themselves caught up in "Catch-22," a difficult situation from which there seems to be no escape; some of them ended up with "bad paper," some incarcerated in stockades or prisons. Are these veterans or nonveterans? That is the question.

Let's be clear, all who return to civilian life after being in the military must feel welcomed at home and cared for by our government. We must insist that the government provide lifetime medical care and other services. Can you spell e-n-t-i-t-l-e-m-e-n-t-s?

Many former members of the military are proud of what they have learned and done; some expect to be thanked for their service. Hey, "For all you do, this card certainly is for you." Then there are guys and gals of all ages with far too many military adventures who chafe at civilian nods of approval—whether they are verbalized or swiped into a card machine. Those especially annoyed by these kudos are veterans who have opposed and perhaps fought against their particular war.

So, if you were among the opposition or were unsure, what do you do about this perk? Sign up for a military discount? More, just what are you called?

Here's what I was thinking...

Back in a day when I first was honorably discharged as a conscientious objector, I took advantage of eighteen months of partial educational benefits that I had accrued. Later I made use of the VA mortgage system to buy a starter home. But that's it. As a trained infantry graduate but also a conscientious objector to the war in Vietnam I had not availed myself, nor do I intend to use, any of the other services or perks that the VA offers. For example, I never used a VA hospital or medical services, and I do not intend to...thankfully that's available for the other guys. I won't be going down those paths, except to help protect them.

I have always been a supporter of progressive GI and veteran's causes, indeed back when I was in fatigues I remember—hoping against hope—for a military branch of the ACLU at Ft. Lewis and maybe a union representing non-cadre. Of course, neither of these things ever happened, but hey, some boys can dream. And yeah, some guys actually signed petitions for a base branch of the ACLU. I did. Others worked for enlisted men's/draftee unions.

I've always supported the VA in the fight against privatization, and for quality improvement with proper

funding. I would write letters and sign the online petitions. I'd send the occasional check to help maintain the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in DC and periodically support deserving organizations, like the Paralyzed Veterans Association.

Still, what do you do when you are one of the guys who understand that basic and advanced infantry training is not like being on a high school sports team? They make an impression, even

what he was doing to Americans and Vietnamese?

What are you called when you find yourself back in the lost world, trained as a killer but not completely sure if you fit in as a civilian, yet you still identify as an ex-GI? What do you do when an organization like VVAW calls people out for events like the "Dewey Canyon III" operation to protest the war and you say, "No, maybe I shouldn't participate because

half of the restaurant on fire. So, not thinking but doing, you walk among the flames, locked and loaded with a fire extinguisher, putting out the fire, knowing that those boots are going to prevent the flames from catching your pants and turning you into smoke.

What do you do when that call to "Move toward the danger" comes and you immediately snap into, "Do, don't think!?" Like the time when the place where you work is being robbed and you almost get yourself killed, or when people fall or need help. So you, "Go, go, go" running to do something, anything—only because you were taught to do it... and it doesn't go away?

What do you do when your first get out and the woman in your life tells you, "You have changed." You don't believe it, because you had no combat experience; but you know that it's true. "Changed," as you become distant and introspective and your radicalism and activism increase and you become angry at everything, especially your government and the church of your youth for not doing enough to stop the war and ban nuclear weapons.

Or, the first time going to a Memorial Day event at a local church you hear preaching that was not about the integrity of the war, nor about those guys that had serious doubts about the morality of that conflict and their role in it.

What are you called when one Memorial Day some ignorant yahoo wishes you a "Happy Memorial Day," and the feelings of anger and outrage pop up? Knowing how completely easy it is to snap back into your "Military Mind" and lose connection to the commitment of nonviolence that you have made...and struggle daily to live.

What does it make you when some fifteen years after the war you decide you really should be a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War because you feel you belong and you need the newspaper and community? What about joining the more traditional Vietnam Veterans of America because this group seemed to be deeply involved in getting funds for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, and were also politically involved in several other veterans issues? I don't know...maybe you are one of those guys who joined them both.

What do you do if you were one of those called to participate in peace demonstrations, but early on could not decide whether or not to march in the veterans' contingent. Still, nonviolently, you march with the people constantly petitioning your government to change. And you carry the American flag in part because you don't want to surrender it to the militarists. The flag quietly screaming that we are all Americans, but we are those who stand up against militarism and nuclearization. Deal with it.

So, "Maggot," what are you called now? What do you do about that card if you opposed that war trying to stand for peace and justice, what does that make you? What does it say?

These and other questions from the war years came crashing into my consciousness as I looked at an offering that beckoned me to sign up as a veteran. Well, of course, the questions never end.

You know what? I finally

What do you call yourself when you first get out and the only place you feel comfortable is in one of the civilian anti-war groups like the ones that helped operate the GI coffee shops?

when you are oppositional toward the training and the mind-games, unaware that if you "Get with the program" you still incorporate the messages and that some things set in and changes you in ways that take a lifetime to understand?

What are you called when you are one of the 10 million guys who trained for but was not among the approximate 3 million who found themselves in Vietnam? Then you read arguments in the various veterans' newspapers about who is a "true veteran"—only those who were in-country (except the Rear Echelon MFers), but not those in ships patrolling the waters, not those who provided grunts in the bush with essentials—or the clerks that kept the records and processed paperwork. Huh?

What do you call yourself if you were one of the few guys who was brought to the beginning of the line on discharge day, handed a DD-214, an honorable discharge certificate and accompanying paper and told, "As a conscientious objector you can never again join this man's army or any other branch of the armed services," and your only response was a Buddhist half-smile and a mumbled, "Great," while taking the paper and—unbelievably—walking away?

What do you call yourself when you first get out and the only place you feel comfortable is in one of the civilian anti-war groups like the ones that helped operate the GI coffee shops? The latter appeared outside military bases, providing a safe space for guys to come and feel like they were among kindred spirits, places frequented by other war-resisters, by guys who proclaimed, "Hell No, we won't go," by those who tried to explain that this undeclared war was wrong, that this was something we do not want to do. What of those filing for conscientious objector discharge, perhaps disobeying orders, being court-martialed and sent to Ft. Leavenworth Prison? All these unrecognized patriots were doing things that many people considered unpatriotic, even for things like writing Congresspeople, posting or distributing fliers, attending demonstrations, speaking out, making their opposition known to officers and cadre.

What are you called when you are one of those guys who attended a rally in DC with the name of a once morally-conflicted—and now dead—GI, delivered to the White House in a casket with other KIA names, to remind Richard Nixon of just exactly

I'm not sure I qualify as a veteran?"

What are you called when you become an ex-military draft counselor and you find yourself in a storefront basement of your hometown convinced that one way to end the war while helping people is to keep them from getting drafted, knowing full well that no one inside the "Green Machine," no one anywhere, is going to listen or care or do anything about what they have to say?

What do you call yourself when you listen to those desperate civilians that come for help, explaining what they are entitled to as students or folks with hardship or medical difficulties, or helping some apply for conscientious objector status? In they come as the war drags on and the war years increase while you keep advising and talking, psychically carrying their stories. You, a "shake-and-bake" social worker. A very young adult inadequately trained for dealing with the emotion and stress of helping troubled people who professionals then referred to as "clients."

What are you called when you are one of those guys that took home his fatigue shirts, field jacket, boots and "Dress Greens," stuck peace signs on some of them and for years wore bits and pieces of them in public—and because now you're really pissed are just daring some supporter of the war to engage, or for some idiot to call you—and by extension call all 10 million of us who were caught up into that war—"baby killers?"

What are you called when, over time, you wear the shirts first without sleeves and then until they become faded and torn and need to be thrown away? And you find yourself looking around in thrift stores, just to see if an old fatigue shirt is available? Then, years later you see John Turturro at the end of the Holocaust movie, *The Trace*, cradling his striped concentration camp prison shirt unable to throw it out, and you immediately understand how he could hold on to such an artifact and to ponder an experience he did not want to remember.

What do you do when you continue to spit-shine those black boots and wear them to your job because they provide great support even though the boss insists that you get rid of them? But for some reason, you now reject most authority and are always alert to possible danger, knowing that someday they will prove to be invaluable, especially on that day when one of the workers set

Don't Privatize the VA

FRANK TONER

The following exchange appeared in the Queens Chronicle in July of 2018.

Dear Editor:

I am a Vietnam veteran who is concerned that the Veterans Affairs Mission Act, recently signed by President Trump, will lead to the destruction of the VA system, the system best suited to care for me and my fellow veterans.

The bill was sold as a way to help veterans get care from non-VA doctors. But in reality, it threatens the very existence of the VA and seems destined to lead to budget cuts for VA services, putting the VA on a path to cannibalize itself — which will hurt veterans and their families.

I was in the Army from 1968 to 1970 and served as a medic with an artillery group in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. After discharge, I eventually started a career in administration in New York City hospitals — so I know a thing or two about bureaucracy and waste in private healthcare. One day in my office, a person, who identified herself as Canadian, asked me how many people worked there. I said 36. She said that in Canada it would be about six. She pointed out Canada has a single-payer system and everyone has a card that just needs to be swiped, thereby eliminating the need for long information gathering and insurance verification.

In 2006, I decided it was a good idea to join the VA system. Once enrolled, the only identification I needed was my last name and the last four digits of my Social Security number. It was the same no matter which clinic or doctor I used. This kind of efficiency saves money, and makes accessing care easier.

Later I began to use the VA more frequently since I had hearing loss. I was thrilled to get my free hearing aids. Referrals were electronic and quick. The caregivers were friendly and respectful. I started talking to other veterans about their care. The praise was almost unanimous.

Now, the Mission Act is opening doors for conversion to a private care system. The president is going out of his way to gain more control and reduce transparency over how it will be funded and who decides which facilities are closed. No matter how Trump or Congress try to justify it — this Mission Act is a smokescreen for destroying and privatizing the VA.

It is clear Trump listens to those who have pushed VA privatization for years. I will continue to fight to strengthen the VA and its care for veterans. With a strong, well-funded VA, we can serve our vets who served our country.

It is up to us to voice our concerns to our members of Congress and senators.

Frank Toner
Bellerose Manor

Limit VA medical coverage

Dear Editor:

Re Frank Toner's July 12 letter, "Don't privatize the VA":

I disagree with Mr. Toner's objections to shifting medical treatment of veterans to non-VA facilities. Like him, I'm a Vietnam era veteran (Air Force, 1964-68) and am eligible for VA medical coverage. But I shouldn't be, and neither should thousands of other vets like me who have no military service-connected disabilities or medical conditions. That was the case when the US Veterans Administration was created in 1930 to treat World War I veterans. The VA grew during World War II, but care was still limited to vets with war-related conditions.

Coverage criteria expanded after the VA became a cabinet-level executive agency (the Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1989 under President George H.W. Bush. The VA instituted "Primary Universal Care" during a 1995-2000 "reform" program, allowing all honorably discharged veterans to get medical treatment, regardless of how their physical or

mental conditions were caused. The VA is now the United States' largest healthcare provider, with 378,000 staffers treating nine million patients at over 1,000 facilities. That huge patient volume is one reason why vets face long delays for treatment.

Nearly half of all vets are 65 or older and should be covered by Medicare. But many prefer the VA to avoid deductibles, copays and the 20 percent of medical costs that Medicare won't cover. I'm not one of them. I see private physicians who are reimbursed by Medicare. I pay for my prescription drugs under Medicare Part D, even though I could get them free from the VA, because I don't honestly deserve the VA's largess. I'm glad Mr. Toner got free hearing aids, but did military service cause his hearing loss?

He marvels at the VA's efficiency, but federal investigations and news reports indicate that this agency is dysfunctional. President Obama's Veterans Affairs secretary caught heavy flak for comparing long waits for medical treatment to long lines at Disneyland. But that's a valid comparison. The VA is a Mickey Mouse outfit, its employees are goofy, they lie like Pinocchio, and when something doesn't work, they refuse to "Let It Go." To restore efficiency, the VA must return to its original mandate.

Richard Reif
Kew Gardens Hills

Firefight over the VA

Posted: July 26, 2018

Dear Editor:

My letter printed in the July 12 edition of the *Queens Chronicle* provided my thoughts and reservations of the newly signed Mission Act and VA privatization ("Don't privatize the VA").

In the next week's edition of this paper a letter appeared from Mr. Richard Reif with a different point of view and some misleading statements ("Limit VA medical coverage").

First I want to answer his

question, which quite frankly I don't know why he asked. He asked if my hearing loss was from military service. He asked the question after I stated I was with an artillery unit.

Did he want me to mention that for months in one fire support base a 105 mm howitzer was regularly firing rounds from on top of my bunker? Should I mention I was once whisked into a (bubble top) helicopter to go to replace an injured medic and I had no protective device to block out the noise?

I am glad Mr. Reif pays for his own healthcare. So do I. When I go to the VA they bill my insurance and charge me the appropriate copay. Mr. Reif's statement that veterans use the VA to avoid copays and coinsurance is misleading. If a veteran is poor he may avoid a copay but so would a poor civilian who is on Medicaid.

Why should the VA be for all veterans? I will give you my personal story. I was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease by my private doctor. If I had never been around veterans or part of the VA system, I may never have found out that Agent Orange is a cause of Parkinson's. Now I know I can receive treatment for a disease that was caused while I was in military service.

Lastly, Mr. Reif, yes, there are problems in the VA, just as there are in the private sector, and those deficiencies should be worked out. But our VA is far from a Mickey Mouse institution as you state, and it is despicable that you call the employees goofy and liars.

Frank Toner
Bellerose Manor

The writer is a veteran of the Vietnam War.



FRANK TONER IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE WAS IN THE ARMY FROM 1968 TO 1970 AND SERVED AS A MEDIC WITH AN ARTILLERY GROUP IN VIETNAM FROM 1969 TO 1970.

Obedient Forgiveness

I think the Vietnamese have guardedly forgiven America for committing mass murder. Muscle memory has a long remembrance. America, on the other hand, has moved on to killing more Viet Nam's. It's Big Business. I wonder if the Vietnamese know this?

—Mike Hastie



Maggot Days: Thank You for Your Service...

continued from page 25

concluded that I was not going to let them take this away from me. For the answer is this: we are in-service resisters, some are members of the VVAW. We are anti-war veterans. It is what it is. I filled out the form, sent the DD-214 information and soon got the discount card in the mail.

One day I used it. I was still lost for words when the clerk, who had been trained to do so said, "Thank you for your service." I tried to muster that half-smile, I nodded, shut my mouth and walked on. I mean, what do you do? Proselytize? Do you preach against war or militarism to clerks

who would be penalized if they didn't parrot that statement?

Then I remembered a union brother who proclaimed that teachers and public employees perform a civic duty, that they too are veterans — veterans of difficult classroom situations, veterans wiping the tears of families and children, veterans providing other services like social work, police, and fire — every day, in every local community.

I also remembered the words of a fellow in-service resister named Jeff, whose story appears in "Days of Decision." He tells us:

"I am a veteran of the Army's bootcamps, its infantry schools, stockades and Leavenworth penitentiary... I spent a little over three years of my young life in their institutions."

Thank you for your service? Hell yeah.

So, after some thought, I decided that from now on when I go to that store, and I hear the clerk say, "Thank you for your service," I say something like, "You know what, thank you for what you do. In doing this job you take care of me and others, you help to pump our economy. It's greatly appreciated..." And I mean it... and we both smile. From time to time I ask if the place has a union and extol the virtues of organizing and participation.

They listen.

I leave the store with a full, happy grin, knowing that I planted good seeds; secure in the knowledge that I am one of those guys who is a veteran of many things, military and civilian — and no matter what they call me — that's what I always will be.



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.*

Forever War

ALLEN MEECE

In 1964 I was a seaman aboard a big new destroyer that was crossing the Pacific to provoke war with Vietnam from inside their Tonkin Gulf. In boot camp, we were taught the fake excuse for provoking a war, the "Falling Domino Theory." We had to stop the "communist monolith" which wanted to invade our country and abolish our freedoms and take our cars and girlfriends! We were told nothing about the capitalist hatred of socialism, love for the domination of foreign politics, trade, and resources. We had to defend. The best defense is a spirited offense, so we sent our high tech, high-powered war machine to a little rice-pot country called Vietnam, a primitive country smaller than California. It might take a year or two to beat them into anti-communists.

Eleven years later, in 1975, we turned our backs on those tough socialist guerillas and went home without apologizing for our atrocity and destruction. Twenty years after that, we gave them the status of a favorite trading partner, and we simply purchase the natural resources for which we killed. With remarkable self-control, they stopped wanting to invade Redondo Beach.

Half a century later, I'm researching why fifty-eight thousand of my brothers and sisters-in-arms and two million Vietnamese civilians and soldiers had to die for a lie that the

enemy was threatening my country. Subsequent continual wars show that it was about economic power, not for defending our lives.

I had hoped that all those names on the Vietnam Wall would teach us to never again use violence to change the politics of another sovereign nation. Sadly, their message is being ignored by a mercenary government. As valorous as those fallen are, it seems they died in vain because our politicians are still listening to the war drums secretly manipulated by the power elite; the rich big shots with PR machines and lobbyists.

After seeing American military incursions into a string of socialist-leaning countries in the middle east all the way from Afghanistan to Libya, I've learned a few facts that the corporate media censors; our capitalist owners hate socialism, truly hate it, period. They fear that socialists will take their stuff and leave them as poor as everyone else. For an avaricious rich person, bankruptcy is death, so they freely kill for them and defend their status and to get even more stuff by exploiting foreign economies.

Warfare is welfare—for corporations. They know that any money gambled on promoting warfare can pay thousand-percent jackpot returns. That is why they'll never stop pushing for war. Their strategy is effective. That is why there is a "Warfare State."



US Navy, DD950 destroyer which Allen Meece served on 1964-67.

They pay their "think tanks" to conduct anti-social and pro-war "research" and then give the fake results to public relations firms that convince the public mind that war produces peace and prosperity. Then the lobbyists sell the same lie in Congress. Our "representatives" endorse those corporate messages from whence cometh the gravy known as campaign funds. Some political scholars call it simple bribery.

Welcome to continual war. The mercantile minds who run it want quick obsolescence and disposal of everything they sell and so to them, war beats peace. The military/indus-

trial marketplace is the God. The little people are ants.

The necessary first step out of this toxic swamp is to put an end to the bribery of commercial campaign funding. Replace it with flat rate campaign funding by the citizens' government. Show them who elected them. Then our representatives would at least have the option to ignore the endless drums of forever war.



ALLEN MEECE IS THE AUTHOR OF "TIN CAN," A NOVEL ABOUT THE TONKIN GULF INCIDENT, AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM.

One Vet's View

PAT FINNEGAN

Thinking about McCain and how much I had no "Good Thoughts" about him. Him and his ilk I only thought of as: "Mile High Mass Murderers."

Years have gone by, and the hardcore radical soul mellows with the decades. Alan Dershowitz. Who's side is he on these days? I haven't a clue.

McCain and his funeral entourage went to the Vietnam Memorial Wall yesterday. I'm okay with that. He earned the right to go there. They massed at the center of the wall where the first killed of the Vietnam War and the last killed of the Vietnam meet and embrace each other.

Completing that circle of death that was the Vietnam War... If they looked real close, they would have seen near the bottom of panel 80 my brother's name, Dennis W. Finnegan. Dennis was KIA'd on October 31,

1972. It was the last day of his 4th tour. He started going over in June 1966, serving two full tours and an extension in the 101st Abn. Div. as a Combat Officer, either as a Platoon Leader or a Company Commander. His last tour was with the relatively safe Mach V, stationed out of Saigon and environs.

Dennis showed me his scars that earned his first 3 Purple Hearts. It was in the bedroom we shared as young brothers in Lynbrook, Long Island, New York. It was one of the rare times we were both in New York and me out of the Army and Dennis between tours. I went on my hippie journeys across and around America and Dennis went back on his final tour in November 1971.

Dennis's body looked like they had already performed an autopsy with

the added scarring of the far too many to remove shrapnel pieces embedded in his torso, arms, and legs. Every few inches there was another reminder of the days and nights in October 1966 and August 1967.

I loved my brother, but the "War" tore us apart. He was a career OCS officer, and I was a field refusal after eight months as an enlisted man. The war tore our family apart, and that rupture was never settled before my Dad died in March 1981.

Anyway back to "The Wall." Senator McCain had all the right in the world to visit the wall and visit all his fellow vets whose names are now carved in Vermont Granite till the end of time. I'll allow him to pay homage to the sacrifice that those Americans endured for our misguided Nation.

If it is ever announced that Trump

is going to the "Wall," please let me know and I will be there in protest. I doubt he's ever been there and there should be laws that prevent that occurrence from ever happening. It's tough enough to get me to the local chain: "Stewart's" shop to buy the "Failing New York Times" paper and play the Lotto, but I will get my well cushioned posterior up out of my well-worn chair and down to Washington, DC to voice my outrage at the fat useless slug that shows his civilian REMF self at the "Holy Of Holies."



PAT FINNEGAN 3RD PLATOON, D COMPANY 1/503RD 173 RD ABN BDE., USA 8/1/66-10/4/689

Dodging The Bullets

LEON WENGRZYN

Dong Ha. Explosions rocking the ground. Fear and excitement and horror. These images and feelings still pop up more often than I care to admit. I just turned 70 years old. WTF. People ask me, did you see any action in Vietnam? It's a stupid question. As if just being in Vietnam wasn't enough trauma in itself, one has to qualify one's war experience with tales of violence and bloodshed. I tell them, I didn't go looking for action, the action came to me. I don't have a combat infantry ribbon, I didn't do recons, or ride tanks. I drove a forklift. I unloaded boats on a river and backloaded battle

damaged goods. I was a flunky. Doesn't sound like much ACTION does it? Mostly boring bullshit run by a fucked up military leadership in a shithole just south of the DMZ.

My Vietnam Service Ribbon has four Bronze Star Pins on it. No, not the Bronze Stars of heroism for taking out that machine gun nest or taking that hill or some such act. These little Bronze Star Pins I'm told represented battle or extraordinary events in my war zone. I guess one was for the time we forklift drivers had to do perimeter defense because all the crazed Marines were killing water

buffalos and pissing off the locals. So we threw concussion grenades in the river every night and shot up the free fire zones for something to do. Who knows. I don't tell people about the fear and bloodshed part because it is none of their goddam business.

I will only say that since the American people now see us Vietnam vets as worthy losers in the war games, there is still a disconnect between a combat vet and a joe blow vet like myself. There are many Vietnam vets who never fired a weapon. Many whose biggest fear was contracting a hideous tropical clap from a skivvy

house. I knew of a guy who drove a beer truck in Danang his whole tour. All these non-combat vets are heroes to me as they survived the Vietnam experience and made it home. They are equal in my mind to the grunts and riverines. No doubt, each has a tale to tell but probably won't. Maybe, like me, they are trying to forget, but can't.



LEON WENGRZYN, E3, NSAD DONG HA (1968-69). HE IS A MEMBER AND SUPPORTER OF VVAW.



It Is Time for The Government and Military to Be Held Accountable

HARRY WAGNER

The conduct of our military and CIA has become more than questionable. They have become a law unto themselves with no regard for the Constitutional restrictions that have been placed upon them. I am not a crusader; I work at my responsibilities to solve problems based on a true analysis of the situation and not with any preconceived notions or results. I work to improve the situation at hand and properly recognize those who participated in the successful conclusion of the job. I've seen from experience government bureaucrats who often outnumber the workers and too often distort the problems and take edited credit for the results. As the American government has rapidly increased in size as to employment and operational costs, the distortions have increased, and they have become unjustifiable and shielded by lies.

Our political system of government of a nation, "of, for, and by the people" has become so corrupted as to be criminally responsible for supporting a failing society with dishonest government. My personal belief is that we are all here, no two alike, but we all survive by living a productive life, at least a life that is sustainable by honest work, at whatever is necessary to coexist with others. There is a code of behavior between us all; it may not be written or codified but it does exist and we all know it, but some, for one reason or other, care to disregard it. Experience has taught us that once

this indifference is allowed to expand there can be serious troubles from it.

That brings us to where we are today with the pending financial and economic collapse of our system that has actively supported a shift toward military martial law government contrary to our Constitutional form of government. The Executive branch of government from the office of President down to the lowest civil servant is more dedicated to self-interests than to the survival of the nation's citizens. The excuse by the CIA and military of the "War on Terrorism" as cause to continue the attack and murder of civilians worldwide by their own admission without Congressional approval or debate and with retention and torture without due process are criminal acts that warrant the highest and severest punishment.

Reading the reports from the field of Desert Shield and Desert Storm followed by the invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan, then Libya and the tactics of "counterinsurgency" I felt competent to voice an opinion since I had worked out a strategy with a new Field Manual for such warfare with 30 different missions in unsecured territory in Vietnam. I was in Vietnam at the beginning of the peak period and through the '68 Tet offensive. The early tour of the country gave me a broad view of the whole Vietnam landscape and the opportunity to observe the extent of our military deployment and the general condition

of the country. When I was assigned as Regional Chieu Hoi Advisor, I got up-close experience with thousands of Vietnamese. They not only taught me their cultural values but showed me that their values were similar to mine, built around family.

The population was mostly rural and labor intensive just to survive and built around family associations. They naturally resisted a government bureaucracy as an outgrowth of the French occupation and then the invading foreign military of the Americans. They saw that they had a limited choice and the North Vietnamese communism was preferred over any other foreign system, especially one that killed them without thought of the consequences. I believe with the creation of the Chieu Hoi program the Vietnamese realized that there must be an opening that allowed the population to freely choose which side of the future they desired—a free South Vietnam or a unified communist nation.

Simply put, the war in Vietnam placed the American military's mighty and powerful war machinery up against the determined indigenous population that wanted no part of the western nation's controls over them. The Americans underestimated the will of the people. To the South Vietnamese the war brought promises of freedom and modern prosperity to their country, an idealistic dream the Americans could never accomplish. The population had

survived the Japanese and the French only to end up with a corrupt home government while the North purged the population to install a strong communist government.

There are several theories as to why the US got involved in Vietnam, none of which actually put forth a realistic supportable reason, but obviously it was a political one. Vietnam is long past having had our mighty superpower military run out of their country in a desperate retreat. Now we are about to be run out of Iraq and Afghanistan again failing to understand limited or irregular warfare. The new concept of war evolved in modern times from the VC insurgency and those methods have emerged to what we have today with IEDs and car bombs along with small unit attacks of vulnerable targets. This brings us to a warning of pending failure again as the military is searching for an opponent they again think they can defeat. The win-loss ratio in war is evidence that some things are not performing as promised by the Pentagon.

With the withdrawals in defeat from Iraq and Afghanistan, the current military-CIA policy is an introverted special operation, small incident tactics to intimidate or kill/capture subjects. This currently suits their criminal minds because of secrecy we know not their success or failures. The wars we are seeing now are absurdly futile and whether on purpose or by design counter-effective. It is more than a disgrace; it is a waste of wealth and blood and those who have instigated these deployments that kill and destroy countries for no known civil reason should be held accountable for their gross neglect.



HARRY WAGNER IS A VETERAN OF VIETNAM. HE WORKED IN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS, USAID, AND WITH THE PHOENIX PROGRAM. HE HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCE IN VIETNAM AND INCLUDES PROVEN STRATEGIES TO TRANSITION OUR MILITARY FROM A BELLIGERENT AGENT OF WAR TO AN ADVOCATE ON A QUEST FOR PEACE.



A Pencil Point

GREGORY ROSS

...Jazzman is an artist who creates unique line drawings. He has a sense of the absurd, of the macabre, yet almost always makes people laugh. Or, at least he always makes his friend Scurface laugh and Scurface makes Jazzman laugh as well. In some ways, neither of them have much to laugh about so on the occasional occasions that they interact, there is always lots of laughing and it feels good to both of them.

Jazzman likes black, thick and thin pointed markers. They make a bold statement. They are definitive and yet Jazzman can be subtle with his drawings. You have to look closely. First, the drawing punches you in the head with its boldness, it's unusualness both in line and subject matter. You have to study the drawings; sometimes you have to close your eyes and see the imprint on your eyelids to get it, to see the subtle line that makes Jazzman's work so interesting.

Jazzman has a singular and somewhat twisted sense of aesthetics, of humor in his drawings. Personally, he looks like a normal guy. A subtle disguise. Scurface shares this disguise. Jazzman's drawings can be shocking, but not in a puerile sense. His drawings can be juvenile but, in

that good way that a young person has of being both naive and universal.

Scurface cannot draw a good circle even if he traces a jar lid. He likes to write and hopes he is good at it. At least as good as Jazzman is at drawing. He also likes to punch people in the head with his words. Or, on occasion make them cry. Sometimes, if he can, make them laugh.

Now and then, it is best to close your eyes after reading a poem, story or memoir of Scurface's creation and let the thoughts it brings up run across your eyelids. Perhaps, there is a subtleness there too. One thing that Jazzman and Scurface have in common—a thing that hinders their laughter, their joy, their ability to move comfortably in this world without a disguise—is a war. They can laugh with each other because they are not shocked by the often unnerving and to some alarming, content of their creations.

As they have learned, most of those called enemy, were carbon copies of the two of them. Even though those called enemy do not look the same, do not talk, walk, sit or shit the same; nonetheless, they are damaged by war the same. Scurface has never seen Jazzman do a drawing about war.

Scurface writes a lot about war. At least how it affected him. Or, it's macabre nature. Certainly, it's cruel absurdity. Rarely, but occasionally even the humor. Often, only Jazzman laughs without nervousness, without a sense of concern under the involuntary expressed emotion.

Scurface has to go to a clinic for help. He needs a lot of help with a lot of things. Physical things that require medicines and medical machines. Soul things too. Some of these things he has been healing on for decades. He has to go to a Veterans Administration Clinic. He and Jazzman do not talk much about that part of war. It makes them both uncomfortable, and then they do not laugh.

Scurface is starting to cry again about war. He thinks maybe Jazzman does too on occasion. They have never cried together because that is not what they do; they laugh. They both need to laugh because war will make any sane person sorrowful. And, all indications to the opposite that they themselves or the larger society might believe: Jazzman and Scurface are often two of the sanest people in the neighborhood; they can still laugh; they can still cry.

Soon, Scurface will begin to

work on his crying. Experts have told him that if he looks it in the face, if he confronts it, embraces it, holds it both close and at arms length, if he enlarges it, engulfs it, miniaturizes it, scrutinizes each line, each word, if he closes his eyes and lets it play across his eyelids, crying will change. It will not go away, but maybe he could stop crying, not always, not forever, but maybe he would not have to wear a disguise all the time. A disguise that is getting harder to pull off or even put on.

Today at the VA clinic Scurface found a red, white and blue pencil with the name of the clinic printed on it. He took it home, sharpened it to a very sharp point, held it both close and at arm's length, and then, wrote these words: There is an artist...



GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY, SERVING IN MOROCCO, SIX DAY WAR (1967), PHILIPPINES (1968), AND VIETNAM, 7TH FLEET, GUN LINE (1969). PUBLISHED IN ANTHOLOGY: "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE," EDITED BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON.

2PKEIKU: Disparate Thoughts on a War

JOHN CRANDELL

Just like Daniel Ellsberg, I hadn't fired a single shot for nearly a year in country and when finally directed to go to the firing range across the river at An Khe, I simply propped the dusty M16 on my elbows and laid there yelling "blam, blam, blam" as others blasted away. I now ask myself what in the hell I aimed at that day in order to qualify for whatever degree of marksmanship.

Soon, no one accosted or spit on me stateside, not in the terminal at LAX or out on the sidewalk and I got out of those khakis as quick as I could and did not wear them around my home town in the San Fernando Valley. Eventually, Nixon and Kissinger proceeded to undermine, fuel the overthrow of the Allende administration in Chile so that my partner's boss could get his mines back. At the height of the Pinochet regime I finally managed to get spat on one day, just down the street from the American embassy in Santiago. Yes, Johnny had long since surrendered his gun, was playing expatriate and made the mistake of wearing his US cavalry buckle in public in another country whose governance had begot American destruction, supposedly to save it. Horror: seeing men with gouged out eyes sitting and begging on sidewalks surrounding the city's central market.

I'd read David Halberstam's "The Making of A Quagmire," absorbed the long, now-storied history of how he and his fellow journalists covered the war prior to the '63 coup-de-grace in Saigon, the degree of graft, oppression of Buddhists and most particularly, the careerism and ludicrous self deception among the American delegation in Saigon. And I'd read all of it in the month before I went there and when I arrived, so much was apparent that my Catholic illusions evaporated. Come April of 2000, the same journalist appeared at UCLA to note the 25th anniversary of the final collapse of Saigon and thereafter I watched him walk away—every step the stride of an incomparable legend. It was he who Madame Nhu thought ought to be barbecued in public. She volunteered to light the match and he soon was rewarded by a Pulitzer for refusing to be a "team player" while reporting for the *New York Times*. Off into the foliage he walked, through a landscape that I'd designed seventeen years earlier.

More than any other, the first night at Cam Rahn Bay was the most harrowing of our lives, reeling with anxiety over so many unknowns, having traveled so far. The sergeant who had sat beside me on the World Airways flight was beginning his second tour in the war zone. We'd just gotten off of the spanking new 707 and were standing in line for processing. He provided everyone within earshot a little of what had become the reality of our American involvement there. Seeing a Vietnamese woman happen by, he erupted with a vile stream of invective—the likes of which I'd never witnessed.

It hadn't been too many weeks after I'd arrived and given my silence, the captain got on my case, his seeing me as an outsider and as a result I was detailed to the east perimeter with a couple of other recalcitrants. The duty was to remove vegetation from the bottom of a swale that coursed diagonally across the northeast corner of Camp Enari, base camp of the Fourth Infantry. We were given a sythe, a hoe and a Hudson Sprayer filled with herbicide. The large macadam paved tarmac along that perimeter used for parking the division's light helicopters would be sprayed with a final application of Agent Orange that November with nary a warning to anyone, be they

pilot, mechanic, 11-Bravo in any adjacent hootch or any of us REMFS who helped guard that side of the base.

A couple of grunts stood guard as we removed the trip flares and rows of concertina wire, hacked away the water plants and then sprayed the defoliant upon what remained. And I wore that pair of jungle boots for the balance of my tour. Ever since, the hair on my legs stops at a line right where the tops of those boots rubbed the skin of my calf. And a couple of weeks earlier the captain had had me shoveling mud into a wheelbarrow and filling sandbags due to a sales infraction. I slipped and fell trying to move the load of red clay and there beneath the not so sheltering sky I thought of all of the poor peasants toiling across southeast Asia, beset by a host of diseases and incomparable misery as compared to the life I'd known and the idea came to me—that all such misery was and is considered as a simple fact of life and "so what?" by those in power in Washington.

Soon, no one accosted or spit on me stateside, not in the terminal at LAX or out on the sidewalk and I got out of those khakis as quick as I could and did not wear them around my home town in the San Fernando Valley.

But if such peasants should begin to get ideas as to bettering the common prospect or questioning the efficacy of their corrupt overlords, then watch the hell out.

Dusk was falling and a lightning storm was drifting around Dragon Mountain a few weeks onward. I'd just learned of the death of a neighbor back home and had rushed out to guard call. Unfortunately, I managed to get assigned to a watchtower next to the creek where I'd sprayed herbicide. Two groundpounders and I climbed high into the crow's nest as the storm moved downslope. Unbeknownst to us, static electricity set off blasting caps embedded in the claymore mines and wham! The perimeter fronting us was suddenly aflame. The entire line opened up with M79s, M50s, M60s and M16s. My ears began to ring (and still resound). Tracers flew like mad. A brilliant green flare shot up from the command post, a supposed signal that Charlie had broken through—just as an ambulance screamed to a halt. Seeing the flames, I surmised that the NVA had managed to secure Napalm through the rampant black market. Then the command post called with orders to abandon the tower for the bunker below. So we loaded ourselves down with the machine guns, our rifles, flack jackets, steel pots, ammo, etc. and clambered down the ladder for the safety of the bunker. Having just set ourselves up, the command post called again with directions to move back up into the tower. So we grabbed everything again and climbed upward. And that's when the fun started. Someone yelled gas! gas! gas! and everyone dove for their gas masks—putting them on far quicker than when we'd practiced in boot camp. Three guys in the tower across the creek had already gotten stoned and immediately became catatonic. All we could hear was groaning, moaning, a scream or two, coughing and an occasional "wow man!"

Finally, all the shooting stopped and we discovered the enemy was nowhere to be found. As the claymores detonated, their shrapnel hit fifty gallon drums of gas half buried amidst the concertina, which brought the

explosions and flames. Well, us admin rangers mowed down nearly all of the vegetation bordering the eastern perimeter that evening. In all of the nine months I spent there at Enari, Charles didn't once come close. Some nights out there were terror. With the intensity of the monsoon you couldn't see anything, no incidental light whatsoever. A few bunkers ranged around the southeast corner would be inundated knee deep.

A mission out west to LZ Merideth had occurred on August 29th. After driving fifteen miles out to an old French tea plantation called "Cateka," also the third brigade's field headquarters, we boarded a flock of Hueys accompanied by a Chinook. Sitting next to the floor hatch of the latter I gazed wide-eyed right between my boots, thousands of feet down into the headwaters of the Ia Drang. The vegetation was broken only by boiling red rivers descending towards the Mekong. We hadn't anticipated having to spend the night out there

Montagnard settlements characterized by thatch, bamboo, flattened beer cans and corrugated tin. From there it was up over the fabled Mang Yang Pass and on through mountainous country to the new quarters outside of An Khe. Particularly memorable is the exotic and pungent smell of burning sandalwood. There it was to behold, through every village.

This was the road traversed only a month before by the entire division enroute to its new home. Back at Enari we were later to hear of various antics which occurred during the postal move. Since he had been in country, the captain had somehow managed to acquit himself with a civilian bedstead: frame, wooden headboard, and box spring mattress. Due to a lack of cargo space his nightly respite was placed atop one of the already overloaded Deuces for the trip east. He rode in another truck aways behind that which carried his furniture and as the first truck neared the pass, the damned bed fell off.

Afraid of suffering a "Din Bin Foo" ambush, the driver refused to stop for a retrieval. Shortly thereafter, the captain rode by, saw the wreckage and fell into a fit. After arriving at the new quarters, he and First Sergeant "Looney" went into a rage, screamed all the while as the crew unloaded the heavy equipment. Hearing of it, I imagined that every square inch of the place was dusted to the max, swept spotless to atone for the demolished bedstead.

After straightening up the money order snafu, I flew back to Enari to gather up my belongings for transfer to Radcliffe. I left for An Khe on March 25th after a last walking tour around the camp. It was sobering with everything deserted, so many ghosts of war. Griff drove me down to the base airstrip in the three-quarter. And I glanced back at the APO as we drove away; so many memories, those lines of men strung out the door, eight to five every damn day, with monkeys, boonie hats, bandoliers and misery in their eyes. I piled my gear into the twin engine Caribou along with about thirty others for the flight. It was all right, until we flew past the coastal range of mountains. Now was the winter monsoon and we descended into a tropical whirlpool. With the cloud cover, we didn't have to corkscrew on a vertical axis as at Enari. The radar at the airstrip beneath us had gone black; air control couldn't guide us. So the pilot kept us circling above in the midst of the storm. The inside of the plane was like a cement mixer. I thought we were going to plow into nearby Hon Kon for sure. Clinging for dear life, I kept swallowing, holding my bile. Our eyes closed upon the firmament that day. Finally, the pilot decided to make a go for it and managed to avoid impaling us into the mountain.

Camp Radcliffe was another world compared to Dragon Mountain with its huge perimeter encapsulating Hon Kon, occupied by insurgents in a subterranean labyrinth. They'd regularly been in the habit of descending the slopes to attack the field hospital and blow up a few helicopters. This side of the Mang Yang had more jungle and lots of mountains intermingled with savannas on the flatlands. Much more hot and humid than the central highlands had been. At the end of April, Nixon ordered the Cambodian invasion and most of the division departed for the west in a combined operation with a battalion from the Screaming Eagles. Charlie hit us every night at midnight for a full week. They'd break through the eastern perimeter and head for the Golf Course while the northern part

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Nicaragua in Crisis

LOUIS DE BENEDETTE

Nicaragua is in a conflict beginning in April 2018

The right-wing backed by US dollars wants to topple the current government and impeach President Daniel Ortega. There is much more to this, but I want to specifically share the solidarity that VVAW and many individual members have participated in through the years.

In April of 1986, seven years after the revolution, a VVAW delegation visited Nicaragua. Reagan's freedom fighters, i.e. (the contra), were killing people and destroying schools and hospitals which the International Court of Justice ordered the US to pay for.

The International Court of Justice ruled that the US was an international terrorist and demanded reparation. The charges went nowhere, and the Reagan legacy as the butcher of Nicaragua was to continue. The VVAW delegation also protested at the US Embassy.

Two years later in 1988, VVAW member Bob Livesey led a convoy supported by fellow VVAW member Dave Cline to show support for Daniel Ortega and the people. During the Contra years, many were arrested including Roy Bourgeois, leader against the School of the Americas, and myself.

In 1990 I poured human blood on the White House gate protesting CIA intervention in the Nicaraguan elections.

In 1990, Barry Romo invited two paralyzed Sandinista veterans to come to the Kent State anniversary. I got them visas for medical help.

I lived in Boaco, Nicaragua, for one year with moral support from VVAW's Dave Cline. At this time Ben Chitty financed the construction of 14 homes of brick stones and we also renovated the FRENTE office. Many VVAW veterans respect Nicaragua.

President Daniel Ortega has

been in office since 2006. Nicaragua had become calm and more hopeful. This changed in April of this year over a protest in a march over a 5% decrease for the aged. However, that was changed back to 5%. Protesters continued to denounce Daniel Ortega. He said during an interview with *Fox News* that these protests are from terrorists, drug traffickers, and opposing paramilitary groups. The Sandinistas are the target of the attacks.

My friend Walter, a Sandinista, and 4,000 others had to build secure homes outside Managua to escape the terrorists. Not many people go outside. His brother Humberto has not left his home in months. Antonio, a close friend and a veteran with only one leg who had been confined to a wheelchair, recently passed.

Thousands of Sandinista motorcycles travel daily from city to city to bring food and protection to the people. Jose Saul is a good friend

and leads the motorcyclist to Esteli, Matagalpa, and Jinotega, at times when there is danger and they carry no arms. Jose Saul is a father of a small child. He wants Daniel Ortega as president and an end to the conflict.

The Sandinista continue to march daily clamoring for justice for those who were wounded, tortured, and disappeared, like Bismark Martinez, and those killed, hunted, and persecuted for being Sandinista. The US supports the Right and denounces Daniel Ortega. The struggle is long and difficult: no jobs, no food, yet the Sandinistas will win for the children and Daniel.



VIETNAM ERA VETERAN, WAR RESISTER, AND A FRIEND OF NICARAGUA, LOUIS HAS BEEN A VVAW MEMBER SINCE 1982 AND IS A VVAW CONTACT IN ITHACA, NY.



VVAW Delegation in front of Managua US Embassy, demonstrating against the "Contra" war, April 14, 1986.

2PKEIKU: Disparate Thoughts on a War

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of the base would be bombarded with mortars. Soon we were accustomed to spending our nights in the bunkers and ol' John Calabrese had himself all prepared before the sirens went off. In a neat pile he placed a ratty old chaise lounge, a blanket, a pillow and his steel pot. So one night, many of us were packed in the makeshift EM Club watching a movie. King Arthur touched Lancelot's shoulder with his sword and all hell broke loose. Tables overturned and chairs flew as everyone rushed out the door, another mortar barrage, another night in the bunkers. And upon arriving, who should we find but The Brese all stretched out on his chaise lounge voicing the inevitable: "Well what took ya so long?"

He was a major in the medical corps at Enari. His hands were shaking as he tried to pull money out of his billfold while buying money orders at my window. He'd just come from an operating table at the medical detachment. He'd been in-country nearly a year, was near the end of his rope, haunted by all of the horror he'd seen but couldn't quite express it. From what I'd heard, they all eventually would start suffering fatigue, particularly the field medics. You'd know they had it when they'd come up to your window with yellow I.V. tubes and shiny instruments dangling from their fatigues. These were hemostats, stainless steel clamps to stop the hemorrhage of blood. And it was always the same thing, they'd be buying money orders to accompany

their applications to med school back home. They had this extraordinary religiosity, this air of intensity about them...

On Enari's eastern perimeter as twilight fell into night behind us. It was always so quiet at that time. Those on guard usually would split apart and reflect by themselves while gazing out at the fading sea of green. Banana Mountain was off to the right with its sparse stand of hardwoods covering a lush understory of emerging banana leaves. It held quite a magnetic attraction for me, sitting out there so inviting and exotic looking in the early evening light. Back at Fort Harrison, Captain Weiss had warned me not to volunteer for any forward mission. He'd been wounded on one of his own. My number soon came up and for myself I went forward and saw what had become America's nightmare. Nobody, not one single bastard of this world can ever take that away from me.

One night on the side of Hon Kon, up in the jungle behind me an animal is prowling. I'm not sure what it is and stand ready to blast away at the vegetation, my throat clutched with fear and heart throbbing, I call the command post and am told not to open fire. Dawn arrived after eons on suspense waiting there expecting Charles to come charging through the vegetation. The exotic view of savanna, hills and mountains captured me and the paranoia evaporated. Soon the truck came; that was the one and

only time that I stood guard on the north side of the mountain. Yeah, life was so much more intense then. Now, it's like living in a long slow shadow, having been high on that mountain - knowing you'll never be up there again. And unfathomable horror on young men's faces, how I felt coming around that mountain for the last time, trucked back to the compound along the storied Green Line. Such feelings didn't last, didn't survive past the freedom flight back to America.

A few more days and I sat beside the pool at my father's house below Camel's Back Ridge east of San Fernando. One sat on the long wood plank, leaned back against the block wall at the deep end and covered his ears trying to keep from hearing the strains of "God Bless America" broadcast from the Fourth of July parade along the town's single commercial drag. He's hated that song with unrelenting passion ever since, vowed right off to never again recite the Pledge of Allegiance or sing this country's national anthem. And I haven't. Instead, I saw the ad for VVAW in *Playboy* and bought a money order, for my first year's membership. And early one evening nine years later I found myself running full bore along Weyburn Avenue near UCLA hightailing it after Jane Fonda. One glance at the picture of her at the gun emplacement in North Vietnam told me that she'd made a very big mistake. Yet I very much wanted to express my appreciation—for how

she had ventured so far out on a limb in her anti-war effort and her work in assisting veterans coping with life in the aftermath of their experience on the other side of the world.

Courtesy of *NPR*, Terry Gross speaks with John Kerry as I write this. He speaks of swift boats and Swift Boaters and the late John McCain. The two veterans once stood together in the latter's cell in the "Hanoi Hilton" and found common ground.

Years ago I'd occasionally become melancholic, would feel *deja-vu* for two or three days. And those images of pain and despair lined up in front of me front and center. I began to think they would always haunt me; but no, I gradually turned corner after corner, kept packing up and moving on. But still I dreamt, was on guard duty—back behind the concertina again, tracers flying and all of the astonishing green vegetation. Illumination was drifting into eternity mist—south of Dragon Mountain. Night again, folks. Always night



JOHN CRANDELL WAS REGULAR ARMY, VOLUNTEERED FOR THREE YEARS IN A USELESS ATTEMPT TO AVOID SOUTHEAST ASIA, SERVED WITH CONARC, WITH THE FOURTH INFANTRY AND FIRST CAV POST VIETNAM. NOW RETIRED, I KEEP FIT DOING HORTICULTURE AND MANAGING "THE FARM" OUTSIDE SACRAMENTO. THIS MORNING I FOUND OUT THAT JANE AND PETER FONDA ARE MY TENTH COUSINS.

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 46 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

i have arrived - i am home

MICHAEL ORANGE

Pre-dawn dew soaked through my sandals as I took the more direct route from the campground to the meditation hall across a wide field of grass. A playful déjà vu sensation enveloped me as I recalled cutting across yards as a child in contrast to my adult habit of staying on sidewalks. The low croak of frogs and the songs from birds and crickets welcomed me. As I neared a tree line, the glorious chorus of mating songs from cicadas looking for love after their seventeen-year sojourn underground reminded me of my longtime love of their calls and amazement of their life cycle. Funny how my Vietnam experiences resulted in a constant ringing in both ears that most resembles a cicada's song.

A police official in Madison, Wisconsin organized this five-day retreat at the nearby Green Lake resort in August 2003 with the hope that police officers and others in public service would attend. The moment I heard of it and that Thich Nhat Hạnh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk I so respected, would lead it, I felt drawn to be with a spiritual leader from the war-torn country that was the source of my moral injuries.

My tour of duty in Vietnam produced a case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that I now know is very typical for combat vets. At the time of the retreat, I was in my fourth month of weekly talk therapy sessions. My psychotherapist (who had also served in Vietnam) and, later, the VA agreed that I was partially disabled due to combat-induced PTSD.

I walked across the field that first morning towards the meditation hall for Thich Nhat Hạnh's (or Thay, "teacher" in Vietnamese) dharma talk. A large banner on the wall to my right read, "i have arrived i am home." I wondered if the lower case "i" was to remind us of the ego's link to craving and the Buddha's lesson that grasping is the source of suffering.

In slow motion, Thay poured water into a glass, moved it two-handed to his lips, and smelled it before he sipped. With a smile and a soft voice muffled by a thick Vietnamese accent, he advised that mindful observation is the "element which nourishes the tree of understanding, and compassion and love are the most beautiful flowers."

Thay's co-leader, Sister Chan Khong, was highly respected for her involvement in Southeast Asian relief efforts for refugees and war victims since the 1960s. I wondered how she was able to maintain a near constant smile after experiencing a decade of war. I requested a consultation with her mentioning my struggle with PTSD, and I felt honored when she agreed.

When we met, I didn't know how to start. With a soft reassuring voice, she suggested, "Start with the worst." I struggled with an instantly dry mouth and got out only three words: "We killed children..." I choked on my tears as my face scrunched. I told her an abbreviated version of one war story—my first experience with the atrocity that is war.

From a guard tower about thirty yards away, I watched as two young boys tried to run away after successfully setting off a homemade bomb that killed three fellow Marines. With a well-practiced calm, I flipped the lever on my M16 from SAFE to AUTO. But before I could finish squeezing off a three-round burst, the machine gunner in the adjacent guard tower opened up. He had a clear shot at less than twenty yards as the two boys ran directly toward him. The fine dust danced a three-step toward the taller boy. The next burst ripped through his right thigh, belly, and chest and sent him reeling. An instant later, after a minute adjustment by the gunner, three more lead slugs bore clean through the other boy's little chest. He collapsed abruptly in a heap.

After a long pause, Sister Khong said that if I practiced mindfulness, I could look deeply into the nature



Sister Chan Khong, a Vietnamese Buddhist nun, at a Buddhist retreat in 2003.

of myself and touch my suffering. I could learn to live with my fear, my doubts, my confusion, my guilt, and my anger. My task, she said, was to dwell in those places like still water. But if I didn't practice mindfulness, I would continue to live in forgetfulness, controlled by my suffering. She offered a final suggestion: "I try to give joy to one person in the morning and reduce the suffering of one person in the afternoon by deep listening. Deep compassion."

I thanked the kindly nun. Like the

initial sensation in an elevator going down, the gravity of my past had less of a drag on me.

Thirty-three years after the war, I began to feel like i had arrived. i was home.



AFTER EXPERIENCING COMBAT IN NUMEROUS SEARCH-AND-DESTROY MISSIONS IN VIETNAM, MICHAEL PUBLISHED A MEMOIR OF HIS EXPERIENCES IN 2001, *FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM*.

Overheard in Afghanistan

