



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Volume 49, Number 2

Fall 2019

Forever Wars Demand Forever Opposition

BILL BRANSON

From the VVAW National Office

Six months ago, *The Veteran* called out President Chump. We joined progressive groups and individuals all over the US in puncturing Chump's latest bloody trial balloon; the invasion of Venezuela.

Now, we have to add to that list, **NO WAR WITH IRAN!** As the lies roll out and President Bone Spurs struts about, the insanely greedy profiteers in the international arms industry lick their chops. Seems like Chump, the Republican party and their masters are hell bent on starting another war somewhere. Could it be that they are feeling the heat from a fed-up public, tired, tired of the trillions spent on these "Forever Wars?"

This fall, the US War on Afghanistan turns 18. This is unacceptable! Young men and women registering to vote, enrolling in college, or enlisting in the military have never known a time in their lives without the brutal, senseless grind of the war in Afghanistan.

On September 27, 2001, VVAW issued this call:

"We speak out of duty to our country and the world, solidarity with those serving in the military and love of our families and friends when we take this stand:

•We condemn the criminal attacks of September 11 and demand that those responsible be held accountable and brought to justice.

•We mourn for the victims and offer our heartfelt sorrow and sympathy to the families and friends of those we lost.

•We condemn bigotry and violence against Arabs, Muslims and immigrants which threaten these communities because of their race, nationality and religion.

•We oppose efforts to curtail our



VVAW in Philadelphia, 1976.

basic civil liberties and democratic rights and must defend the Constitution from those who are undermining it.

•We do not believe that militarism and war will provide justice or security and oppose major US military intervention in Afghanistan or other countries."

In March 2002, we made this statement:

"Domestically, we demand the equal protection of everyone's civil rights. We condemn the fact that several thousand Muslims in the United States have been detained and held incommunicado without trial, or charge, or even legal rights. We oppose such practices and their corollary, racial profiling, in the domestic side of this 'war on terrorism.'

Finally, we in VVAW call upon all who support peace with social justice to act on their principles and join with others in their communities to oppose the 'war on terrorism' as

it is currently being waged, and to oppose domestic terrorism in the guise of "public safety" as it is codified in the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (HR 3162) and other legislation."

When VVAW was first established in 1967, we wanted to end the war in Vietnam, but we did so much more. We've made history and we've changed America.

Yes, tens upon tens of thousands of vets found a home (not to mention husbands, wives, partners, parents, ne'er-do-wells and malcontents). But we did not just camp; we did not hide out, feeling "unappreciated." No, we spoke out. We acted. We took our message to the American people and to the international community. We changed policies and minds through our commitment and our activism.

We have a past and a present. VVAW also has a future, as long as real social justice and peace elude the peoples of the world. As veterans, we

know the true costs of war extend beyond any battlefield, and we have a responsibility to educate our fellow citizens about this. They (the Rich) are certainly willing to go to war to produce more casualties; but they are not willing to pay for their own policies. The veterans and civilian victims of these wars are just trash to be discarded. This is nothing new to us.

VVAW members around the country and around the world must still speak out in high schools, colleges, pulpits, the halls of Congress and the streets. We still have to feed homeless vets, fight privatizing the VA, and demand decent benefits. Why? Because it is crystal clear that this new American Empire is not willing to take care of anyone but the rich of the world.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.

Report: The VVAW Thanh Binh School Library Project

CHUCK THEUSCH

September 21, 2019

In the finest tradition of government efficiency (or lack thereof...), the Final Certificate of Authority and Permit was issued on August 28, 2019, by the Government Agency for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Hanoi. Le Thi Hoa is our friend who is delighted to have the VVAW Library in her Village. Located in Giong Trom, Ben Tre Province the historic nature of the locale has special significance for the Vietnamese. In this remote area of old South Vietnam, relatively close to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), the number of kids existing at poverty level is extreme. Vietnam's definition of poverty is far more serious than the American definition.

Here is a brief introduction to

VVAW's new friends in South Vietnam. Le Thi Hoa started and owned a Beauty Salon in New Berlin at 165th & Grenefield Avenue suburban Milwaukee for over 20 years. She recently sold the business and now runs a small masseuse shop with locations in Elm Grove and Dousman, Wisconsin.

She has never lost her love of her homeland. A late 60's entertainer in South Vietnam, with little education, she has still excelled at building a life for herself here in the USA. She has returned to her home in Ben Tre to help her family invest in a business and homes in Saigon. She purchased some land near Ton San Nhut Airport, familiar environs to many veterans. Her sisters run a coffee shop there that she has inspired and funded.

The VVAW Library Project will



Actual construction brick signed by the Thanh Binh School headmaster from the VVAW Library site. Bricks can be made for any sponsors over \$500, and brought back.

be much more than a one time investment. It will provide Vietnamese friends, associates, and contacts for future travel and involvement for any of its members, their families, and friends. If they wish to travel or engage in internet exchanges, the library will be the source of such contacts taking advantage of the relationships.

Having obtained the Hanoi approvals, October 2019 we will be

finally holding a small groundbreaking event as construction begins.



CHUCK THEUSCH IS A VIETNAM VETERAN OF THE US ARMY, 4/3 INFANTRY, 11TH INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAN DIVISION, VIETNAM 1969-70. HE IS THE FOUNDER/CEO OF THE LIBRARY OF VIETNAM PROJECT.



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

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
ASTORIA, IL
PERMIT NO. 9



Chuck Theusch, Ms. Hoa of Hanoi, Permit Processor, and Khanh, of Saigon, LOVP representative.

Thanks to Ellie Shunas

Thanks to Ellie Shunas for providing her editing skills to *The Veteran* for the past decade. Ellie brought her years of editing expertise from CAMP News to VVAW, and made *The Veteran* even better.

Thanks to Ellie for correcting our stupid mistakes and somehow making us seem smarter than we might be.

To show our appreciation, VVAW has made Ellie a recipient of the VVAW Winter Soldier Service Award.

Thanks again for all the great work Ellie. Enjoy the extra birdwatching time.



Ellie and Bill Shunas at VVAW Veteran's Day event in Chicago, November 11, 2001.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Several months ago I saw an article in this newspaper about VVAW raising funds for the library project in Vietnam so I made a donation. Today I looked to see how much of the \$10,000 we had raised and it was only \$3,096. That's very disappointing to me.

In 1987, I went on the first VVAW trip to Vietnam with Barry, Pete, Dennis, and Tom. One of the sites we visited was Bach Mai hospital, which was bombed in December 1972. A young doctor pleaded with us to help them get an MRI machine, which they greatly needed. Her plea has resonated

with me all these years. We didn't have the means to grant her request, but I think we have it in our means to reach the goal of \$10,000.

I urge everyone to make a donation for an important resource for a generation or two to have a library at their disposal. A library is as important as an MRI machine. Please make a donation today.

—Edward Damato

(To donate, go to: www.gofundme.com/f/vvaw-library-in-vietnam-project)



Milwaukee VVAW.

Thanks to those who have put VVAW in their wills. These gifts have helped VVAW keep on keeping on and have contributed to the building of the library in Vietnam we are sponsoring. If you would like to put VVAW in your will and don't know how, contact the National Office at vvaw@vvaw.org. VVAW is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Bill Branson, Annie Luginbill, Carolyn Forché, Joe Miller, Chuck Theusch, Dennis Tribble, Nick Werle, Ed Vail and others for contributing photos.

Veteran Staff

Jeff Machota Joe Miller
Bill Branson Jen Tayabji
Ashley Buckley

VVAW: 50 Years of Struggle



The Legacy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

by Alynne Romo
A VVAW Publication

Available for \$14.95 through VVAW's website www.vvaw.org/store/.

VVAW Merchandise

**HONOR THE WARRIOR,
NOT THE WAR**

Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967
www.vvaw.org



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

- VVAW T-Shirt
White (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$18.00 _____
- Sand (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$18.00 _____
- Black (white logo) (M, L, XL, XXL) - \$18.00 _____

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

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

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

Total Enclosed _____

Ship to:
Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

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

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

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

In the last issue of *The Veteran*, I had a column about Jane Fonda. Anyone who happened to read it would have realized right away that I had not plagiarized it from an American Legion magazine. In a conversation with a fellow veteran, I had suggested that "Jane had risked her career and possibly her life by protesting our invasion of a foreign country." The vet just gave me an odd look, possibly thinking that I had been joking, and walked away.

When the issue came out, I received several copies from Jeff Machota and took them to the Tuscola Public Library for the benefit of anyone who might wish to grab one. I do this with every issue, and when I later notice that they are no longer there, assume that someone has picked them up. But I confess that I was a little worried about this one. My above-noted quote about Jane might just have gotten me knocked on my ass by a fellow Vietnam vet who didn't see things my way.

Well, the word did get out, and I received reactions from several vets who had either read or just been told about it. Fortunately, no aggravated batteries upon myself occurred. As Tuscola is a pretty small town, I personally know - and generally got along well with - those veterans. Their

usual response was to smile, shake their heads, and say something to the effect of "How much had you had to drink when you wrote that stupid crap?" I suppose that beats getting knocked on my ass.

But I generally felt that a response was necessary, so I usually came up with the suggestion that Jane Fonda was one of the true heroines of the Vietnam War. I throw John Kerry in there (a Silver Star and three Purple Hearts, easily outdistancing my Good Conduct Medal). If I'm on a roll, I add all of those young men who gave up everything to go to Canada to avoid that invasion. I grant that maybe 10% of them were just too lazy or chickenshit to want to put up with basic training, but look at the rest.

They went to a country about which they knew nothing and no one, assumed that they would never be able to return, and left their families to deal with that "desertion." Even had I been anti-war when I was drafted in 1966 (I was much too dumb and uninformed about Vietnam to take that position), I would have submitted to the draft anyway, realizing that my chances of winding up as a clerk typist at Ft. Hood would have been better than as an Eleven Bravo in Vietnam. Needless to say, my thoughts about those young men who went to Canada were not

widely shared.

In a sense what I'm left with is Jane and the young men who went to Canada on one hand, and on the other, the vets who either enlisted or submitted to the draft. As my fellow veterans in Tuscola would phrase it, the choice is between traitors and true American patriots. I'm one who would love to see a statue of Jane on the Capitol grounds in Washington (I won't hold my breath), while my friends would prefer to see her and all those "draft dodgers" living on bread and water in solitary confinement in federal prison. OK, everyone is entitled to his opinion. But what strikes me is that - this obvious difference notwithstanding - I get along well with and work with these veterans. We march together in parades, participate in veterans funerals all around the county, join in pancake breakfasts, and actually get along with, and like, each other. But on that first issue, it's like we're living on different planets.

I'm thinking a lot about Vietnam as I write this, in part because that's the subject, and secondly because I'm writing it on my 73rd birthday. Peers in my age group will assure other readers that birthdays in one's '70s are quite unlike birthdays in one's 20's or even one's 50's. We think about much different things. But I know what I'm

going to do when I finish this. I'm going to walk over to my bookshelf and find a book I haven't read in a few years. It is *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, and I highly recommend it. If you're expecting a lot of good anti-war stuff in it, you can forget that. It's all about life in the field, on the ground, as a grunt infantryman in Vietnam. And the absence of politics makes it all the more real and believable. As I tell high school history classes when I'm invited to speak to them, none of that had a place during our service over there. One of the first things the sergeant told us when we reported to our units in the field was, "If you have thoughts about whether this war is right or wrong, keep them to yourselves. Nobody cares. Your job is to do your job, and cover your buddy's ass, and his job is to cover yours." In all my time in Vietnam, I never heard anything said about whether or not we should have been there.

That all changed in a hurry when I got home.



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

What Makes a Man

Even as my dad lay dying, cancer back a second time and moving fast, he blurted out, "I should have fought!" Apropos of nothing. Out of nowhere but the secret reservoir of memory and shame he'd carried all his life, the weight of it I never fully understood until that moment. World War II, he meant.

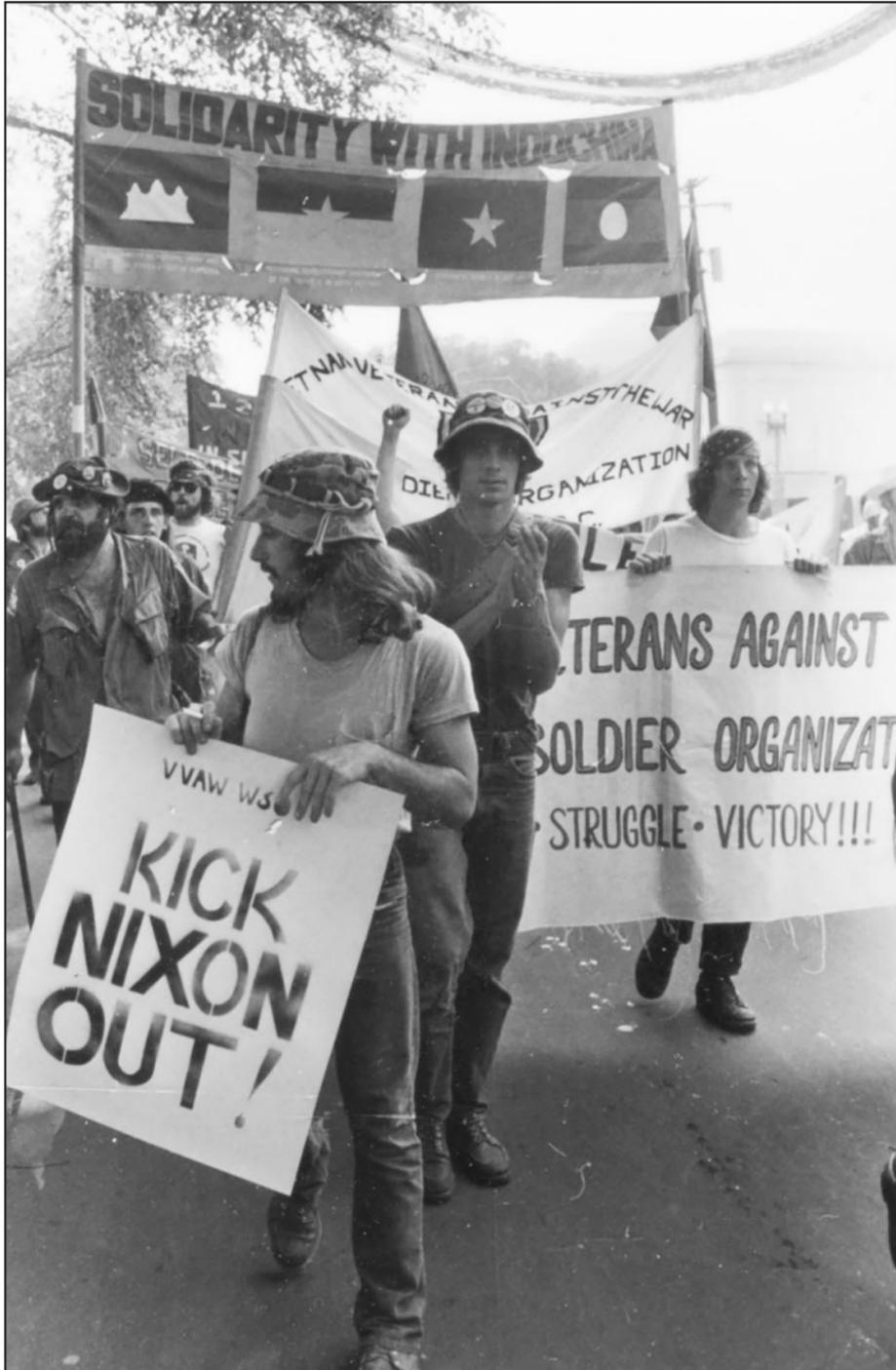
The two of us alone: a man who'd missed the great adventure of his generation, Ike's Great Crusade, the crucible for all those other men around him all his life, the test they'd passed, the club he couldn't join; his son, the ex-Marine, the one who'd come back home from Vietnam insisting it was all just bullshit, just a lethal scam that only proves how gullible each generation's cannon fodder is.

Only in that moment in that room did I begin to grasp how impotent my father must have felt through all those years, how much he must have taken my enlistment as a personal rebuke, and how my subsequent insistence that I'd validated nothing in myself must have been to him a kind of treason.

Dying now, in 1988, he still could not let go of Cousin Bob who'd been dismantled by a German mine but died a man in 1945, not like this: wasted, helpless, haunted by the shades of what he thought he was and what he wished he'd been, a nurse's aide to change his bedpan, too much time to think, and nothing either one of us could do to change a thing.

—W. D. Ehrhart

Reprinted from *Thank You for Your Service: Collected Poems* by W. D. Ehrhart, McFarland & Company, Inc., 2019.



July 4, 1974, in Washington, DC.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

At a used book sale, I picked up a copy of *American Theocracy* by Kevin Phillips, a former Republican strategist. The section on religion—mainly fundamentalist—and its influence on our politics was enlightening and depressing. I'm not a religious person, but I used to have some respect for the moral standards held by the various religions. One of the things I used to like (although I must have not been paying attention) is that there seemed to be acceptance of the separation of church and state. I'm most familiar with the Christians in whose Bible there is word of good stuff like feeding the poor, truth-telling, standing for justice and equality. I would imagine that one finds the same sort of thing in the Koran and the Torah and the teachings of Buddha, Sikhs, and others.

On the downside, religions have contributed to the justification of things like war, various slaughters and other kinds of mayhem as well as various intrusions into our lives including the repression of women and the denial of the role of science and its importance to the betterment of our lives. These backward ideas usually come from perceived orders from above, often the Old Testament. For example, if you like war check out the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. He colluded with God to pursue violence among those who made God unhappy, including the slaying of those who didn't toe the line, sometimes including their children. Lots of dying requested. Maybe the Islamic State was paying attention.

In this day and age, fundamentalists in the various religions are active in asserting their influence on the political front in this country and around

the world to promote militarism. For a small number, that means taking up the sword (or suicide vest or tank or car bomb). For most, it means exerting influence on government policy. These are the forms of the modern crusades. This country is no different. Some over-the-top fundamentalists may use violence. However, for most, the greatest activity is centered in exerting their influence on the government and its policies. They have bonded with the Republican Party. And they have had a measure of success. Their high point so far was during the W years. He is a born-again, and he brought that with him to the White House. It was worse than Ron and Nancy Reagan relying on their astrologer. In addition to the control of oil in the Middle East, Bush marched us toward war in Iraq for a couple of religious reasons. It was a crusade of good against evil. Some of the fundamentalists thought that Saddam Hussein was the anti-Christ. Others disagreed about that but still wanted to go there to fulfill the preparations of Revelations. The end time will bring war to the holy land so you might as well send in the fleet.

Bush and his fellow travelers had long thought about war in the Middle East and 9-11 gave them their justification so they took up the sword with this new opportunity. After all, these were the holy lands where these battles were to take place. So, we marched into Iraq. Things got so bad under Bush that decisions were made in compliance with fundamentalist beliefs rather than what would be rational policy. A religious culture was now in the White House and the government. The General Services Administration even had Pentecostal-type services at lunchtime in the

building. W openly talked about being born-again and being there to do God's work.

War wasn't the only disastrous idea that came from having this born-again and his fundamentalist cohorts running government. Because science contradicted the Bible in so many ways, science was ignored. The looming problem of climate change was ignored. Stem cell research was stifled despite the medical progress it could bring. Reproduction rights were suppressed. Anything having to do with increasing the rights of women is dismissed as contradictory to a fundamentalist who still thinks of women as property. Anything having to do with sex was avoided. This included suppressing treatment for cervical cancer. The list goes on. All of this because these people think the end is coming so it's a waste of time to change or because they think science and human rights contradict the Bible. This is the most insidious aspect of this influence of religion on politics. They are focused on the end times prophecies, themselves and their salvation and their perverted way of getting there.

Now Trump is president, and he gets a lot of support from evangelicals and fundamentalists. To me, this looks like big-time hypocrisy. Whatever they think about Trump's policies, many of his supporters wouldn't argue that his life is a mess. This is not a principled man. So what does it say that he gets support from these religious people? How craven is it to kiss this president's ass so that you can get your way to fight a religious war or intrude into lives by banning abortion or interfering with a person's health or sexual life or personal life

just because you think your Bible so commands.

There's a quote from Bill Moyers during the Bush years. "One of the biggest changes in politics in my lifetime is that the delusional is no longer marginal. It has come in from the fringe to sit in the seat of power in the Oval Office and in Congress. For the first time in our history, ideology and theology hold a monopoly of power in Washington." Beyond individual goals, there isn't much thought other than focusing on creating a Christian state making America into God's vehicle for the redemption of mankind. For the individual, fundamentalism gets you focused on individual salvation. Why be concerned about greenhouse gases? You'd think religion should be concerned about justice and equality. Many individuals may be, but that comes from personal integrity, not religion. This leads to a kind of American Exceptionalism, which defines our role. America is supposed to be God's vehicle for the redemption of mankind. Solutions will come based on faith and backed by a government of born-again or maybe a stooge (Trump) of born-again. This nonsense has unfortunately become part of the political landscape. I would think that it would eventually wear itself out, but history is full of fundamentalist principles having political influence.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR, AND LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER.

Mallory's Musings

JACK MALLORY

I wrote this almost 10 years ago.

I sit here, looking up at the shelves with my 200 and some books on Vietnam, many others on other wars, war in general. All of Fussell is up there, O'Brien, Herr, Macpherson, Shay. Even starting to list them gives me a feeling of futility. I have read them all, some multiple times.

Once I quit drinking, started dealing with PTSD, I had to force myself to stop obsessing about the war, trying to figure it out, make sense of it.

Maybe it would be better to say that now I CAN stop obsessing, figuring, making sense. I can't put it completely aside, but once I abandoned making sense out of it, that helped. I'm not responsible for figuring it out; I was there, I did what I did. What I have to be proud of, I'm proud of; what I have to be ashamed of, I'm ashamed of. I can't change it, it's done, it's over. When the opportunity to take action occurs, to tell what I know, I do that.

I know that it makes little difference, but I have done it since I

got back from Vietnam, around every war we've had since. I've done what my dad and his generation didn't do: I've told my kids the details, what it's really like. Maybe that will make a difference someday. Maybe it won't.

Phil Caputo has processed his war, and written about it, as well as anyone possibly could. He summed it up for many of us:

"Sometimes, events that are bewildering while we're living them acquire meaning in retrospect, but the more the Vietnam war recedes into the

past, the more senseless it becomes to me . . ."

I can live with that, now.



JACK MALLORY IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM 69-70 AND JOINED VVAW IN 1970. HE'S ALSO AN ARCHAEOLOGIST, AN EDUCATOR, AND A DAD. LIKE SUPERMAN, FIGHTING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND HIS OWN VERSION OF THE AMERICAN WAY. HE WON'T CLAIM TO BE WINNING, BUT WTF ELSE CAN HE DO?

The Old Monk

Years ago,
in Viet Nam
Caught in a flood
with kids,
their teachers,
The whole first floor
covered in muddy red water

rain, rain, rain

Buddha statue
at the entrance
built freakishly high
the grey stone sage
meditating, serene,
dry

rain rain rain

On the muddy road
I saw an ancient monk
Passing the school
his eyes mostly white
accompanied by a young monk
both in bright orange cloaks;

I approached them politely.
The old monk returned my greeting
"Xin chào tín chủ"

I offered money
young monk declined
money accepted at the
Temple only...
The old monk
produced his own
sent the young one
into a store
for a soda and cigarette

As they walked on
The old monk chanted:
mưa, mưa, mưa
tuổi già, chiu dung và chết chóc
"mưa, mưa, mưa
"nhà tù, tổ chức, và cái chết"
mưa, mưa, mưa

rain, rain, and rain
"old age, suffering, and death"
rain, rain, and rain

"jails, institutions, and death"

rain rain rain

Now in my mind's eye
I see the serene stone Buddha
engulfed by the rain
up to its chest
in muddy water...
even the Buddha
cannot stop the rain,

that ancient monk is gone
he too could not stop the rain
but the two of us
have that in common;
I could not stop the rain so
I sent a friend
to get me a soda,
but no cigarettes

—David Sandgrund

The Story of a Memorial

DENNIS TRIBBLE

Estacada is a small western Oregon town approximately 40 miles southeast of Portland. This rural community has a veteran's memorial that would befit any town or city in this nation. At the time the memorial was built, the founder had no direct knowledge of the VVAW motto: "Honor the Warrior – Not the War." However, through his vision, it has become a beautiful memorial for all veterans from Estacada and surrounding areas minus any war-related items. According to the founder, it would be "a simple yet elegant tribute to those who served."

Dennis Dahrens is a US Navy veteran who served from 1961–1966. He did not see action in Vietnam. Like so many others, his work was done in support of the US effort in the early years of the Vietnam conflict.

In our conversations, Dennis shared that his first assignment was to radar picket duty with the Airborne Early Warning Barrier Squadron Pacific, based on Midway Island. He maintained EC121K Reconnaissance plane engines and kept logbooks. Later, he was transferred to Hawaii and again assigned to Airborne Early Warning Barrier Squadron Pacific and then Utility Squadron No. 1. In addition to mechanic duties, he trained pilots from Australia and South Vietnam to fly the Orion. The PV3 was used heavily in Vietnam to cut off the Viet Cong supply routes to the south.

After leaving the service in 1966, Dennis returned home to work and raise a family. As we spoke, Dennis wanted to specifically relate two personal events that prompted him to consider a significant way to renew his involvement with the service and servicemembers.

The first incident occurred during his active service while on leave in 1962. Wearing his dress white uniform and escorting his girlfriend, he was confronted by three local citizens. One grabbed his hat and refused to return it. This action prompted words and a fight involving all four men soon followed. Though his serious injuries would heal, the memory of the level of disrespect shown to both Dennis and his friend, as well as to his uniform, would last for some time.

The more recent of the events occurred in 2003. While attending a rally held in Estacada in support of local troops serving in the military, Dennis noted numerous cardboard signs listing these names. One sign identified his son, a US Marine. Dennis was impressed with the citizens' desire to recognize service members. He realized then that the most significant way he and others could show lasting respect and honor to all military personnel was by permanently displaying the names of veterans in a memorial.

The complexities of building such a structure were daunting considering he had yet to locate a site. Dahrens began a search for a location in the community. He found a vacant lot wedged between adjacent developed properties just out of the main business area of Estacada. After finding that the property belonged to the City of Estacada, and following some negotiations, Dennis was granted legal rights to the lot.

Commensurate with the property search, Dahrens put out a call for others to assist in the project. A retired Master Sergeant from the Air Force, John Nieder, came forward, knowledgeable in engineering skills needed to develop a full set of the memorial working plans. It was agreed that the memorial would be "simple yet elegant" dedicated to peace and dignity for local veterans. The completed plans were presented to the State of Oregon for review. Dennis and his newly formed workgroup, Estacada Area Support Our Troops Foundation (EASOTF) founded in 2005, were granted seed money by the State to start the project.

As word spread about the memorial, other interested citizens became involved. Several made substantial monetary investments. One local service club donated a large sum of money. The general public began to donate. Dennis held his own rally to gather additional funds and encourage interest. Soon many others began to donate materials, time, and labor to move the project forward.

There is no doubt that the Estacada Veteran's Memorial is among



the most beautiful in the State. Nieder designed an elevated rear platform on which rest seven flag poles: a large, centered United States Flag pole and six shorter poles—one for each branch of the military and the Merchant Marine Service. These were the first elements to be installed by EASOTF at the memorial. Several flags have been donated by local citizens.

In front of the flags are curved, amphitheater-like Walls of Honor on which bricks bearing the names of the veterans and their service branches are engraved. The curvature of the walls places a viewer inside the display. The EASOTF installs new bricks twice a year during the Memorial Day and Veterans Day services. The Memorial continues to grow as the names have expanded beyond local veterans to those of friends and family who have served. In a fitting tribute on Veteran's Day this year, a brick bearing the VVAW name and logo will be placed near the base of the statue of the Estacada Veteran's Memorial.

The walk to the Walls of Honor is a figure eight-designed path which

crisscrosses at the center to meet a beautiful American Eagle centerpiece. Inside the top round of the figure eight, at the entry arch, is an elevated flower bed with gorgeous, varied plantings provided and maintained by the Estacada's Garden Club. Luxurious Green Arrow cedar trees, donated by the Vietnam Veterans of America, border the Memorial on both sides. An MIA table is set and decorated in the lower circle of the figure eight walk during all ceremonies.

The Estacada Veteran's Memorial is special, as are all those involved whose dedication ensured the creation of this site. Remembrance programs are held each year on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day. As the names of the veterans are read aloud, and the services continue each year, this simple yet elegant place truly "Honors the Warrior."



DENNIS TRIBBLE IS A US NAVY VET WHO WAS ASSIGNED TO THE DESTROYER USS RICHARD B ANDERSON OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM IN 1967.

Memorial Day 2019

JAMES CHRISTNER

Memorial Day, 2019: Confederate Cemetery, Elmira, New York

Imagine the resolve with which the young men, whose graves lie around us here, marching to the consolidating cadence of beating drums, were carried away and thrust into a terrifying landscape of destruction, disillusionment, and death.

Imagine as well the innumerable widely dispersed graves of comrades in arms, parents, wives, children, and other friends and relatives traumatized by the deaths of these young men so far from home.

War is the great deceiver of the naïve and overconfident. Hidden behind a veil of righteousness, lurks a morass of unrelenting destruction

and killing of such ghastly and excruciating horror that men are driven out of their wits.

If such is the evil of war, why has humankind not put an end to it?

War is profitable; some soldiers eager, all expendable. In an astounding declaration of manifest hubris, Henry Kissinger reportedly referred to military men as "dumb, stupid animals to be used" as pawns for foreign policy (p. 194).

War proponents are able to coax the citizenry into war only with its consent.

Henry Thoreau lamented: "There are thousands hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."

So I encourage you to strike a

terminal blow at the root of war by diligently seeking almighty truth and with it smother the seductive but delusional clamoring for war that so devastates lives and brings penury and ruin to the land. Herbert Hoover warned: "As war sanctifies murder, so it sanctifies the lesser immoralities of lies."

"We can never herd the world onto the paths of righteousness with the dogs of war."

Wendell Berry shall have the last word:

"It may be that when we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work, and that when we no longer know which way to go we have begun our real journey."

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings."

Quote sources:

- Henry Kissinger: *The Final Days* by Bob Woodward & Carl Bernstein

- Henry Thoreau: *Walden*

- Herbert Hoover: *Freedom Betrayed* edited by George H. Nash

- Wendell Berry: *Standing by Words*



JAMES CHRISTNER SERVED IN THE NAVY FROM 1967-1970 - FROM 1967 TO 1968 HE WAS ON THE USS ROCKBRIDGE APA-228 AND THE USS FRANCIS MARION LPA -249. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.



Joe Miller at Memorial Day 2019, Chicago.

Veterans Day Thoughts

JIM MURPHY

Veterans Day Nov. 11th in Ithaca, NY Finger Lakes Veterans Peace Coalition. JOIN US!

Most of us here do not actively participate on this date. Veterans day is loaded with "Thank you for your service and references to saving our country." I think we all know better. We do have our own Tompkins/Ithaca Memorial Day Rite with Pete and Woodie songs and our poetry (Warrior Writers) while also hearing remembrances from Vets and families.

But this year for Veterans Day, we will be passing flyers for "R.I.P. Medical Debt" aimed directly at VETERANS. As medical costs rise to unspeakable levels, so does unpayable medical debt. Our goal is to create awareness that the problem of medical debt owned by veterans can be ended by the passage of the New York Health Act.

Meanwhile we want to publicize that giving to CureVetDebt.org will support a buyback and cancellation of existing Vet Debt in New York. For local Finger Lakes contacts, email me.

Also, check out these resources:
<https://www.ripmedicaldebt.org/>
<http://getheadstrong.org/>

It has been a long strange journey for VVAW. Winter Soldier, Dewey Canyon III, and countless demonstrations. Camping out at Valley Forge in December of 1971 was my finest remembrance. 15 of us took over the Statue Of Liberty on

December 26. <<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/12/29/archives/15-veterans-leave-the-statue-of-liberty-claiming-a-victory-in.html>>

"...Tim MacCormick of New Jersey and fourteen other members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, on the afternoon of December 26, 1971, arrived on Liberty Island by the Circle Line boat along with other tourists. But, when the last return ship to Manhattan sailed that evening, the veterans were not aboard. Instead, just before closing time, they hid among the exhibit partitions, building materials, and storage closets which were lying about the monument's base while work was being finished on the American Museum of Immigration. When NPS personnel made their 7:30 evening check-up of the statue, they found that the veterans had seized control of the landmark and barricaded the three ground floor entrances. The men inside refused to speak to or admit any Park Service people, but on the door they posted a typewritten statement addressed to President Richard M. Nixon:

Each Vietnam veteran who has barricaded himself within this international symbol of liberty has for many years rationalized his attitude to war. . . . We can no longer tolerate the war in Southeast Asia. . . . Mr. Nixon, you set the date [for leaving Vietnam], we'll evacuate."

My four member team from Maryland was wonderful, Mike Parker



(RIP), Bob, Steve and myself. Listen up! 2021, we need to return to have a cup of coffee at the Statue . . . AND to bring coffee to the Liberty Staff for what we pilfered while we were "in the house."

A little research and a tip of the helmet liner to Jan Barry, Ray Grodecki, Gene Halpern, Bob Clarke (these three were the creative minds); Jim Murphy, Steve Juli, Bob Barracca and Mike Parker (Maryland/D.C.), Daev Shafran, Bill Garvin, Andy

Mellor (CT.), Tim Holmes Tim McCormack, Don Carrico (MA), Paul Fichter, and Lou Pichinson.

Love you all.



JIM MURPHY, ITHACA/FINGER LAKES PEACE COALITION, VVAW (SINCE '71), VFP. WARRIOR WRITERS AND LOVER OF T-BURG COMBAT PAPER. YOU CAN CONTACT HIM AT MURPHYVETSFOR@GMAIL.COM.

Carnage and Guilt

TOM GERY

Oblivious to the carnage, there were no thoughts of guilt. The war had been on Americans' TV's for at least three years before my induction. My teen life included high school, then junior college, while clerking in a grocery store to pay bills. The immorality of the conflict did not hit me until many years later. The national strategic goals of the Vietnam engagement were not considered nor was the very essence of warfighting, to kill other human beings, given any thought. In retrospect, it was the basic training chow hall practice of shouting out "Bravo Killer" and a number for the headcount that began to give me a clue.

Personal morality is often mixed up with patriotism when it comes to war. There is the enemy who has the same task as you. There are rules of engagement that dictate actions according to circumstances. A military-age male in a so-called free-fire zone is subject to death. An old man in a rice paddy miles away from any designated killing area ought not to be. Personal morality smacked me in the face the first time a pilot next to me in the scout chopper took potshots at civilians on the ground while we were in route back to base after a day's operation. Given he was my platoon commander, a captain, and older than me, there was no comment from this kid. It didn't feel right, but I didn't say a thing. It was before I learned about moral injury. There were other things as well that gave me a sense of the mean-spiritedness.

A day of reckoning arrived on April 8, 1969. The Captain's low observation combat helicopter (LOCH) took enemy fire, became engulfed in flame from a severed fuel line, and crashed landed. I was in the wing ship, which immediately came in to pick up the downed crew. The pilot was burned, his observer physically unharmed. Together, we got the Captain into my LOCH, returning to base where the pilot received emergency services before being sent to Japan.

On April 22, the unit command conducted a memorial service. The

burns were fatal, the pilot was another statistic, a name to be etched in black stone.

I had dark thoughts that day. Did one bad turn deserve another? I thought I knew what had been in this person's heart. Was the immorality of this conflict revealing itself to me?

I buried it, easy to do in the day-to-day routine, moving on, counting the days, thoughts of life back in "the world." And the thoughts remained buried upon return in September of 1969. For me, it was out of the uniform, active duty in the rearview mirror, with life as a civilian no longer on hold. Or so I thought.

Sometime later, within a few months, I received a letter that was addressed to my unit in Vietnam. It had been forwarded to my civilian residence. The postmark was within easy driving distance of my home. The contents were a surprise - I was shocked. The dark thoughts resurfaced. The parents of the pilot were reaching out. They had received a letter from the replacement scout platoon CO detailing my role in their son's death. They used the word "our" with his first name. They assumed we were buddies expressing gratitude for my actions; they wrote words of grief. They wanted to remain in contact. The painfully beautiful cursive said so: ". . . knowing you were such a good friend of our. . . always know you and keep in touch. . . do hope sometime you will come and visit us in . . ." I tried to bury it again.

It didn't work. They were persistent, these parents. Their emotional wounds were raw. They just wanted to fill in some blanks; they wrote of a wife and a nineteen-month-old who would want to know someday. Survivors desperately hold on to memories; to grieve is to remember. He was their hero. There were medals awarded posthumously. The memory was to be honored and I was part of the memory, like it or not.

As a youth of twenty-one, I cared little for war memories or grief. I still had a bitter taste in my mouth from what I had seen and knew. I turned my

back and this time the dark thoughts stayed buried until they weren't. They resurrected with some guilt. I have since come to better understand grief and the need for closure by those left behind. I realize from the heartfelt words in those two letters saved for 50 years that I could have been there in their time of suffering. Had I been wiser, more mature, I could have found a way to be comforting without being revealing. If I'd been able to set my own feelings aside during that period of parental pain, the deeply personal

heart-wrenching experience of losing a child, then perhaps some goodness realized.

No longer oblivious to the carnage I know the thoughts of guilt.



TOM GERY SERVED IN THE US ARMY FROM JANUARY 1968 TO SEPTEMBER 1969 WITH A TOUR OF DUTY IN VIETNAM '68-'69. HE IS A RETIRED SOCIAL WORKER, MARRIED WITH TWO ADULT CHILDREN AND TWO GRANDCHILDREN.

 **McFarland**



THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SERVICE:
COLLECTED
POEMS

W. D. Ehrhart

\$35 SOFTCOVER (6 x 9) ISBN 978-1-4766-7853-5

Fifty-five years in the writing, these are the collected poems of W.D. Ehrhart, one of the major figures in Vietnam War literature. Arranged chronologically, it allows readers to trace the development of a writer whose talents are bound together by the lingering physical, psychological, political and intellectual sensibilities the author first developed as a young enlisted Marine during the Vietnam War. And while many of the poems deal with the author's encounter with the Vietnam War and its endless consequences, the poems range widely in content from family and friends to nature and the environment to the blessings and absurdities of the human condition.

McFarlandPub.com

On Campus After the War

DAN NEW

Two years have passed since I flew home from the war. Some days it feels like I'm not home yet. Today is one of those days. First, I drove past the flashing red lights of a school bus; I was doing sixty, late for class. I don't know where my mind is. The cop was spitting mad when he pulled me over. A crumpled citation lies on the passenger seat of my VW bug.

Then, a professor lectures some crap that just pisses me off. I'm always pissed off. I want to argue with him but I start to head to my next class. A young student hands me a flier. I glance at it. It bears an image of a woman in anguish kneeling over the body of her dead friend. I try to blink it back and blot it out. I've seen enough dead friends to last my lifetime. It advertises the anti-war protest that begins in a few minutes.

"What am I supposed to do, join them?" I mumble out loud to no one as I stand in the corridor between classes. I start up the stairs to the second floor for my next class. Students pour down the stairway. I continue my climb, dodging and ducking their bodies as they rush to the doors. I intentionally

bump a few to slow them down. They head out in droves to the protest. I am frustrated by it. I reach the landing between floors then a corner where I am out of the stampede's way. Settling there as a steady stream of kids escapes from classes out to the excitement.

"Dan, are you coming with us?" I can't manage anything verbal and only shake my head.

My hands are trembling, my palms moist from a rage of conflict rising in me. When I came home, they warned me not to wear my uniform because some might spit or throw blood on me. I've been hiding since then, trying to fit in someplace but not knowing where. Now, they are asking me to join against those soldiers that I have loved and left behind.

"Come on, it's important. You can afford to miss a class for a change." I don't move. The crowd forms outside. This gathering is a chance to be part of it all here at home. I have already been part of it all and know how delusional it can be if you don't know the truth.

Seeing people die and know they continue to die without reason, feeling the shame of knowing and of feeling

responsible and of having born the blame. I carry this secretly in a dark cavity within me.

I think of those who I will never see or gather with again. Bound so tightly with them and that is not breakable. Notable to bear connecting with any group only to risk losing them all again. This invite to the protest is only for these moments and will fade as quickly as the minutes pass. My heart seared by a branding iron of camaraderie, born in fierce battle. It still festers like a scar imprinted on my soul. It is so much truer for me to stand down today.

The stairway empties. Another veteran pushes through the doors from the second floor and descends the half flight of stairs. We have spoken a few times. We are both a few years older than the other students. "Are you going out there?"

"I don't think so."

"They're just protesting. We're students now, we survived. What difference does it make?"

"We both know, it's just a game for most of these kids, teasing the cops, dodging the draft, beating the

system. For me to stand with them is self-deception. They know I was there, and I would be turning my back on those still there."

He doesn't reply. It's complicated, there are no easy answers.

The tower bell chimes at the center of the college square. He walks out through the doors to join with them and I remain where I am, still not home yet.

Protests reached into the millions that day. Still, I could never forget my love for the men that had served with me, knowing their faces and their hearts, their fear, and their courage.

For me, it was not a question of principle but one of loyalty to my brothers in arms. This then lives in my soul to this day. I have forgotten those that flew past me in the staircase all those years ago, the faces of those who served with me remain close in my heart.



DAN NEW IS A VIETNAM VETERAN WHO SERVED IN THE US ARMY FROM APRIL 1967 TO APRIL 1968.

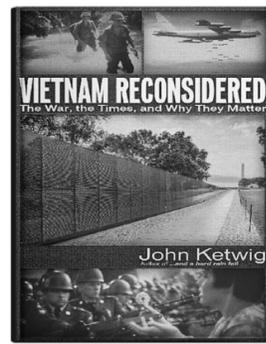


Dewey Canyon IV, May 12, 1982, Washington, DC.

34 years and 27 Printings Later, John Ketwig is at it Again!

From the acclaimed author of *...and a hard rain fell*, announcing:

Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter



"A thoughtful, timely, and beautifully written book that every American should read if we are to ever learn from the disaster of Vietnam." Ron Kovic, author of *Born on the Fourth of July*

"Reading this book, I got angry all over again. The only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. Even those who fought in Vietnam will learn much." Bobby Muller, founder of Vietnam Veterans of America and cofounder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Available now from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or your favorite bookstore.

"Dear John"

STEVEN CURTIS

Almost as feared as the enemy bullet was the "Dear John" letter. I took this photo of a buddy the night he got one. I don't remember what his real name was—he was always talking about his girlfriend Rose so we always called him Rosie—but it doesn't matter: it could have been almost any of us at one time or another. Hardly a week went by without somebody getting one.

Mail call was often referred to as the "Dear John" roundup. They were almost always the same story. A guy would get a letter from his girl informing him that she didn't want to hurt him but she'd met someone else and, from now on, she just wanted to be friends or even worse, no longer wanted to stay in touch. Since they hadn't seen each other in over six months, how could he expect her to be faithful for an entire year? After coming to terms with the one I got, I began to counsel others who got them by telling them to look at it as a blessing in disguise: any woman who didn't have enough strength of

character to stand by her man in his time of need wasn't worth going back to anyway.

I remember one sergeant—a hardened one at that—who attempted to "off" himself right in front of us after getting a "Dear John" from his wife. We heard him cussing as he read the letter but that wasn't unusual—everybody was always cussing about something. Only after he placed his M-16 on the deck while sitting on the edge of his bunk with the flash suppressor directly under his chin did we realize something was seriously wrong. The rest of us ran over and pulled his rifle away at the last moment. They sent him off to sickbay and from there to "somewhere else." I just assumed that would be the last we saw of him but damn if they didn't send him right back to our unit a week later. He was terribly embarrassed as well as moody and unpredictable from that point on. It was tough for the rest of us, too. We didn't know what to say when we were around him. How

stable was he? To what degree could he be counted on?

The most unusual "Dear John" I ever saw came in a box to my buddy Seth. Seth was a typical California boy: a blond-hair blue-eyed surfer who was always doing push-ups and sit-ups and he had a body that reflected his dedication. He was always writing letters to influential people. In response to a letter he wrote to his state senator, he received a California state flag that Seth displayed proudly above his rack.

He wrote a letter to the editor of *Playboy*, highly critical of the war and even signed his name. Lots of bets were placed on how much trouble he would get into but nothing ever came of it. One day, he received a package from his wife. He had become very concerned after learning she was keeping company with a guy she recently met in college. He was so excited at the thought of what might be in there; he hoped she wanted to make up and was hoping it was cookies



or something very special. When he opened it up, he found a roll of toilet paper with the longest "Dear John" written on it that anybody had seen. Why she had to be so vicious and cruel, I can't say. I guess she thought it would break his heart, that it would make him cry. Well, it did.



STEVEN CURTIS WAS A MARINE CORPS PHOTOGRAPHER FROM '68-'70. MORE PHOTOS, STORIES AND HIS BOOK CAN BE SEEN AT WWW.THEVIETNAMIREMEMBER.COM

VVAW and Friends

NICK WERLE

I had joined the Air Force in 1964 at 17. I didn't know a thing about Vietnam. I was stationed on Guam, where we helped launch B-52s every day to bomb targets in Vietnam. I ended my tour in Denver, CO as an instructor. We hung out at the USO and didn't see any antagonism towards vets. When I got out of the service in 1968 I still didn't know much about Vietnam and didn't care about the issue.

I went to work and then started college using the GI bill. Joe Derry was a college classmate and fellow AF veteran who wrote articles for the college newspaper trying to get people off their asses. Joe was divorced and paying child support.

I saw Bobby Kennedy talk about the war on local TV. When I saw that VVAW members were arrested for trying to join a Veterans day parade, I got off the couch and showed up to support fellow GIs, not to be part of the anti-war movement per se. After the bad press of the previous arrests, the powers that be allowed our VVAW group to march as a unit in the Memorial Day parade. Down Broadway in Denver we marched, a rag tag group. As we passed the

reviewing stand, we executed a flank left march and turned our backs on the reviewing stand and assembled in a prayer circle on the grounds of the state Capitol with Banner flying.

As years passed we learned even more how stupid the war was. Joe was also in the local VVAW chapter and I met John Meller at a VVAW meeting. I met Gary Mundt a former intelligence officer. Gary became the VVAW regional coordinator. We were part of a crowd of 10,000 that took part in a protest march in Denver after the Kent State massacre. In 1972, we and others were delegates to the Colorado state Democrat assembly. We helped elect Gary as one of five Denver delegates to the national democrat convention. We had an FBI informant in the VVAW group; he tried to get us to commit illegal and violent acts. To our credit we did not fall for his tactics.

Since the GI bill was not enough to live on, Joe was working at a grocery store. The store was robbed and the alarm went off and cops had the store surrounded. Using his military training, Joe wrestled the shotgun away from the robbers and ran out the back door, his white smock flapping



VVAW banner flying after the Kent State march in 1970.

in the breeze. A cop didn't realize Joe was a worker and shot at Joe but hit another cop in the foot instead. Another cop saw that a cop had been shot and assumed Joe was the gunman and then he shot Joe. Joe had not even been wounded in Vietnam. He was taken to the hospital. I rushed to the hospital but he had already died. The robbers only spent a few years in prison.

Gary ended up working in Pat Schroeder's office and the war finally ended. Gary died during the AIDS epidemic.

My wife and I became friends

with John and his wife Darlene. John worked at the post office and was a union rep until his death from cancer.

I see so many parallels to the wars that have happened since and remember Joe, Gary, and John every time I hear about another GI who dies in another senseless war.



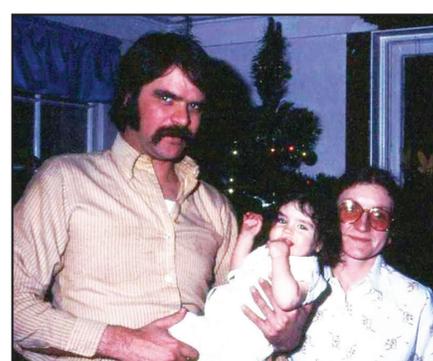
NICK WERLE IS A USAF VETERAN BORN IN 1946 IN COLORADO SPRINGS, CO. HE IS A RETIRED COMPUTER AND AEROSPACE ENGINEER. HE IS MARRIED, WITH CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.



Protest against Agnew in 1972.



Gary Mundt at the 1972 Colorado Democrat convention.



John Meller and family in 1969.



10,000 marched in Denver after Kent State.

The Backwash of War

STEVE KRUG (REVIEWER)

The Backwash of War by Ellen La Motte, intro by Cynthia Wachtell (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.)

Years ago, during the second Gulf War, I went into an auto parts place. The fellow behind the counter was complaining to another customer about the coverage of the war. "I don't think they should be showing video of bodies of children being removed from the hospital that was bombed." I asked him if he felt that it wasn't one of our bombs that did it. He replied, "Oh, no, it was our bombs that did it but it reflects poorly on our war effort." I said, "So, you'd rather be

lied to about the effects of the war so you feel better?" The look he gave me was pure hatred.

So it is and so it was when Ellen La Motte wrote of her WWI frontline nursing experiences. LaMotte pulled no punches describing the wounded soldiers and civilians, not fitting into the acceptable promoted narrative of the war. Does telling the truth "weaken our resolve" or "give aid and comfort to the enemy?" La Motte's critics certainly felt so. The book was immediately banned in England and France, and then a year later in the US, when we entered the war.

The book is in two parts, the first being written by Cynthia Wachtell, who provides a biography of La Motte

and background info of the times in which *The Backwash of War* was written. The second part is the actual book.

La Motte's brutally honest depictions are presented as short stories and quickly demolish any idea of the "nobility of war." Her new style of writing greatly influenced other writers, and indeed, helped broaden the country's idea about free speech during wartime.

La Motte had to fight her families' wishes to become a nurse, went on to pioneer heading up public health services, worked on the suffragist cause both in the States and England, and volunteered as a nurse in the war. While in France she met her partner of

47 years, Emily Chadbourne. Seeing how poverty effectively countered most public health initiatives she was also a Socialist.

Truly she was a most amazing individual. Both the introduction and the book are well-written and, still very timely, as our leaders continue to tell us what it means to be patriotic. La Motte's stories help us push back against militarism and expose the horror of war.



STEVE KRUG IS AN EQUALLY PROUD VVAW MEMBER AND A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.



Maude and Me - A Reminiscence

ANNIE LUGINBILL

The late Bill Davis called Maude DeVictor "the bravest woman I've ever known," and he was right – but she was more than a veterans' heroine... she was my friend, and I called her Maudie-poo.

Maudie would come to our house parties on the North Side of Chicago and I'd drive her back to the South Side afterward, getting an education about who lived in her neighborhood, who had the best holiday lights, and what streets had the ugliest houses. She was never shy about letting me know what was on her mind and what or who had annoyed or pleased her at the moment, and more than once I learned more than I expected.

When Wacky Jack McCloskey made one of his "Mommy Annie, I need to come to Chicago" trips, Maudie had come to our house to visit, and the two of us watched in stupefied horror as Jack backed into our dining room sideboard and dislodged Joel's ship-in-a-bottle from its shelf to crash on the floor next to him. Jack, of course, was completely unaware of anything until the glass broke; Maudie

and I looked at each other, rolled our eyes, and cleaned up the mess.

Maudie enjoyed visiting our home, despite its dog hair, because I'm obsessively tidy and her the exact opposite; I once offered to clean her house so she could tell the neighbors that she was the only person in the 'hood who had a white cleaning lady.

Maudie introduced me to *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* and we had a great discussion about the book – and the fact that Maudie's story was NOT on page 40 as someone had told her.

I held a surprise 50th birthday party for my husband in retaliation for him doing that for my 45th, and Maudie showed up with an unexpected surprise – she'd gone to an adult book store and purchased such items as edible underwear, chocolate body paint, whipped body cream, and other such erotica. She got a good laugh from Joel's ears turning red.

My last conversation with Maudie was in late February 2018. Despite her health problems, she maintained an active interest in peace



Maude during a voter registration event in 2014.

and justice issues, and at that time she said how glad she was that the Parkland March For Our Lives kids had chosen her birthday, March 24th, as the day they were having their nationwide demonstration.

It's truly a tragic irony that "the Mother of Agent Orange" died on Mother's Day. I will miss listening to her chant "Nam Myoho Renge Kyo" and hearing her say "Baby, baby, baby

– have I got something to tell you!" but I am grateful that we were friends and humbled by her legacy. Thank you, Maudie-poo, from the bottom of my heart.



ANNIE LUGINBILL WAS A KEY MEMBER OF THE CHICAGO CHAPTER OF VVAW FOR MANY YEARS.



Maude's altar memorial.



Maude at Chicago Veteran's Day Event, November 11, 2001.

Recollections of Maude DeVictor

BARRY ROMO

In March of 1978, a whole bunch of us in VVAW were living on the South Side of Chicago. We called it the "Barracks," a whole house that we rented. Bill Shunas came over and said, "You've got to watch Channel 2 this evening, this is earthshaking - this is the next movement." CBS in Chicago was airing a multi-part series by reporter Bill Kurtis called "Agent Orange: Vietnam's Deadly Fog." We watched it that night and saw Maude for the first time. We said "oh my goodness" and called other people up to let them know about it. We contacted Maude. She was amiable to us.

We had been bringing up Agent Orange since at least 1971. We knew it was causing birth defects in pregnant Vietnamese women. It was in tons of our literature. We believed the Vietnamese, Canadian, and Polish doctors who said it was causing birth defects in Vietnam. But none of us knew that we were dying from it.

Maude was the first one that let us know veterans of the US war on Vietnam were dying from Agent Orange. The CBS special told how Maude helped a veteran who ended up dying from Agent Orange. She was a VA worker, a clerk, who was not a person with any authority. She was a 1950's Navy vet. And so we thought we've got to call a meeting to distribute this, a national meeting, and put it out all over. We called local chapters and said, "you should contact people locally." I was working at the Post Office then, and one of the unions that I belonged to was a largely African American union. They had an office on the South Side. A guy, Charlie Thomas, was president then. I worked for them, as well because I believed in one union. I was also a member of the Clerk's union as a member and a steward in the Mail Handler's Union, as well.

And so, we asked Charlie if we could use his union hall. It was near 79th, the east side of the expressway. Then we ended up bringing together people from California, Texas, and Wisconsin and local people and people from the East Coast, as well. We called the event the Winter Soldier Investigation of Agent Orange.

When we first called Maude, she responded great. She was a leftist activist. She acted really positively to us and broadening it out, not just being something on Channel Two. She spoke at the event, and other people did as well. Some who would go on to set up their own groups. Some actual charlatans who would claim that "oh, we can clean you" ... I mean real charlatans who would play into the pain of families with husbands and with kids that were deformed with problems and husbands dying

of cancer. They would claim to have magic elixirs and stuff.

In 1985, Maude lost her job at the VA. Basically, what happened was that her male boss and supervisor called her into the office. One was in front of her and one was behind her. And so she had a rape reaction to being surrounded by males with tension and stuff. I think they knew what they were doing. You don't surround an employee and then complain that she shouldn't be working on Agent Orange. And so, they didn't give her an award. They fired her for helping Vietnam Vets that were dying from Agent Orange.

We would go at lunch-time and picket the VA, with her union, calling on CBS to back her, because she got fired. They never did. She literally became a hero. When they fired her, she had no money and a family. But they could no longer tie her down. She would go to places across the country. I remember one particular thing when someone died in New York, who was not a VVAW person but a big person in the movement for testing and treating Agent Orange. We were suing with Victor Yannacone, our lawyer, the six biggest chemical companies. They literally went to the funeral and took pictures of people's license plates. Not like the FBI. The FBI would probably sneak around, even with the Mafia. The chemical companies did that openly and brazenly. They tried to combine fear with people's sorrows.

The lawsuit came a couple of years later, by the mid-80s. It was in federal court. There were thousands and thousands of people. The first one was in Brooklyn or New York. The next one was in Chicago. We were down there, my daughter and I. I have a picture of us picketing and demanding that the children had to be involved. In the judge's settlement, the children weren't included. We were demanding like a billion dollars. It was like \$160 million, which wouldn't even have covered anything, even the vets themselves. The judge, you know, of course, knows better than anybody else. He thought he was being a good guy by giving the largest settlement, eventually.

A side thing; the guy from the anti-abortion group - Randall Terry from Operation Rescue - would show up at the Agent Orange events. He used to dress almost like a vampire. He had on a suit, but on top of the suit, he had a giant cape, a white cape. They were there at the events to demand that people with Agent Orange not have abortions. Here were kids, like Sukie's and Jim's kids there, going "I'm not going to live to be 16". Thank god they did live. But every doctor told them they were going to be dead. The



Maude at Chicago Veteran's Day Event, November 11, 2001.

Operation Rescue people absolutely just used it to get coverage.

So after the settlement, Maude still worked with VVAW a lot. She spoke at a lot of events. But, most importantly, Harold Washington had got elected as the first black mayor of Chicago. VVAW was the main part of Vets for Washington. This was an example of progressive people coming together to elect a progressive mayor. So, when Harold got elected, he appointed Maude as the head of the Vets Human Rights Commission. We thought Harold was going to live forever, but of course, he didn't. But he lasted for five years.

The night before Harold died, he had a giant drink-a-thon at City Hall. I was there, I missed work at the Post Office. He announced a jobs program for vets. It guaranteed bonus points for being a Vietnam Vet to get hired. It included free training at the Junior College system if you didn't do good enough to get hired. So, they could hire vets as police and fireman. I'm pretty sure VVAW member Dave Curry and Maude wrote it.

No other place in the country had free things to help you improve your score if you couldn't get hired. It was also a minority hiring program. Why, because people who were Daley's, none of them went to Vietnam, especially if they were tied in with the Machine. Black and Brown people in the city were drafted in higher percentages.

At some point, after Harold died, Maude went down to Nicaragua, during the Contra Wars, to side with the Sandinistas against the Contras. She went down there to do solidarity work. She contributed in a meaningful way to physically opposing the Contra policies in Central America. She went to Bluefields, on the Caribbean coast. It was in the African American part of Nicaragua. She went down there and

met the Sandinista Blacks. They were a Christian sect. Back in the day, they were English speakers and had to set up their own schools, under Somoza. She ended up bringing a Black Sandinista leader to Chicago for a visit. She brought him over and we talked. He was a great guy, a nice guy. That was the first time he had fried chicken. We got it from Harold's, goddammit. And he loved it.

In 1992, VVAW had its 25th Anniversary in New York. So, VVAW from Milwaukee and Chicago and some other places rented enough seats on the train to fill up a car. We were riding together, talking about old times; John, Annie, Maude, me, Bill Branson, Bill Davis, Bill Shunas, and others. We literally drank the bar car dry. So we're telling stories - drinking, smoking, doing all kinds of things all the way to New York. We rented the rooms for her because she didn't have the money. We partied down every day. There were people that were VVAW people and in the Gay Vets Alliance who worked in the Twin Towers. That's where we slept and had some meetings. Because we were a vets group and had people working there, they gave us a place with free fresh fruit, great sandwiches, and any alcohol we wanted. We could see the Statue of Liberty out of the windows.

We loved her. She was a woman activist, Black activist, vet activist, and an international activist as well. I wish we would have got her to Vietnam, but she might not have made it due to her health.

Maude was a woman who will never get the attention and praise that she deserves, for what she accomplished. VVAW will miss her. I will miss her.



BARRY ROMO LIVES IN CHICAGO AND HAS BEEN A LEADER IN VVAW SINCE 1971.



Winter Soldier Investigation of Agent Orange, Chicago, 1979.

Maude DeVictor, R.I.P.

ANN BAILEY AS TOLD TO JOHN ZUTZ

Maude was a Buddhist, which flavored every conversation. I had the best time with her traveling to New York for VVAW's 25th anniversary. She spent the whole trip talking to people in the bar car.

In 1980, VVAW was holding an Agent Orange protest outside the VA Regional Office in downtown Milwaukee. Maude came to participate. The protesters weren't getting the response they wanted and marched into the office and into the Director's office. The Administrator didn't want to deal with a bunch of pissed off vets

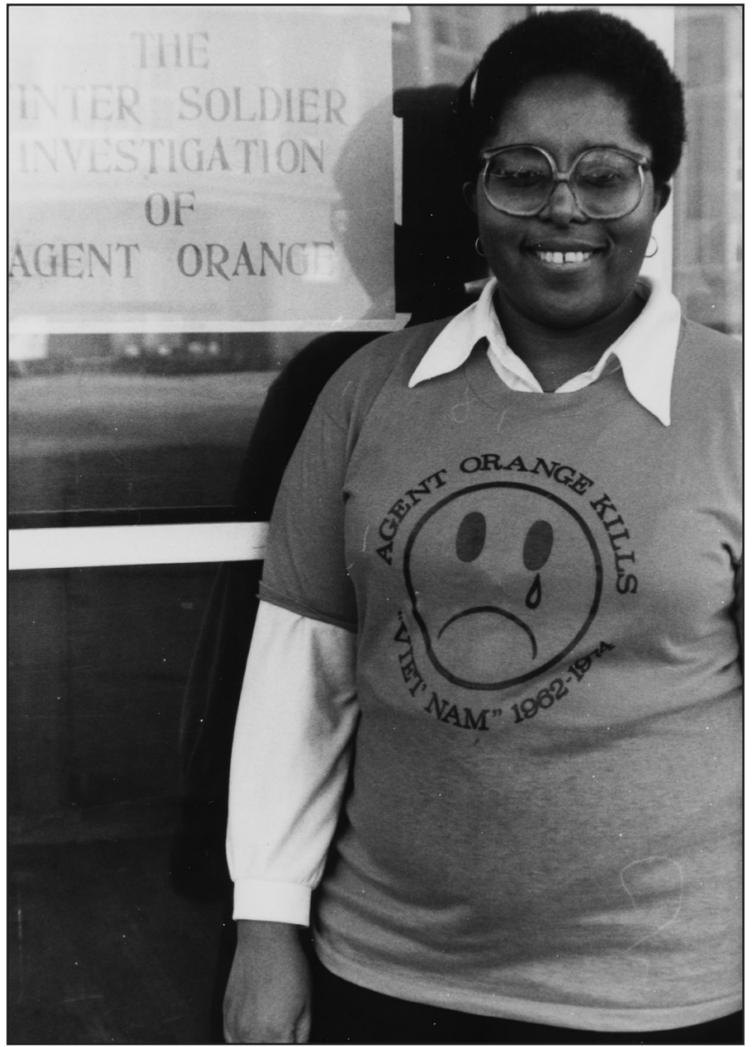
so he fled. VVAW leader Walter Klim came up with some big nails and nailed the office door shut.

Then Walter called Bailey, who had just gotten a job with the city election commission, and asked her to contact a friendly lawyer, Jim Wood. The lawyer arrived and convinced the feds to let the vets go without charges.

JOHN ZUTZ AND ANN BAILEY ARE LONG-TIME MEMBERS OF MILWAUKEE VVAW.



Maude at an Agent Orange Demo in Milwaukee.



Winter Soldier Investigation of Agent Orange, Chicago, 1979.



Winter Soldier Investigation of Agent Orange, Chicago, 1979.



Winter Soldier Investigation of Agent Orange, Chicago, 1979.

James Duffy Remembered

EDWARD DAMATO

James (Jim) Duffy, longtime VVAW member, activist, and a staunch advocate for the Vietnamese people died on April 7, 2019. To many of us, Jim was a steadfast presence during the anti-war years of the early 1970s in New York City. He was a member of VVAW, testifying at the Winter Soldier Investigation (WSI) held in Detroit in 1971. From 1970 to 1975, he was a mainstay at the US Committee to Aid the NLF of South Vietnam and the Indochina Solidarity Committee.

Born on October 7, 1947, he was raised in the Bronx, New York. Fresh out of high school he enlisted in the US Army on July 15, 1965. Trained as a communications specialist he was sent to Vietnam and, naturally, he was given a job as an M-60 machine gunner on a Chinook helicopter with Company A, 228 Aviation Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Division from February 1967 to April 1968. On one raid in April of 1967, they sprayed Agent Orange to defoliate a jungle path. Years later he told his good friend Mike Stout that within a week of that drop his "body started shaking like a leaf, skin was burning all over... and felt like my insides were on fire." Twice his helicopter went down. He was honorably discharged on April 23, 1968. He sustained numerous injuries

that plagued him later in life.

At the WSI in 1971, he told of indiscriminate strafing of civilians in their homes and fields and noted how this was commonplace. He even told of using the rotor wash for fun to scatter harvested loads of rice. One incident gave Jim pause. As they were lifting, the rotor wash blew a boy of about twelve into the path of a 2 1/2 truck, killing the boy instantly. In Detroit, Jim said that their initial reaction was complacency, laughing about it. Then he thought, "No, you can't do that because you develop a shell... They brainwash you. They take all the humanness out of you and you develop this crust which enables you to survive in Vietnam."

In civilian life, he became active in anti-war, pro-worker's rights groups and remained so until he moved upstate, near Albany. In 1992, the VA finally allowed that his ailments were the result of Agent Orange poisoning. According to Stout: "His pancreas was atrophied, his bile ducts all messed up and the cancer had spread through his liver, heart, and bones. His pain over the last decade was tremendous." He died in the hospital awaiting another liver operation. Stout said this about Jim, "his leadership, courage,



Jim Duffy testifying at Winter Soldier Investigation hearing in Detroit, MI, February 1971.

activism, and transformation should be in the textbooks for every soldier who served."

Jim was survived by his three children, Julia Duffy with his first wife Farrell Levy, and Sean and Christopher Duffy with Nora Baynes, his second wife, who was at his side when he died. His ashes were scattered in the Adirondack Mountains.

In Hamlet, Lord Polonius gives this advice to his son Laertes who is going off to war:

Those friends thou hast, and their

adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with
hoops of steel.

Rest assured dear Jim, you are forever chained to our hearts and souls.

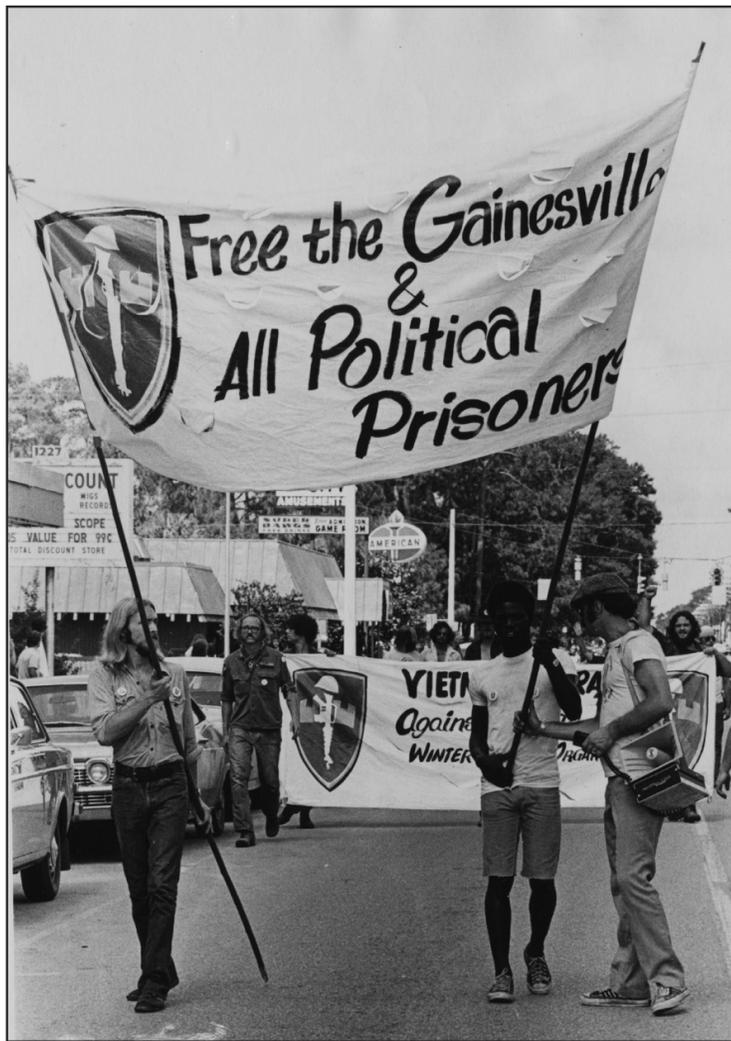


EDWARD DAMATO WAS VVAW NEW YORK STATE COORDINATOR FROM 1971-1973 AND THEN A NATIONAL COORDINATOR FROM 1973-1979. HE CURRENTLY IS ENJOYING RETIRED LIFE.

An Ode to Survival

The dust settled
the blades tied down
The blood cleaned,
reality hits
Too hard to comprehend,
light it up, escape
Jimi, Cream, Janis
Loss of belief in God, never there
fade away in nods,
until reality hits again
Repeat the cycle, over and over
no end to the nightmares,
only to be kind comes back
the faith is restored,
for a moment as living in a gifted world,
No tomorrow, just now!

—Knut Niehoff



August 1973 Gainesville 8 demonstration.

Larsen J. "Lars" Prip: Presente

STANLEY CAMPBELL

Our friend, Larsen J. Prip, and a friend of peace and justice and a Vietnam marine veteran, died on July 28, 2019. If you ever walked the length of Madison, Wisconsin's large farmers' market almost any Saturday morning, you would see "Lars" with a Veterans for Peace vest and a large homemade sign extolling the virtues of anti-war activism. Lars, to his friends (and he had many in the movement), was a constant demonstrator.

I first met Lars on the streets of Madison and then through Vets for Peace activities in Janesville, Wisconsin. He was a longtime member of the Veterans for Peace group and stood with the Vets in Madison Capitol when they were arrested for protesting the then Governor Walker.

On July 18, he announced through Facebook that he had pancreatic cancer, relaying the diagnosis from the VA Hospital, Madison. Two weeks later he was gone.

Lars became a good friend and encouraged some of my veteran acquaintances to participate in his

activities, including a visit to Beloit College to protest the appearance of Eric Prince, owner of Blackwater. Lars came appropriately dressed and encouraged us to wear our "colors." There were probably 200 angry students who kept the speaker from speaking. Rumor had it that Erik hid in the bathroom and snuck out the back door! I had Lars speak to our local Unitarian Church, which allows us to celebrate Memorial Day Sunday as a Veterans Peace memorial service. He was short and concise and to the point.

At his funeral, the twenty members of his family were overwhelmed by the over 100 peace activists who showed up to pay their last respects. I met people who told of his standing with the Native Americans against the pipelines in North Dakota at Standing Rock.

Lars was born on October 8, 1947, in Holbaek, Denmark. His parents immigrated to Grayslake, Illinois, and he and his twin brother enlisted in the US Marine Corps in June 1967. His brother died in



Larsen Prip, Scott Garwick, and Stanley Campbell at Beloit College after helping stop the Blackwater speaker.

Vietnam, while Lars served two years in Vietnam, then spent time guarding the embassy in Saigon, and then served in Iran as an embassy guard. Lars got out in 1971 and he married Patricia "Patty" Hamilton in 1972 in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. He was an engineer and began to work on peace and justice issues, especially after the invasion of Iraq. Lars had a great sense of humor and used it to try and convince people about the evils of war.

We've lost a good activist and a great friend, someone who could

weather the insults from pro-war hawks with grace and dignity.



STANLEY CAMPBELL IS A VIETNAM VETERAN WHO TURNED AGAINST THE WAR WHILE IN VIETNAM, CAME HOME AND PROTESTED WITH VVAW, THEN FOUND EMPLOYMENT WITH ROCKFORD IL UNITED METHODISTS WHERE HE CONTINUES TO WORK ON PEACE AND JUSTICE ISSUES.

My Junior Year Abroad in Vietnam and What I Learned

BILL THOMPSON

Fifty years ago, I returned from the "Republic of South Vietnam" after a year in the United States Navy. I left home in Mississippi a naïve all-American southern boy and returned older, stronger perhaps, even a man, but much more enlightened. In short, it was the most educational year of my life.

I ended up in Vietnam via the back door, not the front door. As a freshman in junior college trying to do all those things that college freshmen do, I ended up quitting school during my second semester. The Registrar considered it her obligation to let the draft board know that a dropout was no longer entitled to a college deferment and was rumored to immediately call the local head of the Selective Service while you were submitting withdrawal paperwork. Thus, I joined the Naval Reserve before visiting her office.

After boot camp at Great Lakes, I re-enrolled in college. For the next three semesters, I attended my college classes along with reserve drills, which included classes on seamanship and other esoteric Navy subjects like knot-tying. My two-week Christmas break from school was spent on a destroyer in Charleston harbor in floating drydock. My only time on a ship was mainly spent painting. I still hate painting.

In the Spring of 1968, about a dozen of us received orders for active duty. I requested deferment until I completed college but that was ignored or denied. Most in our group were sent to Charleston, SC for assignment to the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. Two of us were sent to Long Beach, CA, not Long Beach, MI.

The morning after a long flight I woke to the sound of Marines outside the barracks chanting the cadence, "go fight, kill, kill the Cong, kill the Cong!" Oh, shit! Where am I, what is happening? My orders were to Survival School in Norfolk, Virginia. Apparently, I was not going to a ship: no Hawaii, no fun in the sun with the Pacific Fleet. Survival School, or Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape (SERE), was for sailors in a war zone.

We had classes for several weeks accompanied by lots of PT. It was an accelerated or refresher boot camp and then some. Our final week we

were sent to live off the land in the "jungles" of Virginia at Camp A.P.Hill. We were permitted to take one pack of cigarettes and two candy bars, but no other food, provisions, or weapons. We were armed only with the totally inadequate knowledge imparted in the classroom. For a week, we were deprived of sleep and nourishment and sent on forced marches day and night at the direction of "friendly natives" under constant harassment from the "enemy." Both roles were too willingly played by Seals, Marines and/or other special ops forces. These were our instructors who we had specific orders "not to strike no matter what they did to us."

The week ended with our capture and imprisonment in a "mock" prison camp. I could write a book on that last 24 hours, but I will just say that the persons who committed the torture and other atrocities at the infamous Abu Graib prison in Iraq used the same playbook right down to waterboarding that our instructors used during this "training exercise." After our rescue, I was served ham and egg C-rations, which was a wonderful meal.

Upon our arrival at NAS DaNang, we were issued green fatigues to replace our dungarees. Everyone wore the same uniforms "so the snipers could not pick out the officers" although "Camp Tensha is the safest place in all of Vietnam," said the instructor in our brief orientation class. "We did not take any fire during the entire Tet Offensive." Several weeks later, we took fire with casualties.

Initially, I was assigned to the base Master-at-Arms where I stood guard duty at night and did janitorial work and head duty in a Seabee's barracks during the day. Not particularly enamored with this duty, I requested a transfer to a friend's riverboat. If I had to be here, I wanted to do my part and fight. My friend's boat was hit by rocket fire in the DaNang harbor before my transfer came through. He, fortunately, was thrown clear and made it out alive. Since I had two years of college, I requested a transfer to the supply division.

My transfer to supply came through, but it was supply at NSAD Chu Lai, further out in the boonies.

Crap! Chu Lai was a relatively secure duty station. We had about 800 sailors on a small peninsula jutting out into the ocean, surrounded by the HQ for 50,000 members of Americal Division, along with both Marine and Air Force bases. I worked 10 to 12-hour shifts in a warehouse issuing supplies to just about every unit stationed in the area. The inside joke was "even the VC's supplies came across our boat ramps." Indeed, the whole economy of the area was dependent on the US military presence.

Notably, at bases in both DaNang and Chu Lai, there were many young Vietnamese men my age who were employed as civilians making pretty good salaries, I presumed, doing many of the same tasks as our servicemen. They were hard workers but there was something wrong. What were they doing working for us instead of fighting in the South Vietnamese Army defending their country? I guess they knew someone or were the sons of important people in the South Vietnamese government.

One afternoon the Chief asked for a volunteer to work the night shift. Although I knew the adage about never volunteering, I quickly stepped forward. While a civilian working at a bank during college, I learned that the bank officers, other VIPs, and those who thought they were important did not work nights. In the military it is pretty much the same; at NSAD Chu Lai only one officer, the OOD, worked the night shift. Night duty was more laid back than the day shift.

We occasionally took rocket fire, but they rarely hit our narrow peninsula. Most rockets missed and landed in the water on one side or the other. Since most attacks were at night, our primary task during an attack was to round up the Vietnamese workers and secure them in a bunker. This served to protect them and us. Safely guarded in the bunker, a VC infiltrator in our ranks would be unable to cause any mischief during the attack.

One night at the enlisted men's club, the Skipper's yeoman let it out that Admiral Zumwalt had issued a directive permitting any sailor leaving Vietnam with less than one year remaining on his enlistment to be released on request. Seems like so

many men were joining the Navy to keep from being drafted and they had to make room for the new recruits. That directive was BUPERS Message 16.16.16Z, dated August 16, 1969. It is funny how you remember something like that after 50 years.

With less than a year to go on and orders for the USS Platte just off the coast, I jumped at the chance to sign up. Several hundred sailors lined up at the personnel office the next morning for the details. While going through the chain of command, my lifer senior chief tried his best to talk me out of it. "Sea duty will make you a man and you will learn a lot." My response was that the Navy had already taught me an "awful" lot, but I needed to go back to college. Under the directive, he had no choice but to approve my request.

As my tour was ending, rumor was that Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the enemy, had a stroke or heart attack and was near death. The South Vietnamese employees on our base in Chu Lai wore black armbands for a week, after all, he was their national hero! What were we doing there?

My junior year abroad made me a skeptic. I learned to question almost everything, especially politicians who make unproven statements to justify going to war. In the 50 years since, many other young men have been sent off to "war" by presidents of both parties claiming to protect America's rarely defined "national interests." If you can't trust the President and the government about the reasons for war, who can you trust? Today, once again, our president pushes towards war echoing that familiar refrain.

In the Constitution, the People of the United States gave the power to declare war to Congress and only to Congress—not to the President. It is our patriotic duty as citizens to be skeptical when the president and the government try to involve us in tribal wars, civil wars, and oil wars all while claiming it is in our "national interest." The Navy taught me a lot, indeed!



BILL THOMPSON IS AN ATTORNEY. HE RECENTLY RETIRED AFTER OVER 40 YEARS OF PRACTICE. HE RESIDES WITH HIS WIFE IN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI.



July 4, 1974, in Washington, DC.

The Forever War

BARRY REECE

On March 19, 2003, millions of Americans turned on their TV sets and watched an impressive display of male bravado. They witnessed the first few hours of the "shock and awe" bombardment that was designed to give the US-led coalition rapid dominance in the Iraq war. "Operation Iraqi Freedom" was breaking news.

On May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush stood on the deck of the USS Abraham and boldly announced the end of combat operations in Iraq. A huge banner behind the President featured a two-word message: Mission Accomplished. The Iraq war would

last nearly nine more years and cost 4,474 American lives.

Although US troops exited Iraq on December 18, 2011, our nation continues to spend heavily on "contingency contracting." The United States has overwhelmingly born the burden of Iraq military and reconstruction costs. The defense sector remains a powerful force in politics. Over 1,000 lobbyists represent some 400 corporate clients. Massive waste, fraud, and abuse by Iraq contractors cost our nation millions of dollars each year. Dwight Eisenhower ended his presidential

term warning the nation about the increasing power of the military-industrial complex.

The long-term cost of the Iraq war must take into consideration the care of wounded veterans. At least 30,000 troops have required medical care. Many will need lifetime benefits. Health care costs for veterans are projected to increase in the years ahead.

Mark Twain said, "Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it." The US has no realistic way out of its commitments to Iraq. Despite the

sacrifices of our military personnel, we appear to have no option to the forever war.



BARRY REECE JOINED THE IOWA NATIONAL GUARD IN 1953. TWO YEARS LATER HE ENLISTED IN THE US ARMY. THROUGHOUT THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS HE HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, VETERANS FOR PEACE, AND THE PEACE MEDIA GROUP. REECE IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY.

Letter to the Wall

LE LY HAYSLIP

From the Unknown Soldier Gravesites on Route 9 Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Dear Names On The Wall, In Washington USA, I just returned from Vietnam, our Motherland, where you lost your lives. You are so much luckier than my countrymen in Vietnam. At least your names are here on these beautiful black marble walls, standing right in your capital near the White House where they made the decision for your life to send you away to Vietnam.

Since I was a young girl growing up in my village I heard the name "Dãy Núi Trường Sơn" (Annamite Mountain Range) to describe the many mountains around us. Later, when the war against you and your country broke out, Trường Sơn become something very sensitive and secretive. Our parents always looked at the mountains with sad faces and told us many ethnic groups lived in the mountains. We saw the smoke rise up after some airplanes dropped something on them.

I came to the US in 1970 and learned from the English language news that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was in the Trường Sơn Mountains, where the US carried out heavy bombing and killed hundreds of Vietnamese almost every day. They are tall mountains with deep jungle, covered with heavy vegetation and forests extending over 1,100 km in length. These mountains extend from north to south Vietnam and were used by the north to infiltrate troops and supplies into South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos during the US war in Vietnam.

For the last 32 years, I learned from people in Vietnam who traveled on foot for months from south Vietnam to the north to join the People's Army in Hanoi. Some were badly wounded and had to be carried by two men on a stretcher walking for months before reaching Hanoi for treatment. I also talked to people, like my brother, Bon Nghe, and countless cousins who left families and villages in 1954 to join Uncle Ho's army in the north. He was

only 17 years old and walked most of the way.

In 1972 Bon Nghe and our cousins walked from the north back to central Vietnam. They walked for four days, stopped for a day of rest, then continued on amidst heavy aerial bombing, mortars and artillery fire from every direction and watched human beings killed like ants. It took brother Bon and his comrades years to arrive near our home where they fought to liberate the south. On the way, they buried as many dead comrades as they could.

On March 28, 1975, they achieved their goal: Danang, Quang Nam, and all of central Vietnam were liberated. Bon shared with me many stories of bravery and horror about the Trường Sơn Mountains and Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was used by the National Liberation Front from 1959 to 1975 during heavy fighting and bombing.

After 1975 until about five years ago, Vietnam opened up tours for world visitors to come and visit old battlefields and hot spots all over Vietnam, in places like Khe Sanh, Dien Bien Phu, Hamburger Hill, Hue city, Phu Bai, etc. They widened the old Ho Chi Minh Trail into a big highway for tour buses to carry veterans from the US, France, Japan and many other countries so that veterans who fought there could return to show their families and friends the places and battlefields where they saw so many of their comrades fall. For a long time, I wanted to visit these places to capture the experiences that my brother Bon and others told me about while they walked in the Trường Sơn Mountains. Many advised me not to visit, worried that I could not take it! So, I resisted this urge until my trip to Vietnam last April when people invited me to join them on two major spiritual events that I could not resist.

The first event was to honor the memory and sacrifice of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thay Thích Quảng Đức on the 56th anniversary of his self-immolation at

a busy intersection in Saigon on June 11, 1963, to protest against the war. The ceremony was held at the famous Linh Mu Temple in Hue, and I was one of 10,000 national and international guests on that day, April 23, 2019.

After a huge ceremony and lunch for several thousand monks, nuns, and guests, by noon there were just ten monks and thirty of us. We headed to the Trường Sơn Mountains to the location of the Trường Sơn Martyrs' Cemetery on Route 9, where most of the unknown soldier gravesites are located. It is the largest military cemetery of the People's Army of Vietnam. Without knowing what I was getting myself into, I was shocked when we reached the gravesites.

While monks and disabled people were working and praying for the souls of those fallen comrades to be released from earth to heaven, I walked around to see the full expanse of this gravesite and how many graves were there, but that would have taken me days to complete.

I have visited many of the largest military cemeteries and sites of massacres in the world, including US Civil War sites such as Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia, the Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz, the Passchendaele battlefield in Flanders, Belgium, Battlefield I in Australia, just to name a few, but nothing was like the Trường Sơn National Cemetery. Not only was it so large, but the powerful spiritual force present there deeply affected me both physically and mentally in that moment. No matter which country or military cemeteries I visit, they are all victims of war.

I walked and walked, crying in the hot sun. Finally, I sat and meditated under a tree to let my soul be with the spirits in the mountains, the frost, and death. Their spirits spoke to me; I prayed for them and asked for the release of their souls. I was deep in meditation when a vision came and showed me the story of human struggle in battles and the aftermath of wars as deep as the waters in the

sea. Seemingly never-ending fighting. When forced to choose between life and death, we always choose life. A voice came. "Against all odds, we chose to be heroes and recognize our destiny to protect our Motherland by following our government's demand to make a sacrifice. That's why we are here at this lonely military gravesite on Route 9 of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. We never did make it to the south." Then I heard a song coming through the winds above, the song "Mẹ Việt Nam" which every single Vietnamese mother can relate to, including my own mother, never to see her son return.

The monks and disabled ones prayed hard in the four-hour ceremony in hopes that all the souls in these mountains be released from earth and move to a higher realm, to be with their loved ones, ancestors and their God to find peace. I joined the monks and the group praying to ask those souls to forgive and be forgiven and to move on.

There was a soldier who left home in springtime / He left his poor family and their bamboo hut and never returned / His name is now engraved in the mountain stone / Clouds cast a shadow on the yellow flowers by his grave / Clouds in late afternoon cross the blue sky / Old mother still waits for her son to come home / Old mother keeps looking at the path where her son walked / Oh Mẹ Việt Nam, Oh Motherland Vietnam / Tall mountains just like the love of our mother / The four seasons have whitened her hair / Still, she looks for her son to return / Oh Việt Nam ơi, Oh Motherland Vietnam / Fire is burning in the mountains where you fell / Red flowers bloom there / Showing the beauty of the evening sunset.



PHUNG LE LY HAYSLIP, A VIETNAMESE WRITER, MEMOIRIST AND HUMANITARIAN. THROUGH HER FOUNDATIONS, SHE HAS WORKED TO REBUILD CULTURAL BRIDGES BETWEEN VIETNAM AND AMERICA FOLLOWING THE VIETNAM WAR.



July 4, 1974, in Washington, DC.

Dragonshead

JOHN BROMER

Dragonshead
by Richard Pettus
(Black Rose Writing, 2017)

"Dragonshead," by Harold Richard Pettus, is the story of Adam, a genetically-engineered "boy of the future," who shows up as the world is on the brink of nuclear war to

enlighten mankind as to what that war will bring about. It's an interesting concept for a story. Unfortunately, the book is self-published, which means no proofreading and no editing, both of which it sorely needs. Written by a member of Mensa, (and VVAW), it is a difficult read, with lengthy, labored expositions from Adam as he speaks

down to the leaders of the world, apparently echoing the author's own thoughts. Needless to say, the world leaders are not impressed, indeed suspicious, until Adam lets matters go too far. In this reviewer's opinion, the book is overlong and hifalutin. Almost every page literally has misspelled words and grammatical errors. I forced

myself to finish it. Not recommended, at least by me.



JOHN BROMER, A VVAW MEMBER, IS A VIETNAM-ERA VETERAN. HE LIVES IN BLACK MOUNTAIN, NC, WITH HIS WIFE AND NEARBY SONS.

Reluctant Soldier, Uneasy Veteran

LARRY KERSCHNER (REVIEWER)

Reluctant Soldier, Uneasy Veteran: A Year in Vietnam and Beyond
by Mark Fleming
www.reluctantsoldier.com/purchase

Mark Fleming's book, *Reluctant Soldier, Uneasy Veteran: A Year in Vietnam and Beyond*, is a memoir of a middle-class honors college graduate who ended up in the infantry in Vietnam in 1971. This honest book can easily stand on the bookshelf with *A Rumor of War* by Phil Caputo, *The Ground You Stand Upon: Life of a Skytrooper in Vietnam* by Joshua E. Bowe, *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, and other Vietnam memoirs.

When Mark graduated from college, he knew he would likely be drafted soon. He decided to enlist in the Army for two years, hoping that his college degree would lead to a non-combat assignment. The Army had a different plan. After initial training, Mark was assigned to the infantry with orders to report to Vietnam.

He was placed with the 1st Cavalry Division, which carried out combat operations about 60 miles east of Saigon. His first combat patrol began January 12, 1971, with a helicopter ride to a landing zone (LZ). "The Huey gained altitude quickly. The ride was jarring. The aircraft shuddered under its big rotor blades; screaming turbines created a chaos that pierced my brain."

This was the beginning of his five months in the bush. His unit "crashed through the brush up and down the ridges. The terrain was challenging enough, but I was climbing with at

least 60 pounds of gear on my back, an M16 in one hand and a heavy ammo box in the other. I remember cursing each step, the mountain, the Army, the officers, the heat—fucking everything." After two months in the bush, his unit had a short R&R where he realized that his platoon mates were "the only people in the world who could understand my situation. We were all in this together."

He reflects that he could not dwell on the omnipresent danger because it would paralyze him. "Yeah, I might die any minute but that was just a fact of life then and there was very little I could do about it other than not fuck up and hope that my command didn't fuck me up either."

After five months in the field, Mark talked his way into the job of Company Clerk in the Battalion rear base. As a permanent REMF (rear echelon motherfucker), he reveled in clean clothes, hot food, and available showers. He was glad to trade the bush for "the world of Army bureaucracy. My life was not at risk, but my sanity was sorely tried by pettiness and stupidity."

In 1971, "we were at the tail end of the war, the last men asked to risk life and limb as our country withdrew troops and told the American public that the war was over." 2,357 Americans died in Vietnam in 1971, far less than the 16,592 who died in 1968, but that was still 200 needless deaths each month.

Drug use was common among the troops in 1971. "Smoking pot was definitely about stealing from the Army. I was angry about the

whole goddamn war, about me being part of it, about the aggression that was now part of my life. Whatever time I could withhold from the Army was that much less of me that was part of the war." Smoking marijuana and the increasing heroin use were a small part of the overall erosion of morale and growing resistance to the war among the soldiers. In August of that year, President Nixon decided to begin his War on Drugs in Vietnam. As Company Clerk, Mark was in a position to appoint an enlisted member of the Battalion drug control council. "I perversely chose one of the biggest heroin addicts in the company for that role." The council never met.

On the whole, Mark had a negative view of the command higher-ups. "In a war with meaning, officers and enlisted ranks share a sense of purpose. America's war in Vietnam held no meaning for me beyond my own country's ignorance, hubris and stupidity."

On January 3, 1972, back in the states, Mark mustered out of the Army. Planning for graduate school and hiking by himself in Virginia's mountains filled his time those first months back. "I did not forget about Vietnam, but as long as I stayed focused on my present, Vietnam was simply a part of the background of my life. ...The one aspect of the experience that remained was the sense that I was different from all the other people around me who had not gone to war."

"Being exposed to combat left me with a life-long wariness. Even now my brain often interprets simple, benign events as life-threatening

possibilities...That was a loss of innocence—my world had always been safe and secure—that I could not walk back after Vietnam...Learning to kill is a lesson that never goes away. Properly equipped, killing another person is very easy."

After almost 50 years, Mark still questions why he went to Vietnam. "I went because I was afraid to say 'no' to my country. I feared that refusing the draft or orders to Vietnam would forever keep me from anything like a normal life. That was not a chance I was willing to take. I was more afraid of disapproval than I was of risking my life." "All Americans were betrayed by their country in Vietnam. We grunts were simply the Americans who got the worst of it. The Vietnamese got even worse."

Mark tries to give some meaning to his Vietnam experience by speaking and writing against war and militarism. He has become an independent VA claims agent to help veterans and active duty members of the military prepare claims with the VA, especially for PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Mark ends his book with posts from his blog, *Unsolicited Opinions*, and a collection of Vietnam-related short stories and poetry. Both give further insight into his time in Vietnam.



LARRY KERSCHNER IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF BOTH VVAW AND VFP. HE IS IN THE 17TH YEAR OF A WEEKLY PEACE VIGIL INSIDE TRUMP COUNTRY. FIND LARRY ONLINE AT: WWW.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/~LARRYWRITES

Enemies to Partners

ALAN BATTEN (REVIEWER)

From Enemies to Partners, Vietnam, the US and Agent Orange
By Le Ke Son and Charles R. Bailey
(G. Anton Publishing LLC, 2017)

Agent Orange is one of the two great legacies of the Vietnam War that continues to kill or sicken Vietnamese, the other being unexploded ordnances. Between 1961 and 1970, 19.5 million gallons of Agent Orange and other herbicides were sprayed over 10,160 square miles of what was then South Vietnam. Agent Orange is essentially a mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, which are potent herbicides affecting broad-leaved plants (dicots). Neither chemical is supposed to be toxic to animals. The real danger to people comes from dioxins that are present as contaminants in 2,4,5-T.

Dioxins are one of the most potent toxins known to man, with contamination on the order of a few parts per TRILLION capable of causing severe health and reproductive problems. To meet the high demand for Agent Orange by the US military, the chemical companies developed faster ways of producing it. Unfortunately, these faster ways produced substantially more dioxin contaminants than the older, slower production methods. The chemical companies were well aware (as were high-level government officials who oversaw buying the stuff) that dioxins are extremely dangerous, but the tainted products were willingly sold by the chemical companies and willingly purchased by the military anyway.

Son and Bailey's book lays out in clear detail the history and current status of Agent Orange/dioxin in Vietnam, and what the United States and Vietnam are both, separately and together, doing about it. Their book also provides a road map for what is still needed.

Extensive testing of soils and waters in the sprayed areas in Vietnam reveal that very little dioxin remains

in those areas (levels are far below US and Vietnamese standards requiring remediation). An exception is in an area near Kon Tum. Dioxins are stable to most chemicals, but break down in the presence of sunlight. Presumably, the dioxins in the sprayed areas have been broken down by sunlight (or have been washed deep into sediments or out to sea). Soils at three former US bases (Phu Cat, Da Nang airport, and Bien Hoa), where Agent Orange was stored and handled, remain seriously contaminated with dioxins. This has been a serious issue since runoff from these areas has contaminated nearby bodies of water that local Vietnamese depend on for food. At Phu Cat, the contaminated soil has been pushed into a holding area isolated from the water table and is no longer a threat to the local population. At Da Nang airport, the US provided major funding for eliminating the dioxins in contaminated soils by heating it to the point that dioxins break down. This massive project was completed successfully in 2018, reducing dioxin levels far below environmental standards. Bien Hoa is by far the largest contaminated area. The US has committed money toward cleaning it up and preliminary work has been started. Indications are that the US will continue to support this effort through completion.

American veterans had a long, hard road getting official recognition that exposure to dioxins lead to severe health problems. Now, the Veterans Administration recognizes at least 17 diseases and conditions to be associated with exposure to Agent Orange when they occur in Vietnam veterans. Vietnam also lists 17 diseases and conditions, 14 of which are also on the US list. There is no way to know accurately how many Vietnamese (not to mention Laotians and Cambodians) were exposed to Agent Orange, but it amounted to at least several million during the war. The 2009 Vietnam census estimated that there were

6.1 million disabled Vietnamese. Approximately 10% to 15% (600,000 to 900,000) of them meet criteria associating their disabilities with exposure to Agent Orange/dioxin, either directly or indirectly through an ancestor who was exposed. The Vietnamese have institutions in place to support families of the victims, but at a minimal level and mostly in population centers. In recent years, USAID has made substantial contributions to Vietnamese agencies supporting victims, as have private charities.

The United States has never admitted responsibility for Agent Orange/dioxin contamination in Vietnam, or for the victims of that contamination. It is afraid of the potential financial and diplomatic repercussions of such an admission, and, frankly, I don't believe it wants to face the shame that such an admission would imply. However, the US does respond to humanitarian concerns, especially if it can take credit for being a good guy without having to admit that it caused the problems in the first place.

The Vietnamese have been very persistent in making it clear

that some resolution of the Agent Orange problem is necessary for relations between the two countries to improve. The Ford Foundation has been an important player, contributing critical diplomacy and seed money. American veterans organizations provided moral leadership and led the way in contributing money (drops in the bucket, but important) in support of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims. They helped publicize the issue by bringing Agent Orange victims to America to testify before Congress and speak to Americans. Senator Pat Leahy of Vermont has provided leadership in Congress and has worked tirelessly to get money appropriated to Vietnam to address war legacy issues.

This book is an excellent summary of the current state of the complex Agent Orange issue in Vietnam and contains plenty of ammunition for educating the American public and Congress about the importance of mitigating our legacy of death and destruction there.



ALAN BATTEN WAS WITH THE 34TH ENGINEERING BATTALION AT PHU LOI IN 1968-69.



A Discomforting Letter From A Comfortable Town

MARC LEVY

"Our futures are more important than ourselves." John Williams, Augustus

Once, on a good day in a bad war, as we lay in wait, four young men, unsuspecting of what lay ahead, walked into the perfect ambush, and we took no casualties. After we scavenged the bodies for souvenirs, silently, we marched away. An hour later, a colonel had eight gallons of ice cream flown out to us by chopper, and like children, we sheltered beneath the jungle canopy and devoured the rare treat, knowing the enemy could not harm us.

Most often, once a week, ammo, c-rations, and water were flown to us. Log days, we called them. Among the paperbacks the Army tossed into the red mail sack I grabbed *The Gypsies*, by Jan Yoors. The cover photograph depicted a group of boys—children really, with one youth—showing off, his arms outstretched, his face a hardening smile. In the background, a somber young man, hair rakishly swept back, stares directly into the camera. At age 12, Yoors had run away from home, joined a group of Gypsies, and for 10 years lived and traveled with them, immersing himself in their pleasures and ordeals, their secret sorrows. His once popular book details the true Gypsy way of life, and their struggles to live in a world hostile to their nomadic freedom.

For several weeks in Vietnam's scorching heat, I carried that book, found sanctuary in it, brought home this paper souvenir, the last page, smudged with Vietnam's unique red dirt, used as a diary to record our losses.

Fast forward to winter 2019. A friend from Rockport, MA, mentioned the name Jan Yoors while making small talk. I replied how I knew his book, how much it meant to me. By a remarkable coincidence, Vanya, Jan's son, was my friends next-door neighbor. He offered to introduce us.

On July 4th, at a Veterans for Peace gathering in Rockport, while a cluster of old-timers sat, ate and gabbed before heading out to march

in the town's annual parade, I sat in the cozy living room of Vanya Yoors, with his wife Christine, their two dogs, and Marianne Yoors, Jan's 93-year-old-widow, just then visiting from New York. Jan, known for his writing, photography and tapestry weavings, had two wives simultaneously, but that is a story for another time.

For a quickly passing hour, as if the terrible events were just then unfolding, Marianne, seated on a comfortable couch, recollected her war experiences in Nazi-occupied Belgium. The Germans had rounded up many of her friends, she said. Hauled them away. When her father was arrested she banged on the door of the Nazi commandant, defiantly strode into his office, and demanded to know her father's whereabouts. There was nothing to be done, said the high ranking officer. The train had departed to Auschwitz.

"I could have done more," said Marianne. For him, for all the others.

Vanya, who may have heard this story of survivor's guilt more than once, knowingly disagreed.

"You, a young Dutch girl with a Jewish father—a teenager, did all you could," he replied. "All you could do."

Jan had fought for the French resistance, said Marianne, was captured, incarcerated for months, then released, but the torture had taken its toll. Cruel scars covered his body. He was never the same. And never talked about it.

There is no inkling of torment in Jan's vibrant book on gypsies. War is the subject of his *Crossing: A Journal of Survival and Resistance in World War II*. Marianne said her husband's biography, written by a best-selling academic, lacked the gut felt sensibilities of war, its grit, suffering, and sorrow. During all this time I listened attentively, making only an occasional remark.

"You were in war?" asked Marianne.

I nodded yes. "Vietnam."

"It's in your eyes," she said. "I see this in your eyes."

As Marianne related other events

she had witnessed, her war time seeming to invade the very room in which we sat, I was impressed by her remarkable inner strength, though within her she contained much grief. Then it was my turn to tell a story. I told how one evening, 25 years ago, friends played a few minutes of a recording of Gorecki's Symphony No. 3, a work commissioned in response to the Holocaust. I was moved by it, and a few months later, while house sitting, I put on the same recording, turned off the lights, and lay back in a large comfortable chair.

By the second movement I began weeping, then sobbing, and soon felt a great unburdening, as if something deep inside me, long-held back, set itself free. When the beautiful sorrow ended, for hours on end I replayed the music and continued to weep. In college, I had written about war stress, but did not think I had it.

Perhaps Marianne might listen to this music? Perhaps, she said.

When it came time to leave Marianne wrestled herself up from the comfy sofa, stepped toward me, and proceed to clasp me in the arc of her arms. "Give me a hug," she demanded. And I did. "No. Give me a real hug," she said, and once, twice, three times, vigorously she pulled me to her.

I said goodbye to Vanya, to his wife, then off I went, to rejoin my friends, who were readying for the parade.

Under a blazing summer sun, the Fourth of July march, an annual Rockport tradition, covered one hilly mile and took two hours. Proceeding at an uneven pace, at times slow and steady, at times zipping along, six Veterans for Peace old-timers, proudly bearing VFP's black and white flags, a colorful banner, and jaunty anti-war signs, as always, brought up the rear. Ahead of us, a variety of civic and community groups, local sports teams, assorted clamoring bands and musicians, two wailing fire trucks, the occasional New England-themed float. For the entire length of the parade, along either side of the two-lane road were stately white painted

century-old New England houses—in front of them, crowds three and four deep, the lively people mostly white, and many perhaps of considerable wealth and privilege.

At every bend in the road, along each brief straightaway, the townspeople cheered us as we marched by. Long, almost joyful applause filled the humid air. Looking about, I detected an occasional look of chagrin, or reluctant knowing nod. During and after the initial years of Afghanistan and Iraq these same good people had booed and hissed as we strode by, taunted us with crude remarks, turned their angry backs upon us. For a quarter-mile I pondered who or what had changed their minds; the question, I soon realized, was irrelevant. The citizens of Rockport had woken to the truth, and that was all that mattered.

At a curve in the road, standing still, waiting for the bottleneck to clear, from my right came a sudden movement: a familiar figure ambled from the crowd, beckoned me toward her. Another immense hug. Vanya snapping the picture. Clearly, our war experience was a bond between us.

A quarter-mile later, as the sun began to set, the spirited march, once past the judges reviewing stand, came to a welcoming end. Back home in Salem, rested up, I contemplated how that afternoon, in a comfortable and pleasant sea-side town, Marianne Yoors, aged widow of a WWII veteran—had told me her tales of a dreadful time, stories that demand our attention, so that presently, we do not relive her past, but act to assure our future.

This article was first published in CounterPunch on 24 July 2019.



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

With Nixon in the Underworld

LOOK AT THAT!
THEY TRIED TO
IMPEACH ME
AND I HADN'T DONE
ANYTHING AS
BAD AS TRUMP.

YEAH...
... IT'S HELL,
AIN'T IT.



Sep 26 2019 (9392)
DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group



Talking Vietnam

JAN BARRY (REVIEWER)

Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter
by John Ketwig
(Trine Day, 2019)

Like many Vietnam vets, John Ketwig has made a public service campaign of speaking forthrightly to high school and college students. Responding in a rush before the bell rang to students' questions and concerns was often the hardest part. Consider this hesitant query from a nervous young woman: "I have two sisters," she said softly, "and both have serious birth defects. I know my father blames his service in Vietnam and something called Agent Orange, but when anyone mentions Vietnam he goes into his room and closes the door, and sometimes he won't come out for days. My question is, what is Agent Orange?"

To address such deeply emotional inquiries more fully, Ketwig wrote *Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter*. This is a long-considered sequel to Ketwig's mind-blowing war memoir, *...and a hard rain fell*, published in 1985. Challenged by students' questions, he dug deeper into the era in which he had found himself struggling to stay alive during the height of the fighting in Vietnam. Amid his professional career as an automobile service manager, side trips as an author doing speaking engagements, and his activism with Vietnam Veterans Against the War protesting US military interventions that kept popping up around the world, Ketwig read piles of books about Vietnam and the wider events of that era.

"I have been obsessed, trying to put it all together," he writes. "Trying to understand." And to share what he's learned.

"Back in the 1980s, I often

found I was speaking to young people who were living in a home where the damage, emotions, or loss of Vietnam were a traumatic everyday presence, but the parents couldn't or wouldn't talk about the war," he notes. "Gradually, my audiences became more removed from the emotions, but always curious.... They seem to sense that the history of that time is critical to understanding today's America, and the current wars in the Middle East."

In recent years, students have been directly concerned about current wars. "Far too many describe funeral services for veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan, former classmates or relatives," he writes. "Sometimes, the veteran took his own life, leaving the student bewildered."

How does a grandpop Vietnam vet respond to such anguish? Ketwig's response is woven throughout this book. He writes about friends who died in Vietnam and since, about the silent epidemic of suicide by Iraq vets from one small town in New Jersey, and about the times he tried to talk vets out of ending it all.

He provides a brief overview of how the United States got involved in continuing France's colonial war in Indochina and the deliberate misrepresentations later exposed in the Pentagon Papers. He weighs in with startling anecdotes that challenge historians' claims.

"In all the history books I've seen, the emphasis has been on the impact the Tet Offensive had upon 'the best and the brightest' in Washington, and upon Walter Cronkite and the American public," he writes. "There has been scant recognition of the impact of that enemy action upon us, the American troops in foxholes in Vietnam... Our best hope of getting home in one piece was the skill and

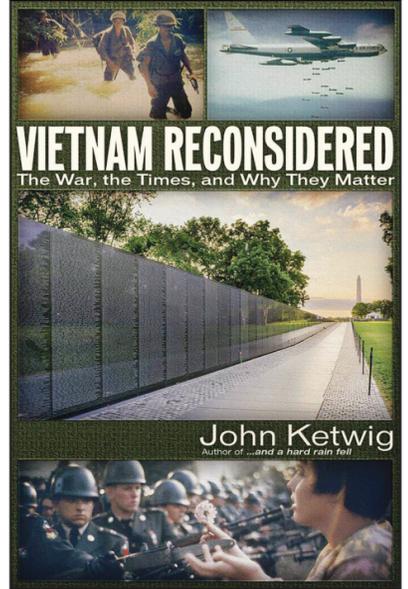
understanding of our officers, and we suddenly had to face the sobering fact that they had 'no freaking idea' what was going on... The morale of the American troops in Vietnam was the greatest casualty of the Tet offensive."

He discovered from obscure books and rare news reports that the black market he witnessed in Vietnam and Thailand was a tiny part of a vast network of corruption run by American military officers, high ranking sergeants, Vietnamese military and shady businessmen and women that sold everything from rifles to explosives to trucks stolen from US military supply shipments. That rip-off campaign, he notes, mushroomed into reports of billions of dollars lost or unaccounted for in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ketwig offers savvy commentary on the swirling demons of profiteering, PTSD and suicide, patriots vs. peaceniks, sex and soldiers, the draft and the Wall, among other topics. He presents lists of questions for students to consider and FAQs on key things such as Agent Orange. He weaves song lyrics and poetry throughout, from Bob Dylan and Joan Baez to Steve Mason, the late poet laureate of Vietnam Veterans of America, providing succinct ways of sparking talk about Vietnam and the world of hurt that mushroomed from that military madness. I'm honored to be included in the poetry pullouts and passages about VVAW.

What makes this book memorable, a gift to share with others, is Ketwig's unrelenting quest to dig deeper into what the war in Southeast Asia did to so many people, civilians and soldiers, Asians and Americans, and what to do about it.

"Please don't thank me for my service," he writes. "I was playing



in a rock 'n roll band when they came for me, reciting songs about understanding and brotherhood and love. They took me against my will, stripped me naked and beat me bloody, and they sent me to the other side of the world where death fell out of the sky and exploded, and its shards tore up anything and anybody they hit... Please oh please don't thank me. If you want to express something, promise me you will get involved in the struggle to abolish wars... Then, I will thank you."



JAN BARRY RESIGNED FROM WEST POINT AFTER A TOUR IN VIETNAM. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF *A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS*, *EARTH SONGS*, AND CO-EDITOR OF *WINNING HEARTS & MINDS: WAR POEMS BY VIETNAM VETERANS*, AMONG OTHER WORKS. A CO-FOUNDER OF VVAW, HE IS ACTIVE IN *WARRIOR WRITERS*, WHICH PROVIDE CREATIVE ARTS PROGRAMS FOR VETS OF ALL WARS.



Thank You for Your Service

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Thank You for Your Service: Collected Poems

by *W.D. Ehrhart*

(McFarland & Company, Inc., 2019)

I have known W.D. "Bill" Ehrhart for many years, and I usually refer to him as the most articulate spokesman of all Vietnam veterans. I have a number of his books, and I have listened to him read his works on a variety of occasions. In short, I knew what I was getting into when I purchased this book and agreed to review it.

What I didn't appreciate was how a collection of Bill Ehrhart's poems would affect me after all these years. The guy is a wordsmith, hammering out images that excite the imagination, that describe the familiar in riveting, illuminating style, and revealing how the memories of Vietnam still haunt him. He is concise, choosing words carefully to paint clear, illuminating images. He scolds, imagines, and laments without selfish complaint. He celebrates his wife, his daughter, and especially, his old friends from the military, the survivors and the lost. Most of all, Bill Ehrhart holds up a mirror so we can see ourselves, and he shines a bright light upon us so no blemish can go unnoticed. He has lived a colorful life rich with sadness and pain, and every poem is like a page from a secret diary. He dares to find fault, recognizing that words upon a page won't change America's thirst for blood, but he hopes they might change a few individual readers' hearts. That is, in reality, his life's work, and this collection offers no faint praise that he has done great work and done it well.

Song for Leela, Bobby, & Me,

for Robert Ross

*I have friends who wonder why I can't
just let the past lie where it lies,
why I'm still so angry.*

As if there's something wrong with me.

*As if the life you might have lived were just a fiction, just a dream.
As if those California dawns were just as promising without you.
As if the rest of us can get along just as well without you.*

*Since you've been gone, they've taken boys
like you and me and killed them in Grenada,
Lebanon, the Persian Gulf, and Panama,
Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq.
And yet I'm told I'm living in the past.
Maybe that's the trouble: we're a nation
with no sense of history, no sense at all.*

Bill Ehrhart doesn't seethe with blind anger. He does not strike out wildly, letting his blows land wherever they might. No, he is insightful and surgical, and always accessible. He does not use big words to impress us with his vocabulary. Each of his poems is like an investment deposited into a savings account, and this collection is the statement of his worth at the moment these thoughts were gathered together. I take comfort from the knowledge that there are many more, perhaps squirreled away in a box under his bed, and someday they might be revealed.

Twice Betrayed

for Nguyen Thi My Huong, Ho Chi Minh City, December 1985

*Some American soldier came to your mother for love,
or lust, a moment's respite from loneliness,
and you happened. Fourteen years*

*later,
I meet you on the street at night in the city that was once called Saigon,
and you are almost a woman,
barefooted, dressed in dirty clothes,
beautiful with your one shy dimple.*

*It doesn't really matter who won;
either way, you were always destined
to be one of the losers:
if he wasn't killed, your father left for the place we used to call The World
years before the revolution's tanks crushed the gates of the old regime forever.*

*Now we sit on a bench in a crowded park
burdened by history. It isn't easy being here again after all these years.
I marvel at your serenity – but of course,
you can't possibly know who I am,
or how far I have come to be here.
You only know that I look like you,
and together we are outcasts.*

*And so we converse in gestures and signs
and the few words we can both understand, and for now it almost seems enough
just to discover ways to make you smile.*

*But it isn't, and I have no way
To tell you that I cannot stay here
And I cannot take you with me.
I will tell my wife about you.
I will put your photograph on my desk.
I will dream you are my own daughter.
But none of that will matter
When you come here tomorrow*

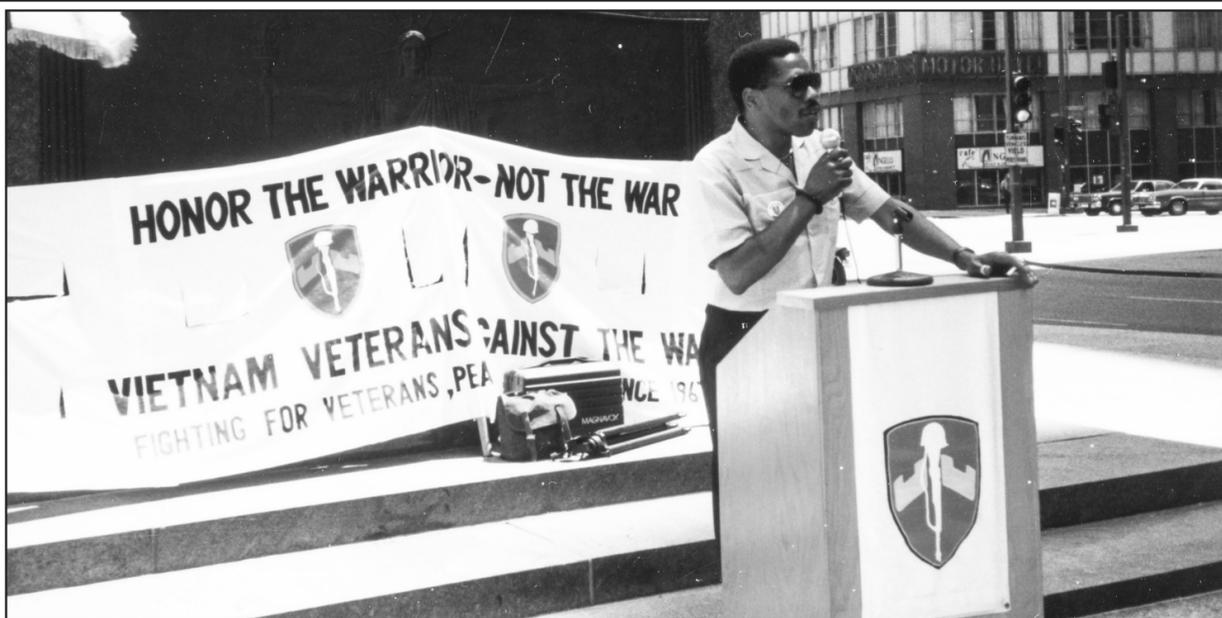
And I'm gone.

Above all else, Bill Ehrhart is a human being. He feels things, and has the most unusual capacity for describing all that he feels, and putting his feelings into some semblance of order that makes them familiar and understandable to other humans. He does not recognize borders and has little reverence for flags or emblems of rank sewn or pinned to a fatigue shirt. He values humans and has great reverence for their lives. He means no harm but can never forget or forgive.

I rarely read poetry. To me, poetry is usually abstract and bloated, with far too many words to describe a feeling. The poet recognizes an important event or thought, and too often he or she builds a great shrine of words to convince us of its importance. Bill Ehrhart uses few words to describe his observations, but his art consists of finding the most telling words and combining them in ways that communicate with the broad spectrum of readers. I came away from this collection feeling sadness that this might be the condensed summing up of his life's work. No, this was a meager sample of his contributions up to a certain moment in time. I'm sure today he is adding to it, and I can only hope someone will undertake to collect his current thoughts and put a cover around them and put them up for sale on Amazon, where we can all share in his maturing reflections. Yes, I will say it again; Bill Ehrhart is the most articulate spokesman of all Vietnam veterans.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



Clarence Fitch speaking on May 13, 1987, at VVAW's 20th Anniversary Celebration in Chicago.

Another Brother

LARRY KERSCHNER

Another Brother

Produced and Directed by Tami Gold (Third World Newsreel, 1998)
tamigold.co/films/another-brother/

Clarence Fitch was an African American who came of age during the social turmoil of the sixties. He was an ordinary man whose life was both heroic and tragic. He was able to use his understanding of the imperialism of the American Empire, his life in a racist society, his use of and overcoming of drugs and his fight with HIV/AIDS as a springboard to a life of political activism.

Clarence spoke on the American War against the people of Vietnam, he said "There can be no justification for what happened, but the culpability lies primarily with the politicians and generals who initiated, planned and ran the war. Not those who were sent to fight it. Until we honestly face up to what happened in Vietnam and those who are responsible, especially

Johnson, Nixon, McNamara, Laird, Rusk, Kissinger, Westmoreland and Abrams, are held accountable, the past will continue to haunt us."

His father had been in the military and Clarence grew up believing that being in the military was one of the few ways a black man could be seen as honorable in US society. He joined the Marines at age 18 just after graduating from high school while living in Jersey City. The military was made to seem glamorous. "I believed the whole spiel—hook, line and sinker."

On leave from Camp Pendleton, he was home when the National Guard was in the streets of Newark. Between July 12th and July 17, 1967 during four days of rioting, looting, and property destruction. During that time 26 people died and hundreds were injured. He soon found himself in combat in Vietnam. "It was the first time I saw someone with their legs blown off but still alive...I never knew what dead people smelled like."

Drugs were readily available, "To relieve the tension. I smoked a lot of grass and opium".

Racism was flagrant with the black and brown troops getting the shit jobs. With the rise of Black Power, "We segregated ourselves during what we saw as the White Man's War...we recognized the Vietnamese as another brown people. I felt guilty as a black man in Vietnam."

In 1971, he returned to Jersey City with an honorable discharge. At that time there was no follow-up veterans support system and heroin was cheap and available. In 1972, he got a job with 4,000 other employees of a large post office. Many of his co-workers were Vietnam vets. Clarence got involved with the union and was elected to shop steward. He was also centrally active as a leader in the local anti-apartheid movement.

He would periodically kick the heroin but always returned. In 1983, after 13 years of running the streets

he seriously considered suicide. It was thoughts of his daughter that led him to VA rehab centers.

He joined VVAW where he found other Viet vets who understood what he was going through. In 1986, he was part of a VVAW delegation to Nicaragua that changed his life after seeing wounded Nicaraguan veterans as young as 13-14 in a hospital. In 1988, he began to have symptoms that led to a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS.

The New Jersey Chapter of VVAW is named in honor of him. *Another Brother* is narrated chiefly by Clarence in an audiotaped interview by William Short, a fellow Vietnam veteran, before Clarence's death from AIDS in 1990.



LARRY KERSCHNER IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF BOTH VVAW AND VFP. HE IS IN THE 17TH YEAR OF A WEEKLY PEACE VIGIL INSIDE TRUMP COUNTRY. FIND LARRY ONLINE AT: WWW.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/~LARRYWRITES

Vietnam Reconsidered

JOHN ZUTZ (REVIEWER)

Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter
by John Ketwig
(Trine Day, 2019)

While glancing at the table of contents I discovered there's a chapter on "Sex and the Vietnam Soldier." Being a healthy guy who contributed much of my minuscule paycheck to the lovely ladies of Vietnam, I immediately turned to the page in the middle of the book. The fact that the author anticipated this was my first clue that his thoughts on the war ran parallel to mine.

In fact, our military experiences were similar. We both enlisted to avoid the draft, though I managed to sign up for two years versus his three. We both went to Vietnam and discovered shortly after arrival that we weren't "fighting for freedom," the entire

enterprise was a giant waste, and we couldn't win. After Vietnam, Ketwig spent a year in Thailand, I got 6 months in California. We both used that time to unwind, defuse, and begin recovering from our wartime experiences.

So, don't be surprised that I enjoyed the book. I probably could have written it myself, if I were more skilled.

This is not a war story. Ketwig explores the connections between the events at home and their effects on the war. He debunks the notion that the media, or the protesters, kept us from winning. He points out our support of a thoroughly corrupt regime in Saigon as well as the corrupt practices at home. He magnifies the truths and calls out the lies (mostly from our leaders).

I began reading with the sex chapter near the middle. I read through to the end and then began at the

beginning. Those early chapters are a more or less consecutive overview of the major events around the world. I know he couldn't include everything, but I thought the first moon landing deserved a mention (he squeezed in Apollo 13).

Due to my unorthodox reading method, the last chapter I read was about corruption. I thought I had studied the war pretty well, but the information here shocked me. I knew there was corruption. I knew there was a black market. I bought ice-cold sodas or beers from the girls on their Hondas along the roadside. I frequented the ladies of the evening. I knew Air America was transporting heroin.

I was surprised about the depth of the corruption among our own troops. Ketwig points out the highest-ranking enlisted person—the Command Sergeant Major of the Army—was

ripping off his own troops. He includes the corruption and lies coming from the Oval Office.

And there's more. Ketwig manages to compare corruption in Vietnam to the disappearance of billions of dollars worth of \$100 bills in Iraq and the rip-off contracts given to the contractors.

Reading this book was, to me, kind of like sitting at the bar of the VFW and shooting the shit with a good friend. He does get kind of redundant at times, but I would recommend it to any veteran, or any High School student, looking for information about the war. This may be our way to communicate with future students after we are all gone.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



January 6, 1977, in Milwaukee.

A Poet's Awakening

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

What You Have Heard Is True: A Memoir of Witness and Resistance
by Carolyn Forché
(Penguin Press, 2019)

Carolyn Forché's new memoir - *What You Have Heard is True* - both as an act of testament and as witness ranks equally with the finest and greatest writing regarding the United States' invasion of Southeast Asia.

The period is that of Ronald Reagan's administration in Washington. The context is El Salvador, and if one kept close attention to the support given by the US government to the Salvadoran junta, one is none the less shocked and awakened by Forché's memory. She first became noted for her poetry following the time that she spent in Central America. Her familiarization in human monstrosity was under the tutelage of a very much larger-than-life person, the late Leonel Gómez Vides. Whether or not Forché's work is adapted to the cinema, Vides' is a name that ought to live forever for those who value human uplift, decency, and truth.

Forché's first husband had fought in Vietnam at Cu Chi and helped construct infrastructure for the US Army south of Pleiku. They first met when she was yet a senior in high school. Wearing his army jacket, Carolyn would spectate alongside an anti-war march in her hometown, get caught up in a police riot (Detroit) and get knocked unconscious by the swing of a baton. Her husband's work in infrastructure was for the Fourth Division base camp directly below Dragon Mountain.

Of the time she would spend in El Salvador she does not once mention the media-central burg of Tegucigalpa where so many journos clustered during the time of Reagan's CIA/School of the America's sponsored assault upon the rural Mestizo population. Most were likely afraid of getting their feet wet; Forché and her own sponsor repeatedly were in

danger, frequently on the move to avoid detection. He introduced her to the country's archbishop and the new acquaintance would later end with a photo she would take of the cleric a few hours before his assassination by neo Falangists.

The religiosity of her work is no less poetic than what I heard at a reading she participated in at a theater on Spring Street in Los Angeles in the mid-1980s. Her name stuck; another reading, that by Britain's poet of class struggle and injustice, Sir Stephen Spender, was not equal to hers. Yet in 1939 he had edited *Poems for Spain* at the end of the Spanish Civil War, the conflict in which poets had played a remarkable role in resistance against Spanish fascism.

Even though he would never be confined and tortured, the activities of Leonel Gómez Vides recall the heroics of Alexandros Panagoulis, he of the one-man anti-junta Greek resistance described by his paramour, the late Oriana Fallaci - in her extraordinary 1979 elegy - *A Man*.

Carolyn Forché's work also recalls the finest works of witness reflecting upon our time in Vietnam: Ron Glaser's *365 Days*, Gloria Emerson's *Winners and Losers*, Daniel Ellsberg's *Secrets*, John Laurence's *The Cat From Hue*, and especially *Dispatches*, by Michael Herr. Hers is neither a historical effort or one of journalistic reportage. It is all resonantly personal, at points becomes highly expressive verging upon the poetic. Such artistry employed in giving witness to grotesque human carnage has rendered an unforgettable must-read (gratis then CIA director William Casey and the irrepressible Oliver North - Reagan and George H.W. Bush's consiglieri in Iran-Contra lunacy).

While in-country she would encounter her second/current husband, war photographer Harry Mattison, whose work has rendered equal witness to human gravity. As stated



Leonel Gómez Vides - photo by Carolyn Forché.

on the book's dust cover, Carolyn Forché is an American poet, editor, translator, and activist. Her books of poetry are *Blue Hour*, *The Angel of History*, *The Country Between Us*, and *Gathering The Tribes*. In 2013, she received the Academy of American Poets Fellowship given for distinguished poetic achievement. She is a University Professor at Georgetown University. In 2017, she became one of the first two poets to receive the Windham-Campbell Prize.

As we all now know, singer-songwriter Bob Dylan has lately

received his Nobel Prize. Yet all of us have to wonder whether he ever got himself in anywhere near as much danger as has America's foremost poet of conscience.



A REGISTERED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND A VETERAN OF THE FOURTH INFANTRY IN VIETNAM, JOHN CRANDELL RETIRED FROM AN ENGINEERING POSITION WITH THE AIR FORCE IN 2014 AND NOW MANAGES "THE FARM" PLUS SIX FELINES, SOUTHEAST OF SACRAMENTO.

Killing From the Inside Out

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Killing From the Inside Out
by Robert Emmet Meager
(Cascade Books, 2014)

Robert Emmet Meager is Professor of Humanities at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, and has made a career of addressing the spiritual wounds of war in veterans, their families, and their communities. I approached this book with the hope that I might find some pathway to spiritual peace, or some suggestions of where I might find some prescription for an antidote for moral damage from war. In this age of America's commitment to perpetual war, it is inconceivable to me that my grandsons might someday be destined to carry around the corrosion of mind, morals, and gut that I have lived with since my military experiences.

The first pages of the book feature endorsements from a wide variety of theologians, scholars, writers, veterans, and coworkers in the field. Clearly, this book is viewed as a landmark step toward understanding the history of how powers-that-be over the ages have portrayed wars as "just" and necessary, with campaigns so effective that today we see military recruiting storefront offices in every small town and hamlet.

Our young people join for all the most honorable reasons, to serve our country and battle the forces reported to be threatening democracy and freedom. Yes, many of them are forced to volunteer by an economic system that devalues them and offers few realistic avenues to any appreciable career success. They can flip burgers or sweep floors, or they can join the military. If they can keep their mouths shut and their heads down for a few years, they can graduate from the service with some meager financial help for college, or they can re-up and receive an enticing bonus.

Of course, the longer a recruit remains in uniform, the greater the chance that he or she will be deployed to one of our burgeoning array of combat situations around the world. And, regardless of which option he or she might choose, if they survive, they will rejoin society as veterans.

Recruiters don't tell them about the common veteran experiences of PTSD, moral damage, or suicide.

I came to this book expecting it to be a dire warning, and yes, the preface and first chapters contain vivid glimpses of lives damaged or destroyed by the terrible experiences of war. The first chapter tells us of one Noah Pierce, a young man who enlisted in the army at age seventeen, and was deployed as part of America's invasion of Iraq in 2003. Four years later, he sat alone in his pickup truck in Gilbert, Minnesota and scribbled a note to his mother:

Mom, I am so sorry. My life has been hell since March 2003 when I was part of the Iraq invasion...I am freeing myself from the desert once and for all...I am not a good person. I have done bad things. I have taken lives. Now it's time to take mine.

Noah Pierce put a gun to his head and ended his agony.

To this point, I felt a deep appreciation for this book. Surely, the author was going to describe the various torments that lurk in the memories of veterans, and then offer a few suggestions that might make those desperate thoughts evaporate and the sufferer escapes his, or her, cruel fate. I read on, through vast and scholarly explanations of the ancient origins of just war theory, and the evolution of that insidious strategy to modern-day. I read every word: the histories of Dionysus, Sophocles, Heraclitus, Neoptolemus, Achilles, Philoctetes, Plato, Aristotle, and on and on. Yes, war has existed since ancient times, and the Greek wars immortalized by Homer and others exposed many of the truths about human damage from war that we see repeated today.

Previous books by Jonathan Shay and Edward Peck have made this point in unforgettable fashion, and their books have offered suggestions for how the afflicted veteran might find some respite from the universal curse of moral injury, or damage, from the experience of war. Indeed, Jonathan Shay, MD and PhD, has contributed an afterword to this book.

Sadly, the author has offered little

remedy to the veteran experiencing a crisis of moral conscience. In his final chapter, titled *Conclusion*, Meager throws up his hands and declares that making war is a universal and undeniable aspect of the nature of all mankind. Pacifists are "selfish" because they fail to take part in the community's struggles, and the conclusion he reaches is that communities and nations will always require the active participation of their citizens. He quotes a mysterious, unidentified William James, who suggested in his last public utterance over a century ago, that "common service might serve to patch together our torn national fabric, rent by faction, fear, and contempt," and create "the moral equivalent of war."

Indeed, "pacifism offers no viable or persuasive substitute for the unstinting idealism, discipline, courage, self-sacrifice, and fierce, intimate loyalty instilled and exemplified in military training and service." The ultimate answer to the dilemma of moral damage from war is, Meager states, universal service required of all young people! They may be assigned to "address the needs of a peaceful nation," he suggests, "from building roads to hauling away the garbage." I was, to put it mildly, appalled and amazed! There is no mention of the damage modern weapons do to human bodies.

There is no mention of modern American tactics and strategies, from "search and destroy" missions to carpet bombing, drone warfare, napalm, Agent Orange, depleted uranium, land mines, or ultimately, nuclear war. No, Meager seems to suggest that if everyone experiences these disastrous weapons and tactics, and if everyone witnesses the death, destruction, and suffering that they impose upon human beings wherever the powers find it necessary to wage wars, the common experience will eliminate the mental and moral effects and result in a nation of young warriors that will be idealistic, disciplined, courageous, and possessed of a "fierce, intimate loyalty."

VVAW is, basically, an organization of war veterans who

oppose the great war machine as we seek to find solace and comfort for all our brothers who have experienced the horrors of modern war. There is nothing in this book to indicate that Mr. Meager has ever experienced war. He has gathered his opinions in a variety of classrooms on America's tree-lined college campuses. How sad that he feels such contempt for the many young students he has encountered throughout his career. I suppose his advice to Noah Pierce's grieving mother would be to urge her surviving children to enlist, even as he urges the re-establishment of local draft boards. Really? As I am composing this review, the stereo is playing Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's *American Dream* album. From a song titled *Soldiers of Peace* written by Graham Nash, Craig Doerge, and Joe Vitale, I am encouraged to hear:

So come all you warriors who live for the fight,

Come listen to somebody, someone who might

Have been there before you and they have the right,

They've been dying to tell you the score.

The old warriors don't want you to hurt anymore.

Soldiers of peace are not fighting a war.

No more, no more, no more, no more.

Two more Americans were killed in Afghanistan this week. Why? You don't put out a fire by throwing more fuel at the blaze. I am proud to be a member of VVAW and join with a decent and sensible group of fellow vets who deal with horrific memories by standing up and joining the chorus. No more, no more, no more, no more. Not my grandchildren! And, not yours! We are Vietnam Veterans Against the War.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND A NEW BOOK, RECENTLY PUBLISHED, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

Passing in Front of the Flag

LARRY CRAIG (REVIEWER)

Ghost of a Person Passing in Front of the Flag
by D F Brown
(Bloomsday Literary, 2018)

January 2, 2019, 4:45 AM. I sat down to read this book of poetry thinking, I don't read poetry, I don't know poetry, what can poetry have to do with Vietnam. Well, as you may have guessed, I was soon hooked.

Whatever Happens Merges on page 7 pulled me in.

*The first day I didn't know
How far to anywhere
Though the sarge pointed out
Sandbagged bunkers
Left and right
Laced in triple concertina wire,
Enlisted outhouse, commo trench
And wiring to the claymores—
All I saw was leaky sandbags*

*In a blast wall around the ammo
And the sun's red knot at the horizon.*

Then night fell just like it was supposed to

And the wind whispered it's old story,

I listened close as words

To my soul squeak and squeal.

I'm wondering what makes it hit home. Is it the words? Is it the spacing? Maybe it's the impact of the short lines that make the words sink in.

Sandbagged bunkers took me to April 10th, 1967; three of my friends, Dave Fisher, Joe Kramer, and Jimmy Edwards were killed when a recoilless round exploded in their bunker. When Vern Shibla emerged from the carnage, his first words were THAT BASTARD JOHNSON.

Well, I've made it to page 7.

Soldier boys face down in the

muck.

VVAW better find someone else to write this stupid fucking review. Or I could ask my friend Pat to write it. She has had several poems published. She even gets paid. Showed off her prize, an uncashed check for five dollars.

Page 33.

As if Nam was a place

Scraped from my brain

And scattered here explain.

The blood of a beautiful Vietnamese child spurts in my brain every day. The West Point Captain who shot him in the back said, "This is the way you win a war," as he handed the M-16 back to the grunt who had courageously missed by a mile.

I put the book down and looked at the photo of D.F. Brown on the book. For some strange reason, I realized I

love the hapless fucker who wrote on page 34 about the war no one wanted anymore.

*So they gave it to the children,
Let them play with death*

Watched them die on TV during supper.

Read the book, and you will forever think like the kid who said, "It means I don't have a daddy anymore," when some old fart asked if he knew what the war memorial on Main Street meant.



LARRY CRAIG WAS AWARDED THE BRONZE STAR FOR COVERAGE OF OPERATION JUNCTION CITY IN 1967. HE TESTIFIED IN DETROIT AT THE HOWARD JOHNSONS ABOUT WAR CRIMES IN VIETNAM.



Annie Bailey speaking at an Agent Orange demo in Daley Plaza, Chicago.

Lost in Vietnam

MINNIE WARBURTON (REVIEWER)

Lost in Vietnam: AWOL in Southeast Asia

by Larry Craig

(Independently published, 2019)

Lost in Vietnam: AWOL in Southeast Asia by Larry Craig is both novel and memoir, a personal narrative that can serve veterans, not just of the war in Vietnam, but of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well. From the disillusion one feels "in country" to the confusion and disorientation once home that can cause addictive, inappropriate and self-destructive behaviors. I personally feel every account by a survivor of the war in Vietnam, American or Vietnamese, has a place and ought to be read. Nevertheless, at times while reading Larry's book, I was confused. I wrote Larry a letter and asked him questions about the book. Following, instead of a traditional review, are a few of my questions and Larry's answers.

Minnie: The title doesn't indicate whether the book is a memoir or a novel. When I began reading I thought it was a memoir, especially because you included photos. Then I became confused and realized it wasn't. Can you say what the book is to you - aside from allowing you to sleep at night, which is a good thing - do you consider it a novel or a memoir or a combination of both?

Larry: Memoir or fiction or both. I gave the character [the name] Larry

Ryan to keep myself on track and to help folks get through the book without knowing for sure if they were reading truth of fiction.

Minnie: You make the character Muy Ba in your book the daughter of General Giap. General Giap was an extraordinary military officer with a fascinating history. Can you talk about how you made the choice to have your character, Larry Ryan, marry one of General Giap's daughters? And why you chose to make General Giap a major figure in the narrative?

Larry: General Giap. I'm happy to hear you admire him. I do too. The part about his fictional daughter Muy Ba starts with a lovely young Vietnamese teenager coming up from the hold of a boat that was loaded with pineapples. She was holding a plate of pineapple slices from fruit picked that morning. My real friend Vern Shible and I loved the pineapple. Then comes the fiction. I did not get on the pineapple boat and go downstream with her and her general father.

Minnie: I will admit that this was the place, the introduction of General Giap, his wife, and his daughter, that I became confused and didn't know whether I was reading a memoir or fiction. I think for a reader, this would be useful information. Writers often incorporate historical figures into their works of fiction, but traditionally the title of a novel on a published work is followed by the

words "A Novel by...." or "Memoir by..." I became more confused when what had been a first person narrative suddenly switched to the third person. Sometimes a paragraph begins with the first person pronoun "I" and switches abruptly to the third person—he or Larry. Some chapters, not about Larry, were entirely third person stories—narratives about other characters subsidiary to the story. At times I felt you had written several pieces originally as short stories and then put them in as chapters without really editing for the whole body of the book. Was this an intentional choice and what was behind that choice?

(Larry did not answer this question.)

Minnie: An observation, not a question: There were times in the book when the explicit sex passages did not really contribute to the overall demands of the book itself. Those were the times where I felt the author could have benefited from the input of a good editor. Sometimes less really is more!

Larry: An editor! What a wonderful concept. Yes, I know I need one and am not at all disappointed to hear from you about my many mistakes. Thank you very much. The explicit sex early on is to set the scene for a sex addicted soldier to get needed help.

Minnie: What is essentially the second half of the book—life in America post-Vietnam and the main

character's activity in anti-war protests and actions—is equally necessary. What it's like "coming home." Were you involved in actions with Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn or was this too a device? That info in a preface or afterward would have helped me as a reader.

Larry: I have been married to my wife, Lynn, from Chicago for over 50 years. I never had a Vietnamese girlfriend in Vietnam. I did not work with Bill or Bernadine against the war but am now convinced they were right about bringing the war home. The testimony Larry Ryan gives in the book from the Winter Soldier Investigation into War Crimes in Vietnam is all taken from my actual testimony posted online.

Bill Ayers and I met to discuss this project. He liked the idea of having my fictional characters work with the real Weatherman tribe that gave us the days of rage.

Lost in Vietnam: AWOL in Southeast Asia is self-published and available through Amazon.com as a paperback or Kindle e-book.



MINNIE WARBURTON, WRITER AND ARTIST, LIVES IN ANNAPOLIS, MD.

HUSBAND VIC MCINNIS WAS A CHAPLAIN FOR TWENTY YEARS, SERVING WITH THE MARINES IN BOTH AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.

A Very Personal View of Vietnam

ED WHITE (REVIEWER)

Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter

by John Ketwig

(Trine Day, 2019)

This is John Ketwig's second personal view of Vietnam and its effect on him and on our generation. Ketwig's first book, *...and a hard rain fell*, reflects his very emotional reaction to Vietnam. The book was printed by what he calls "the establishment," Macmillan Publishing House, a key player in the media empire of America. Who would disagree with that!

It is in this latest book where, I believe, Ketwig really begins telling the reader about his personal journey. On page 293 of *...and a hard rain fell*, he talks about listening to *CBS Reports' Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*, which aired in 1982.

I too, remember that report, but I did not put it together as Ketwig has. I had my own slow burn when I heard the excellent reporting that Westmoreland deceived President Johnson on the size of the enemy. There were more of the enemy than Westmoreland was telling Johnson. By the way, contrary to Ketwig's statement on page 116

of *Vietnam Reconsidered*, this report is available on YouTube. Listen and weep. This major deception begins a long line which becomes the tragedy of Vietnam.

Vietnam Reconsidered has 24 chapters, well not really. Chapter 23 is a letter to the editor in 2014, and chapter 24 is a bibliography which generally is not a chapter in "the establishment" world. More about this later. About one-third of the book is 6 chapters called *What Really Happened* from early history to 1975, describing the Vietnam War. The other 16 chapters are variations on the subtitle *The War, the Times and Why They Matter*.

The first chapter establishes the format to come: Ketwig shares personal likes and the car culture; his love of JFK and his CIA-planned assassination, a distrust of officers, CIA, the mafia, and a wide swath of history that includes President Trump. Perhaps it is in Chapter 2 that Ketwig's real love of music comes out. I loved this chapter as I use music in my course on the Vietnam War. He covers everybody except my favorite song of the time: *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*. There is a title of a book by

the same name written by Bradley and Werner. Ketwig quotes this book in his bibliography but neglects to mention it in the chapter on music. Many say that *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* was the Vietnam War veteran anthem. I totally agree.

In the history sections on the Vietnam War, he elaborates on Smedley Butler's testimony of a potential coup d'état of FDR. Just for the record, General Butler was not the former head of the Marine Corps (p.42). He later connects that trend to the coup d'état of JFK. He develops the war profiteering stories from World War II up to the present wars. This is elaborated in the chapter on *Corruption and Profiteering* (Chapter 12), an excellent and well-researched chapter.

Ketwig offers an excellent analysis of the dichotomy of America's mission of offensive confrontation by Westmoreland, and winning the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese, (p. 94). This really shows the reality of how we could not have won the Vietnam War, no matter what we did.

In the chapters on the Vietnam War, he starts to bring out the peace movement's influence both in Vietnam and back home. The connection of the peace movement and the morale of soldiers is well-established, particularly in Chapter 15, *Peaceniks, Patriots, and Provocateurs*. Another excellent chapter.

I am not sure why Ketwig included Chapter 13, *Sex and the Vietnam veteran*. I suppose his private horniness was widespread, but so what. His next chapter, *The Great Myth*, develops the reaction to Vietnam veterans when they returned home. This is a never-ending discussion and personal for many returning Vietnam veterans. I, for one, was called a "baby killer" at a party and received a stand-offish-ness on the plane back to the United States, but those that mattered, my family, welcomed me. Also, when a friend who organized the New York City parade for Vietnam veterans wanted me to go, I said I didn't need to be thanked. I simply did a job and I am a New Yorker, anyway, with a certain edge.

One of his best chapters is Chapter 17, *Vietnam: What was all the fuss about?* Ketwig had partially put down Ken Burns and his series on the Vietnam War, which aired on PBS, in a prior chapter. In this chapter, he added 27 questions to ask yourself, or in my case, my Vietnam war class.

I also really liked the chapter, *Telling Moments*. Often, Vietnam vets go to high school classes to talk about the war. This chapter also goes into the various reactions of a whole variety of people to his book and presentations. There is a great story about the reaction from an Annapolis academy class when he brought a piece of shrapnel to the class.

I thought the chapter entitled, *FAQ*, could have been in an appendix, along with the next chapter, 20, called *The Wall*.

Perhaps the best chapter is Chapter 21, *The High Cost of America's Militarism*. This spells out the in-depth research he has done on the Pentagon budget with great information from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) and the cost of war project at Brown University's Watson Center.

I would recommend that Ketwig get an editor to do the book over again. It is too important a topic to be left to a small press that wants to "rock the boat" with upcoming titles like *Caviar and Sodomy*, *Your Mother's Not a Virgin*, and *The Deceit of Rome*. The author does run on, and that can be tightened up and become a more effective presentation with a good editor. And let's not forget the table of contents that does not reflect the actual pages in the book. Oh, yes, and the section called *Introucion*. Even spell checker picked that up. Just sayin...

Overall, I found Ketwig's book to be a personal story worthy of inclusion in the annals of the Vietnam War. History is written from such personal stories.



ED WHITE IS A MARINE VIETNAM VET WITH MEMBERSHIPS IN VVAW, VFP, AND VVA. HE ALSO TEACHES A COURSE ON THE VIETNAM WAR AT TRITON COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS.



Walking in Havana

ANN HIRSCHMAN (REVIEWER)

Walking in Havana: A Memoir of AIDS and Healing in Cuba
by Elena Schwolsky
(She Writes Press, 2019)

"In 1972 I left my 2 year old son with his father at a rural hippie commune north of San Francisco and traveled to Cuba to wield a machete in solidarity with the young Cuban revolution"

This opens the story of the life and times of Elena Schwolsky but this book is more than a memoir of one amazing woman. It is a history of the people and places she experiences from 1972 to 2019. Elena takes us through these years with the courage of her unsparing observations of the times, of the people she meets and of the country she comes to love, and of herself. I came to love and respect her through these pages in ways that I had not imagined—and I have known this lady for decades. It is also a history of AIDS.

The author writes of her life and the people with whom she has shared it with honesty and transparency. This is not the exposure of people and places that shocks and disturbs—it is a nuanced and loving reportage that allows the reader to understand the complicated decisions made by individuals and a country that she

clearly loves.

In 1988 Elena's partner, Clarence Fitch, was diagnosed with AIDS. They had been together for years and now would be married. Their wedding was the most multicultural event I have ever experienced. There were people from all walks of life, all areas of the world, all races and creeds and orientations and it was a day of joy. Joy of shared love and of children and of friends and of activism. Joy despite the specter of AIDS.

Elena had become a nurse and chose to work in a pediatric AIDS clinic. She writes: "Clarence had been forced onto the frontlines of this epidemic and I wanted to be there too." This was a terrible time in the AIDS crisis. There was great stigma around people who were HIV positive. Even children with HIV were vilified—remember the story of Ryan White. Treatment was in its infancy and we had few of the drugs that now keep people with HIV alive and healthy. Here in the US cases were multiplying and world-wide they were exploding. The situation in Cuba was very different and very controversial.

There are accounts in the book of a second, still illegal, trip to Cuba where Elena has to confront the Cuban policy of placing AIDS patients in

sanitoriums. "I would visit the AIDS sanatorium, I decided. I would talk to people living with HIV/AIDS and hear their stories. I'd talk to nurses and doctors. I remembered Cuba as a place filled with warmth and compassion. I would keep an open mind." Later there are accounts of her finally legal time in Cuba doing the fieldwork for her MPH and living with people I came to love as Elena paints them with her words.

We are insiders at the conferences where Elena shares her love and expertise with international workers in the war against AIDS. We are there when she meets veterans of the Cuban army who served in Angola and compares their experiences with those of Clarence and other US veterans of the war in Vietnam. We are there when she organizes with others to create the AIDS quilt in Cuba (a place where there was "no word for quilt"). We get to know the people with whom she lives and loves. It is easy to see why she is "recognized as the madrina (godmother) of Proyecto Memorias, the Cuban AIDS Quilt Project."

This is a book about Cuba. A country admired by myself and many US activists of my generation. A complicated country deeply affected by the US government embargos and attempts at regime change by any

means. It is also a book about AIDS. But more than both of these it is a book about people. Elena herself is a quiet heroine who would never use that word about herself. The people she loves so much are the cast of characters in the amazing times about which she reports. And it is a book about family—family by blood and family by choice and the family that is all of us.

The most important part of a review is the part where the reviewer rates the book. This is a great read. Elena is a wonderful writer and her prose is both elegant and easy. I gobbled it up the first time I read it—cover to cover in one night. Then I got to read it again to be able to review it here. I feel so honored that I was asked to do this that I am almost guilty for enjoying it so much. It is illustrated with pictures of the places and people we get to meet.

Buy and read this book you will thank me. More to the point we will all thank Elena.



ANNIE HIRSCHMAN MARCHED WITH THE VERY FIRST MEMBERS OF VVAW IN 1967. SHE IS ALSO AN ORIGINAL STREET MEDIC AND IS ON THE BOARD OF VVAW.

Poisoned Fruit of JFK's Assassination

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Inheritance: Poisoned Fruit of JFK's Assassination
by Christopher and Michelle Fulton
(Trine Day Publishing, 2018)

Certainly, the most heinous crime of the twentieth century was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, on November 22, 1963. Officially, the murder of the President was investigated by a select group of distinguished men. Headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Warren Commission included the former head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, who had been fired by Kennedy following the Bay of Pigs disaster. Dulles was known to have exerted a great amount of influence over the Warren Commission, steering it away from any investigation of a possible conspiracy, often in direct contradiction with the evidence. The final disposition of the investigation(s) into the President's murder had been established from the moment the first bullet hit the President, or even before. However, such a momentous crime, or crimes if you include the subsequent murder of the supposed shooter Lee Harvey Oswald, left too many bits and particles of evidence to be swept away completely.

One of those pieces was the President's wristwatch, a Cartier that had been a gift from his wife Jacqueline. A nurse at Parkland hospital removed it and put it in a

pocket as she was working to insert an IV into the President's arm. The watch had been splattered with a heavy coating of gore from the President's wounds. Earlier that morning, Vice President Johnson had ordered all of the President's personal metal items removed during a routine inspection of them by the Secret Service. These items included a St. Christopher money clip the President always kept in his breast pocket, a Catholic medal he wore on a chain around his neck, his cufflinks, and his watch. In short, anything metal that might deflect a bullet from its course. However, after his items had been removed, Jacqueline Kennedy gave the second watch to the President on the airplane as they traveled to Dallas. She had recently had the prized watch repaired for him and it was in her purse, so it was not anticipated that he would be wearing it at the moment of the assassination. The nurse gave the gore-encrusted watch to a hospital security person, and it made its way to the President's brother, Robert F. Kennedy.

The Secret Service had been instructed to gather up all of the President's belongings prior to the day's activities, but they had missed the watch. The President had raised his left hand when the first bullet struck, and when the second hit his right temple the rear of his head was blown away and the watch was covered with

blood and brain material. This was incontrovertible evidence that he had been shot from the front. The official story was that Lee Harvey Oswald had been the only shooter, and any evidence of the second shooter was immediately disappeared.

Bobby Kennedy was devastated by his brother's death, and he was determined to discover who had ordered and performed the terrible deed. At one point, he confronted President Johnson face-to-face and held the watch in his left hand for LBJ to see. Johnson was shaken and had the House of Representatives pass a bill requiring that all evidence in the assassination had to be turned over to the government to be secured and classified until the year 2039. RFK was determined to achieve a level of responsibility in the future that would allow him to start another, more balanced investigation. He gave the cleaned watch to President Kennedy's personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, for safekeeping. Ultimately, after she had died, the watch came up for sale. It was purchased by Christopher Fulton, a successful contractor who was living and working in Vancouver, British Columbia. Almost immediately, he came under pressure to turn in the watch to the American government.

In August 1998, still in Canada, he was arrested. The warrant had come from the US, where he was informed that he was on the Top Ten Most

Wanted list, and considered armed and dangerous. This book is mostly about the horrors he encountered throughout nine long years in a variety of prisons. He was not allowed to contact his wife, and she died before he was finally released. The moral of the story is that it doesn't pay to defy the United States government. It is a chilling story. The reader wants it to end within the first hundred pages, but there are more than 500 altogether, including an array of documentation at the end. The back cover of the book displays the following warning: Christopher's roller coaster ride of discovery intertwines the JFK legacy and tragedy with his own...and indeed with the fate of America itself. *The Inheritance* reveals the true intentions of Bobby Kennedy and Evelyn Lincoln, as well as Christopher's secret pact with John F. Kennedy, Jr. This history must be uncovered in order for us to understand what is happening today. Although this is Christopher Fulton's story, it is really about all of us. A wide selection of other books provide ample evidence that the Vietnam War would never have happened if President Kennedy had not been killed. To those of us who wonder what really happened even after all these years, this book offers many invaluable pieces of the puzzle.

I must admit that Trine Day is the publisher of my latest book. I don't feel that my opinion of this very important book was influenced in the slightest by that coincidence. However, after reading this book, I was able to ask the publisher, "You have spoken to the author. Do you really believe this story is true?" Without hesitation, he answered, "Yes." It is a frightening horror story far beyond the chill of Frankenstein or Dracula. Of course, much of our country's history since November 22, 1963, has been scary. I highly recommend this book.



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 34 YEARS AND 27 PRINTINGS (MACMILLAN, 1985). A NEW BOOK, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER WAS PUBLISHED IN JUNE 2019. JOHN IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



November 5, 1976, in New York.

The Myths That Masked An Imperialist War

WOODY WOODRUFF (REVIEWER)

The United States, Southeast Asia, and Historical Memory
edited by Mark Pavlick and Caroline Luft
(Haymarket Books, 2019)

The United States, Southeast Asia, and Historical Memory is an extremely useful book for those of us who were, in effect, too close to events to get a step-back perspective—and it joins a well-known shelf-full of similar books on the war, including its first edition (2008) under a different title.

The book touches on not only the deliberate demolition of Vietnamese society—economy, culture and engagement with the land itself—but on other related outrages ranging from not only the lethal sideshows in Laos and Cambodia but slightly earlier parallels in post-WWII Indonesia, where the US and Aussie meddling very nearly turned still another nationalist self-determination movement into a mortal enemy in an unequal struggle.

As much to the point, the contributions from Noam Chomsky, one of the war's strongest and most persuasive critics, answer the harder question—how did the people of the US, and yes, how did many of us in uniform, stay numb to the raw wrongness of the war when it should have been clear from the start who benefited from waging it? Good old corporate capitalism and its mirror images and enablers in the US government most benefited. The "propaganda model" Chomsky and his co-author Edward Herman developed shows how the information fog was created and maintained that helped the war's real causes, as well as many other afflictions of our lives, stay well behind the curtain.

Pavlick and Luft's book provides, through various authors, particular features of the war that emerged from deliberate obscurity after it was over, both individual atrocities and the dismal statistical tale of its costs to the people on the ground from Dienbienphu to the last helicopter liftoff from the embassy roof. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's "propaganda model" is tested and validated in their chapters on the war's well-cloaked, savage path through two

decades of US history and helps us better understand and respond to the book's other chapters.

The focus in some of the book's chapters is on specific atrocities, like the growth of defoliation by 2-4-D or "Agent Orange," a tactic much favored by the first puppet president, Diem. It is still devastating our brother and sister vets today as well as having permanently poisoned the land and people our policy left behind.

The moonscape of UXO, or unexploded ordnance, left behind in Laos and Cambodia to this day creates a new need for artificial limbs on an almost industrial scale each year, as Channapha Khamvongsa and Elaine Russell outline with harrowing statistics. In the nine years leading up to 1973, 2.1 million tons of ordnance was dropped just on Laos, including cluster bombs. Hidden bombs explode every year. In 2008, 302 killed and injured and in 2017, still 41—because most of the land in Laos that is best for growing crops is also the part most polluted with UXO.

Fred Branfman, an aid and NGO worker turned advocate, spent a good deal of time in Laos witnessing the bombing as it happened, and his testimony is detailed and harrowing. US officials eventually expelled him because he helped reporters expose the carnage. But the stories he sourced were accurate—and damning.

Why were those stories always on the fringe of public consciousness, quick to fade away? As Richard Falk says in his introduction to this book, "the wartime fates of Laos and Cambodia have been deleted unforgivably from the collective political memory of America," something Branfman and others attempt to remedy in this book.

In 1988, more than a decade after Chomsky wrote the articles that appear in this book on Vietnam, he and Herman published *Manufacturing Consent*, a book in which they outlined a "propaganda model" designed to keep the public information sphere favoring the official version of events. Chapters of *Manufacturing Consent* in which the Vietnam war was the case study illustrated how elites and their enablers in the mainstream media muffled the full scope of the

conflict and the shadowy motives and forces that kept this obviously terrible foreign-intervention project going.

As Gareth Porter relates in his chapter on My Lai and Lai Ke, the elite-managed narrative was that "the command of basic US combat units in Vietnam had fallen into the hands of the uneducated lower class" rather than, as Porter details, "the result of a deliberate policy adopted at the highest level of the Department of Defense to treat the civilian population of hamlets and villages...not as noncombatants but as part of the enemy structure...and therefore fair game for the US war machine." (86)

Porter's meticulous account of how the Pentagon-appointed Peers Commission on My Lai exonerated higher-ups all the way to Westmoreland—and McNamara—shows that MACV's noble pronouncements about sparing noncombatants had a glaring exception that the investigators looked away from—"free-fire zones" where the government lacked control, so civilian noncombatants were considered enemy forces. That was more than half the country. Lt. William L. Calley Jr. was, indeed, "following orders." And Gen. Peers, who were hoping for a fourth star from Westmoreland, took care of the official cleanup, an essential element of the propaganda model.

Porter's account shows how careful archival reporting can produce truths that evade the propaganda model.

As is clear from Chomsky and Herman's account, the "propaganda model" they describe is observed academically at a distance; it's unlikely any US official thought of it in that way. What mattered to officials was making sure the narratives that emerged from Vietnam made the US look noble, good, well-intentioned and so forth—despite the patently humiliating outcome. That's how the propaganda model is put in place. The routine practices of blame-shifting and motive-polishing use the model to give shape to the myths.

Chomsky and Herman's model tests well in their account of "bloodbaths," which contrasted the real assault on the civilian population in episodes like 1969's Operation

Speedy Express in the Delta as well as the Phoenix program's slow-motion slaughter of alleged VC operatives with the alleged bloodbaths perpetrated by the other side in the North's 1954-59 land reform program and "massacre" of civilians in Hue as the US and ARVN forces reclaimed the capital city after Tet 1968. Official media handouts ignored the US bloodbaths but hyped the alleged ones of the "other side."

All this was, of course, the mottled and disturbed surface beneath which some persistent policy themes ran more or less smoothly—if finally unsuccessfully, tragically so. Starting from the decision to support the French colonials before and after their crushing 1964 defeat at Dien Bien Phu, "the United States committed itself with its eyes open and with full knowledge of what it was doing to crushing the nationalist forces of Indochina," Chomsky declared. In two articles and a 2008 interview, he traces the post-WWII policy, driven by corporate goals of commercial dominance and resource control in South and East Asia. And once the US had engineered the breach of the 1954 promise to unite the two Vietnams with an election, "For propaganda purposes, our goal was reformulated. It was our noble task to protect Indochina from 'aggression.'"

The fact that these myths, these narratives are still surfacing and keeping their traction in instances of mass misrecollection like Ken Burns's recent *PBS* series is a credit to the propaganda model.

This book is not history—that is, not a timeline. It singles out incidents and practices that try to justify the overall narrative/myth that a well-meaning attempt to preserve freedom for a besieged people went terribly wrong through no fault of our own. We were all victims of that myth and are still struggling with it.



WOODY WOODRUFF (8TH RRFS, PHU BAI, SEPT-DEC 1967) IS A JOURNALIST AND JOURNALISM TEACHER, NOW RETIRED, IN LANHAM, MD.

The Man Who Fell From the Sky

PATRICK McCANN (REVIEWER)

The Man Who Fell From The Sky
by Bill Fletcher, Jr.
Hard Ball Press (August 2, 2018)

Two generations of veterans populate the landscape in Bill Fletcher, Jr.'s murder mystery *The Man Who Fell From the Sky*. It is 1970, and the US war on Vietnam is in its latter stages (midway between the Tet offensive of '68, and the leaving of US troops in '73). Nixon is president.

The novel's setting is not Vietnam, however, but the Cape Verdean community of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Its major characters are WWII and Vietnam War veterans, and their families. Our narrator and main character is David Gomes, a Vietnam-era veteran of Cape Verdean ancestry and investigative reporter

for a Cape Cod weekly, the *Cape and Islands Gazette*.

The book opens with a bang, literally. WWII veteran and construction company owner TJ Smith is shot in his driveway, just after kissing his wife goodbye on the way to work. No one heard the shot from the bushes across the street. What seems a professional "hit" is set to roil Cape Cod, especially its Cape Verdean population.

The Cape Verdean dynamic introduces race into the novel's plot equation. Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau were also at war at this time, not with the US, but with their historical colonizer, Portugal. Cape Verde, an island nation archipelago in the central Atlantic Ocean, was uninhabited when the Portuguese landed in 1456. They

brought slaves from West Africa to Cape Verde to work their plantations. Many Cape Verdeans, as a result, are of mixed race. The last census of 1950 pegged the Cape Verdean population as 70% mestizo, 28% Black, and 2% white.

Cape Verdean immigration to the United States began around 1790 aboard New England whaling ships. Restrictive legislation enacted in 1920s severely ended a period of significant Cape Verdean immigration. Cape Verdean immigrants strove to establish their own unique ethnic identity separate from Afro-Americans. For many years, authorities classified them ethnically (Portuguese), rather than racially (black). This, along with light skin, allowed Cape Verdeans to assimilate, especially if they

"kept to themselves" in southeastern Massachusetts.

Assimilation didn't stop racism and prejudice, and discrimination was part of the Cape Verdean immigrant experience. World War II was a jarring experience for many Cape Verdeans. Few Americans outside southeastern Massachusetts knew of the Cape Verde Islands, and Americans classified those with black ancestry as black. Cape Verdeans went into all-black military units, and (especially those stationed in the southern US) experienced blatant discrimination for the first time. Others successfully "passed," then served in all-white units.

The novel revolves around this issue. Cape Verdean veterans and their families hotly debate whether some Cape Verdeans are trying to deny and escape their blackness. The debate is not just about principals or morality, but of the consequences of such "self-denial." Our plot rushes to an unexpected ending, as reporter Gomes uncovers a dark secret from the past that has come to haunt the present. The book was a pleasure to read from beginning to end!



PATRICK McCANN WAS IN THE USAF 1970-1972, VVAW 1973 – PRESENT, AND VFP 2003 – PRESENT.



VVAW Milwaukee on Vets Day.

Memories of a Vietnam Veteran

ED VAIL (REVIEWER)

Memories of a Vietnam Veteran: What I Have Remembered and What He Could Not Forget
by Barbara Child
(Chiron Publications, 2019)

In its 198 pages, this powerfully written and beautifully structured book, is really three books in one, addressing the many dimensions of the costs of war. By writing it, Barbara Child creates a vivid window into what war does to vets and to the people who love them. It offers no prescriptions but provides a rich and unflinching description of all of the costs of war from the psychological to the physical/environmental, from relationships to health to death. Her multi-faceted descriptions and observations provide a unique resource for personal reflection, for learning, and for healing. All veterans, not just of Vietnam, who need to deal with the soul wounds of war and anyone who is in a relationship with a veteran will benefit from reading this book.

As war zone vets know all too well, wars kill physically long after the guns go silent.

Alan Morris was a Vietnam vet and a founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War at Kent State. The author, Barbara Child, was on the Commons when the killings happened. They met initially through Kent State anti-war activities in the early 70's then reunited in 1986, beginning a complex relationship that initially ends with Alan's suicide in 1996.

The first: "book within" *A Lifetime is Too Narrow to Understand it All* is primarily a memoir of their decade from 1986 to 1996 together. It is built around excerpts from Alan's

brutally honest in-country journal as a combat medic, describing the direct costs of war on the soldiers on both sides, the civilians and the environment. It is an unflinching window into the creation of soul wounds so deep that after a base attack when Alan doesn't seek cover from a follow-on mortar barrage, his officers declare his active duty war is over and send him home.

Barbara describes Alan's subsequent battle with complex PTSD and their struggles to create and maintain a relationship in that environment. Alan manifests most of the worst PTSD symptoms: hyper vigilance, weapons, substance abuse, isolating, not speaking/conversing. But through it all, her love for him and desire to stay in relationship never flags even though she finds that she must move on with other parts of her life.

Barbara's *An Open Letter to A Vietnam Veteran* written to him in her first year of seminary school in 1994 attempts to establish a deeper level of conversation with Alan, combining excerpts from his Vietnam journals with her reactions and observations. But, even with this outreach, subsequent visits, calls and letters, and attempts at organizational care, Alan continues to decline. The impact of a veteran's suicide ripples out across all past and current family and friend relationships, as well as ending those that might have, that should have happened in the future. These are some of the other costs of war.

The second "book within" *I Will Wait For You* is the story of Barbara's second relationship with



Allan; her dealing with her loss of him, his presence with her through her memories and her journey to finally being able to let go. Her pathway to healing the relationship wounds of war was via Jungian analysis of her memories and the meaning of those memories. It culminates in a personal journey to Vietnam in 2018; her memory and soul work, a timely ritual and the writing of this book sets her free.

The third "book within a book" *For Further Reading* is a 24-page selection of varied recommended resources. Each has a summary of the key points to help the reader determine their value and use. These resource summaries themselves are also thought provoking: impacts of war on children in a war zone, manipulated patriotism, Kent State, Jungian analysis and dream work, poetry and the search for meaning, and the moral/soul wounds of war.

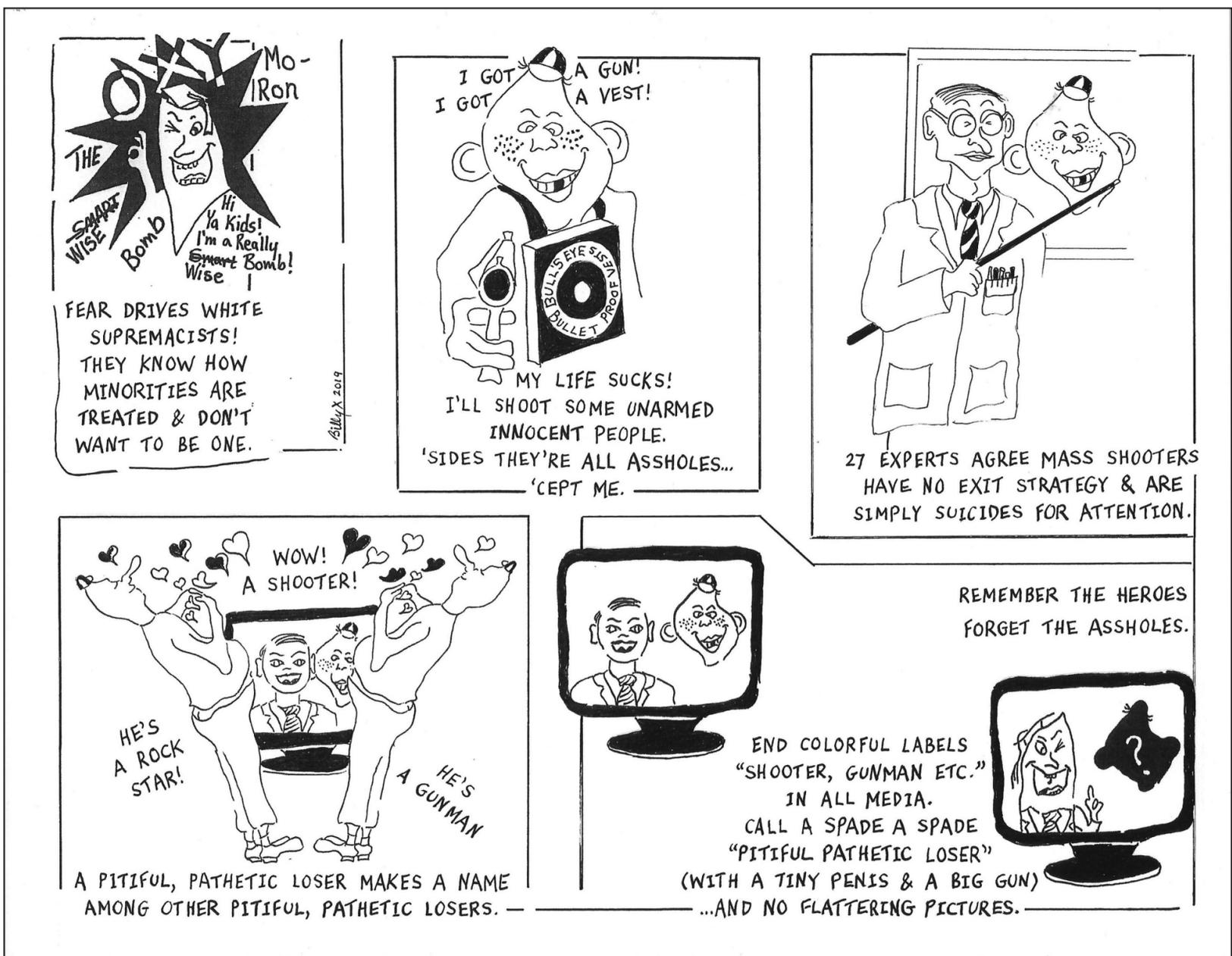
An example: *Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini. Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury*

After War. "Moral Injury can lead veterans to feelings of worthlessness, remorse and despair; they may feel as though they lost their souls in combat and are no longer who they were. Connecting emotionally to others becomes impossible for those trapped inside the walls of such feelings. When the consequences become overwhelming, the only relief may seem to be to leave this life behind (pp. xv-xvi)."

By the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC, across from the statue of the three soldiers, is a plaque set flat in a black granite base. It reads: For Alan Morris, 1949-1996.



ED VAIL, 1LT INF, SERVED AS A BASE-DEFENSE PLATOON LEADER, 2/8TH 1ST CAV, IN BIEN HOA, RVN, 1971-2 AND IS A LONG TIME MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE.



Comments or suggestions? Contact Billy at billyx.net@gmail.com or visit him online at www.billyx.net.

Monument to Stupidity #1 Sponsorship opportunity

Sponsorships for The Monument to Stupidity #1 are being accepted. The concrete block wall (approximately 6' x 10') with an identifying plaque is proposed for the grounds of the Witoka Contemporary at Art Works USA. Construction is anticipated during 2019.

The monument is intended as the first in a series of monuments leading up to the much larger scale NATIONAL MONUMENT TO STUPIDITY that should be managed under the umbrella of the US National Park Service.

Contributions in any amount are welcomed, but sponsors donating \$100 or more will be recognized on a didactic panel. Credit or Pay Pal payments: www.billyx.net and click on Store. Snail mail: Monument to Stupidity c/o: Art Works USA - 27979 County Road 17, Winona, MN 55987



I Started Learning the Real History of Vietnam

MIKE MCCAIN AS TOLD TO RICHARD STACEWICZ

Excerpt from Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War by Richard Stacewicz, pages 142-151.

Mike McCain was the son of a lifer in the Air Force. He joined the Marines after having received his draft notice because he believed that the Marines offered "the best opportunity for survival." He also wanted to be with the "best of the best."

I enlisted in the Marine Corps on May 24th, 1966. It was still what they called the "old Corps" where they could touch you and be up in your face. I mean, just intense. I personally got whaled on every single day for three months. Sergeant Bolton, our gunnery sergeant, would just walk up and, boom, coldcock you while he was asking you a question. I figured I'm going to learn how to fight and survive. I got other things that I want to do afterward.

One basis of boot camp is to get you physically fit; the other is emotional, the ability to be able to react when told to without having to be critical. You're broken down psychologically and then rebuilt in the mold which can respond when the need arises, especially during wartime. There's nothing like the threat of death to focus your mind.

How did they prepare you for Vietnam?

We were getting straight propaganda. We got there the story of how poor little General Ky and Thieu were just standing facing these onslaughts of North Vietnamese hordes. They had asked us if we could come and help them out in any way. Of course, the United States government, being the kind and wonderful people that we are, said, Listen, we'll try and figure out something we can do to help.

You believed that?

Yes. I had no other basis of belief.

I was a radio operator. You carry this very peculiarly shaped package on your back and an antenna up in the air; the second lieutenant is standing next to you (laughs), so I got one of the few jobs that had less of a life expectancy than second lieutenants. My MOS [military occupational specialty] was 2533. I could operate any piece of radio gear the military had, AM-FM, single-sideband, radio-relay, cryptology stuff. I graduated first in my class in radio school, which is one of the most intense schools in the military.

Then I got sent to Defense Language Institute. There was an experimental class set up in the Defense Language Institute up in Monterey at the Naval War College where they took a 12-month language class and compressed it into 90 days. I was there with officers and enlisted people from every branch of the service. I graduated first in my class there too.

Every time I graduated, I got promoted. When I got out of boot camp I got PFC because I was the series honor man; I got the Leatherneck Dress Blues Award; I got every single award the Marine Corps could give you coming out of boot camp. Out of radio school, I was made lance corporal. Out of language school, I was made corporal. So I was an E-4 at the end of a year in the Marine Corps. I was an E-4 when I got out too. [Laughs.] I came close to sergeant, but by then I had an attitude.

I got offered to go to OCS then,

and embassy school. I was the perfect size for going to embassy school. When I graduated from boot camp, I was 210 pounds of solid muscle with a 28-inch waist. I was bright and articulate and I looked good in uniform. They loved people like me. I had all the bases covered, but I said no. I had already enlisted for three years and in order to do either one of those things, I would have had to have increased my time in the military. I already knew I didn't want to do that.

I had already grown up in it. There were some problems of being a lifer in the military, and there was nothing that could be done about that. The class structure is rigid. I mean the guy that's the colonel could be the stupidest thing alive, but he's still the colonel. There's no future in being an enlisted man with 30 years in the Marine Corps, being an E-9 and knowing how to do everything and talking to some shave-ass lieutenant and calling him sir. I would have told them to fuck off. I turned all that down, knowing that the only alternative was going to Vietnam.

I got to Vietnam on May 28th, 1967. I was in the First Marine Division, Headquarters Battalion, Com Company Radio Platoon, in Danang. We were the ones that ran the first Marine Division Com center. We went on every operation that the Marine Corps was involved in. I did convoy duty and I did operations. For not being a grunt, I was in combat about as much as it was possible to be, which is about 50 percent of the time.

What do you mean by combat?

Actually being in a position to get shot at and having to shoot back. Most combat veterans will say that the most intense periods of their lives were those wartime experiences. It was insane—flashes of intense terror and fright coupled with incredible moments of quiet and tenderness. You're never nearly as alive as you are except when your ass is on the line. Either some body's shooting at you, or you're shooting at somebody else. Everything is on. All your senses are alert. You feel everything. You smell everything. Sex doesn't have anywhere near the immersion of sensation that combat does.

In Danang, you had a few rockets come in now and then, but you walked around in a bathing suit and flip-flops, smoked dope and drank beer at the club, paid \$5 to get laid, and stuff like that. It was like being in a resort.

We were living on the highest point of Danang harbor, which is one of the most beautiful natural harbors in the world. Our hootch in Danang was pretty cool. We had hustled mattresses. We had sheets. We had blankets and pillows. We had cantilevered porches built down the side of the mountain to hang out on. We had these huge stereo sound systems. We had cold water to drink. They're very comfortable. But then of course, when you're out in the bush, it wasn't like that at all.

As soon as I got over there, as a goof, I started going around and asking people that I would meet, you know, the mama-sans that would come into work around us, "Ay, which one of you guys invited us over here?" I started learning the real history of Vietnam and the war and the struggle of the French against the Vietnamese from the Vietnamese.

There are Marines there who are telling me, "Don't believe anything you heard, man; this place is fucked." It was like this, "Hey, new kid, what



Mike McCain (holding baby), Oakland, 1974.

they just told you, you been lied to, asshole. They're fucking with you." These are Marines telling me this.

One story was being told in the United States, and people who had been there for a while knew what that story was, but that was not the reality of what was going on. I mean these great advances and military victories and all that was being reported in the United States papers, people were telling me were just not true at all. "No, man, that's bullshit. They kicked our ass."

How did this strike you?

It was like an epiphany. It was like, Wow, what's going on here? So I started asking. There wasn't any putting it together at that point. The conscious analysis didn't happen until much later, not until after Tet in 1968, after I had been there for a long time, that I started really questioning and understanding the politics of what was going on. But that was just the beginning of it. It didn't reach completion for years after I got out of the military and did anti-war work, because I had to study the history. There was just this feeling that there was some problem here.

Did you ever personally experience the problems you had heard of?

Oh, yeah. The experience with the ARVN was that. The ARVN was as much our enemy as the NVA or PRG [Provisional Revolutionary Government]. That was the first real clue because these people were supposed to be fighting for their own country and there was no way in hell they were.

They were just a bunch of crooks. They would steal anything they saw that they wanted. If they saw a young woman who was particularly good-looking, she would get raped by all of them. Somebody had a piece of meat or some food they wanted, it would be taken. They couldn't be counted on for anything. They were worthless. They were a drain on society as a whole. This is what I saw. They didn't act like

the soldiers who were supposed to be trying to free the people.

The military is always supposed to be in the service of the people. This is what I thought then; this is what I think now. I'm not anti-military, not at all. There are rules that you have to abide by. Neither the ARVN nor the United States military functioned in a way that I thought was right. I mean, there was always prostitutes around. They institutionalized prostitution around military bases, you could get laid for five bucks or a case of C rats. That, I felt, was fundamentally wrong.

There was another problem in that the United States military was not intellectually capable of understanding what was going on in Vietnam. One of the things that was going on then was that we would take places in the daytime; then move out at night; it would be taken over, and then go out and go through the same fight the next morning. We weren't educated about this hill as a strategic position; we were just told: Kill! Go kill!

I had a constant struggle with officers. Most of the officers didn't have a clue about what was going on, nor did they know how to lead, which I was already learning how to do. I was active in sports in high school, and growing up in the military, I knew what teamwork was. We're all in this shit together. Very seldom was there that relationship with officers.

One of my nicknames was "The Man." The Man was the guy who made sure you came back. I was always a squad leader or platoon leader, and nobody that was ever with me died—and we were in some pretty difficult places. I had a sense ... I knew when something was about to happen. I'd wake up from a dead sleep in our hootch and tell everyone to move and get in the bunker, and we'd get in the bunker and the first round would hit. Nobody would have survived.

You don't let ignorance rule just

continued on page 26

Learning the Real History of Vietnam

continued from previous page

because it's wearing a bar. You don't allow yourself to be killed because some asshole says go do something. I mean the lieutenants in Vietnam had to be brought along. That's where fragging was involved. When push came to shove, if your only choice was to die yourself or getting rid of this dude who was going to put you in a position where you were going to be killed, the choice was reasonably simple.

The other thing was the callousness of the military itself that I found out about very quickly. If you got office hours, your punishment was to work in the mess hall. So people were doing disgustingly gross shit with the food because it was their punishment, right? Once you find that out, you say, "I don't think I want to go there anymore. I don't like this guy beating off into my coleslaw, pissing in the spaghetti, or whatever it was." [Laughs.]

We wrote to Senator McGovern, Kennedy, and the guy from Oregon [Senator Wayne Morse] who voted against the Tonkin Gulf [resolution], saying, Listen, we think we got a bad situation here and we don't think the Marine Corps should be doing this. We had already talked to our own officers and stuff and said, This is not such a good idea, guys; we all like to eat.

That was the first time I got in trouble. I got called up before very high brass. "How dare you tell somebody else that there's something wrong with our Marine Corps? You should have come to us first." Our response was, We tried. Nobody would pay any attention to us. "Well, you must have not done it right." It became totally our fault. We became the ones who had done something wrong. We had circumvented the chain of command, which is a deadly sin. We refused to accept it. They were wrong.

I was bucking authority. They were doing two o'clock in the morning inspections and shit like that. I told them, This is really stupid, man. I had grown up in a family that said you should always fight for what's right. Your bosses are supposed to take care of you, all of this shit. I've always been an uppity sort of guy. I've always been willing to accept that people might be smarter than I was, but they damn well better take my opinion into consideration because I was just like anybody else. Our society is supposed to be about that kind of stuff.

Very few people would argue, if they'd been there very long, about the correctness of what we were doing. It just wasn't an argument that held a lot of water. It was always talked about, but there were always people who didn't want to admit it. Because then it means, What's my life about? What's my country about? Questions like that are hard to deal with. Most people don't want to raise the questions.

At one point, my commanding officer decided that the way to deal with me and that phenomenon was by getting rid of me. I was made the commanding general's bodyguard of Task Force X-Ray, which was the unit that was in Hue City. It was Brigadier General Foster Carr Lahugh, a graduate of VMI [Virginia Military Institute], straight, traditional, old Corps. I couldn't leave the boy's side. I was like connected with an umbilical cord with this guy.

We moved up to Phu Bai, which was a combined Army and Marine Corps unit. It was either the 101st or 82nd Airborne. We were the ones who had to go into Hue the 30th or 31st of January when Tet started.

The first night of Tet, when I was in Phu Bai, the CIA officer in Hue City came through the lines and walked into the command center totally unannounced. He and his Vietnamese radioman got through our lines and just

walked into the commanding general's bunker to make their report. These guys were tripped out to the fucking nines. They're dressed in solid black. They got weapons I'd never seen before. They had the highest-quality, most brand-new radios that existed—weighed half as much as I had, twice the battery life. They had stuff that I would have given my eyeteeth to have.

He came in and he just gave the list of names of thousands of people that the CIA thought were sympathetic to the north. As far as I know, all the reports of the NVA coming into Hue and killing all these people and burying them in mass graves was not done by them at all but was done by the United States military.

I quit carrying bullets after that. I didn't carry bullets in the last six months I was in Vietnam.

What about that experience made you stop carrying bullets?

I had already had the Vietnamese do several things for me, like I'd be out in the ville having dinner with people and somebody leaves the room and comes back a few minutes later and says, "There's a sweep coming through here; you'll have to come hide." I'd get put in a cellar or tunnel or something, and there'd be me—this big old white boy—and a couple of other Vietnamese, who I later figured out had to be the PRG or NVA because I could talk Vietnamese. So we'd talk.

They talked about their families and their life and what they wanted to do, just like I did. It was the most elemental of political discussions. "Are you married? Got any kids? My daughter's in high school now. She's doing pretty good. I'm worried about this guy she's going out with." I felt that they were all good people. They were just like anybody else.

As soon as Tet was over, the general got reassigned to the states, and I got sent back to radio platoon and was even more of a jefe than when I left because I had been up in Hue. When I got back to Danang at the end of February, we had this big party. That's when I found out about all the guys that died up on 337, which is the radio hill.

It's the most painful [holding back tears] . . . having your friends die. It's the most difficult thing next to your wife and children. The only comparison is family . . . It's not really a comparison - that's what they really are, is family.

How did you make sense of their deaths?

I didn't. I smoked reefers [and] drank to numb it, because there was no mechanism. My first introduction to drugs was in Vietnam. I started smoking reefers there and took speed and barbiturates because there were times on operations where you didn't want to go to sleep, so the corpsman would give us a thousand-tab jar of 10-milligram straight methamphetamine. We'd take that out with us

A political consciousness is growing in the entire military by that point. We started to occasionally get glimpses of an alternative analysis of what we were doing there. There were active-duty GI projects in some of the places around the world. People in Vietnam were starting to wear peace symbols on their helmets. "Vietnam for the Vietnamese." "Get the GIs Out of Here." "Peace Now." All those kinds of things.

I was there when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The MPs were almost all white. The cats were just happy-very, very happy. They thought that was the coolest thing since white bread. I mean, it was all that traditional shit. "Thank god the nigger's dead. He deserved it." That sort of shit. They came across the street mouthing off. We had a couple



of black people in our platoon, and we locked and loaded on them. Said, "Mother fucker, get your ass out here, or you will die. I don't want to hear that shit anymore."

One of the guys I was involved with was from Chicago, "Honey Bear." He had been telling us about the Black Panther Party. He had been getting the newspaper from them. We were all reading it. We read anything.

There was an underground system of radio stations. The last operation I was on was the first incursion into Cambodia trying to break the Ho Chi Minh trail. So I'm sitting on top of the highest point in South Vietnam, which is a hill called Ba Nai . . . I think it was Hill 1327. We were a mile or so up. After midnight, all these underground radio stations would start coming on the air. The entire country was connected from top to bottom with this underground system. You'd have the guys from Detroit with the Motown show and the guys from Texas would be doing the country-and-western bit. There'd be a salsa show and rock and roll, and all of this was interspersed with news about what was actually going on. That was the first time we actually started hearing about the mutinies in the Army. Of course, we had done the same things in the Marine Corps already.

What do you mean?

You know, "I want you, Joe, to take your platoon out here. I want you to make a perimeter. You go out three clicks to this point, head east, then do this, and this whole thing . . ." "Yeah, right." [Sarcastically.] You go out like half a mile, find yourself a nice place, sit down all fucking day and come back at night. "Yeah, I checked everything out and it's fine." That had been going on for a long time.

The stupidity of the—you know—"Go out and take a hill during the day and come back at night and give it up to the enemy" was the start of that. There was a futility to anything we were doing. People just said, "If there isn't any reason for it, what the fuck am I going to do it for?"

You discussed this?

Absolutely. A major topic of discussion, particularly after Tet. I mean, Tet's the epiphany. That's where everybody got their eyes opened. That was an eye-opener. "How did these little motherfuckers do this? How could this possibly have happened?"

We had not been told the truth. What Westmoreland was doing was a denial of the reality for so long that we didn't understand what had happened. We didn't realize that after Tet, the war was over. We destroyed huge percentages of the infrastructure of the PRG and NVA. They were decimated, but we didn't perceive that at the time.

Tet starts the end of January, is over by the end of February, and I left the country at the end of October of 1968. I had gotten my flight date, and like in 10 days before I was supposed to go home, I got busted for possession of a tenth of a gram of marijuana. My platoon commanding officer walked into the hootch and caught me with it. Within seconds of him walking in the door, people came in both doors of the hootch behind him, covered

both doors, locked and loaded, and would have killed him on the spot if I had said, Do it. After he busted me, people were lining up to take him out because of the respect and position that I had in my unit, and I said, "No, you can't do that. It's wrong." He got transferred very shortly thereafter. Somebody made a phone call and he got sent to Fifth Marines in An Hoa, which was not a fun place to be. He was killed within two weeks of getting there with an M-60.

Because there was no longer any witnesses, I went from general court-martial to summary court-martial, where you have one officer who's judge, jury, defense, prosecuting attorney, and everything. It ended up being this hippie captain, a graduate in history from Berkeley. We talked about the great quantity of marijuana in Vietnam for an hour or so. He fills out the form, "not guilty," and I was on a plane in 48 hours and I was gone, but that took almost six months. I ended up doing almost 18 months in-country.

I got out late fall of 1968. Got transferred to Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station in North Carolina, and basically did not do anything. I went to another school, to microwave relay school, where I learned how to work with microwave transmission. I then got an early out and was released on April 1, 1969.

I was still married to my first wife, Elaine. We packed the car. Sean was born then. We drove in a Volkswagen van from North Carolina to Los Angeles. Her family was in Los Angeles. I went to college. I was a straight-A student. I started studying political science, history, economics—trying to learn the history of what I had just been involved in.

Then Jackson State and Kent State and the invasion of Cambodia happened in early 1970, and I just got to where I felt I had to do something. I didn't know what it was I was supposed to do; I just felt that there was something I was supposed to do.

The military was killing our babies. You don't send the military into your schools. That was wrong. That's what we had done. We knew it. It was a gut reaction. There wasn't any analysis. There was just this overwhelming sense that what had just happened was very, very wrong. Something had to be done. We didn't know what.

So the killing at Kent State was what motivated you...?

We came home with nightmares about . . . [Chokes up.] I did some stuff over there that I still refuse to talk about. I did stuff to children and women that I don't even want to think about, that I did in the heat of being in war, that I think is totally wrong. There's too much pain. That's part of what got me looking at stuff. There's no excuse for it. It's wrong. You get to thinking, Is there some other way to do things? The answer is yes, but it's a lot harder to do those than it is to kill people.



Copies of Winter Soldiers can be purchased through Haymarket Books at www.haymarketbooks.org/books/859-winter-soldiers.

Fifty-five Years Ago: Into the American War Against Vietnam

JOE MILLER

(An earlier version of this article originally appeared in *The Veteran* in 1989.)

I share with many thousands of others the somewhat dubious distinction of being a Vietnam veteran who never saw Vietnam. However, in late December 1965, our ship was a few miles off the Vietnam coast at Cam Ranh Bay, with the land in clear view. We had to move in close, not for any military purpose, but to bring Bob Hope's Christmas Show troupe out to us—Christmas in the tropics, 1965. Boy, it was war, and war sure was Hell!

We carrier-based sailors were recipients of the Vietnam Service Medal, combat pay (when the ship was operating in a "combat zone"), and the free mail privilege, along with any other "goodies" (ribbons) the government saw fit to throw at us to make us feel we were doing something worthwhile.

Most of us had never been, nor would we ever be, directly involved in any sort of real combat. We thought it was rough when we had to stand twelve-hour watches during General Quarters. Of course, we did lose shipmates and pilots, many unseen and many the result of stupid accidents due to the pressures of a war-time level of activity during so-called "peace time."

Vietnam was a very "clean" war for most of us on carrier duty during this early period (1964-66). The ship's aircrafts (A4s, F8s, A3Bs) and pilots did all the dirty work. We did not see any explosions (except for practice gunnery exercises), hear any screams, nor did we have to take any body count. If we were lucky, the CO would inform us each evening (just before the evening prayer—because we were doing God's work, after all) of the day's "successes." I recall once when a great cheer rang throughout the ship's crew of some three thousand men, as the Captain announced one particularly strategic kill—a water buffalo!

When I enlisted in the US Navy in April 1961, the Vietnam "issue" simply did not exist. In those days, there was no sentiment of doing "our part for the war effort." This was peace time. Enemies were far away, behind "iron" or "bamboo" curtains, and all that most of us knew about them came through media images.

My generation had been raised on TV shows such as "Navy Log," "Victory at Sea," "Annapolis," or "West Point," not to mention those WWII and postwar Hollywood productions that always glorified war and military service and starred some "reel" war heroes like Ronald Reagan and John Wayne.

A so-called "tour" in the military then simply looked like some sort of romp.

Surely nothing would happen to any of us. Of course, all of us healthy, eighteen-year-old men had our military duty to perform in any case. All were required to serve at least six years, according to the Selective Service rules of the day. No one thought to oppose such requirements back then. Joining up was the thing to do, and I did, as an eighteen-year-old kid just out of high school.

Upon completion of "boot camp" at Great Lakes, I was designated to work as a Communications Technician (CT) in the Naval Security Group, a military intelligence unit that reported to the ultra-secret National Security Agency (NSA). As part of my training, I was sent to the Army Language School (now the Defense Language Institute) in Monterey, California, to study Chinese-Mandarin. While I was there (1961-63), Vietnam began to have a little more relevance.

Those who struggled with one

to one-and-a-half years of language training, were appalled at Army Special Forces types who were going through six-week "quickie" courses in Vietnamese. How much could they learn in six weeks, when we were barely able to carry on any sort of conversation after six months? Also, why was Vietnamese so important all of a sudden? It was now 1962, and who among us knew much of anything about Vietnam then?

I completed language training in 1963 and was sent to Taiwan to work with the Naval Security Group Detachment (NAVSECGRUDET) at Linkou Air Station, about fifteen miles outside Taipei. Though I considered myself a "ChiCom specialist" mainly concerned with intelligence analysis about both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (yes, Virginia, we also spied on our allies!), we also received daily teletype reports on troop and ship movements in and around Southeast Asia. One of the senior noncoms regaled us with stories about having been shot at while working in a spy plane over northern Vietnam. That sort of possibility was new to many of us "greenies," since the running joke had always been that in any sort of emergency, CTs would be evacuated even before the women and children. (Of course, later there would be the USS Liberty in 1967 and the USS Pueblo in 1968 to put that myth to rest...)

Six months into my tour on Taiwan, I was pegged as a "security risk" due to my relationship with Hui-fang, a Taiwanese woman who worked on the base. One of my friends from language school, an E-6, reported this to our Operations Officer, Lt. Dickey. I demanded that Dickey confront me directly if he wished to know anything of my personal life. This made it "official." I was told that I must break off the relationship with Hui-fang, that I would be sent away to another station that night and not allowed to ever communicate with her again. The only alternative if I persisted in this relationship was that I would be removed from security work and sent out to the so-called "regular" Navy to finish out my enlistment.

I told Lt. Dickey what he could do with that job, was kicked out of the Naval Security Group, had my Top Secret "Crypto" clearance removed, and was soon assigned to—horror of horrors!—sea duty on board the World War II vintage aircraft carrier, USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14). Before leaving Taiwan, however, Hui-fang and I did manage to fight through all the official and unofficial obstacles in order to marry.

In mid-June 1964, I reported aboard the Ticonderoga, was assigned to work as a clerk typist for the Weapons Department, and passed the first weeks at this new duty without any major event. We spent most of our time sailing back and forth between Japan and the Philippines, with a week or two off the coast of Vietnam once in a while. Suddenly, Vietnam was "real," though still unseen.

On August 2, 1964, the Ticonderoga received word that one of our task group's destroyers, the USS Maddox, was under attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Planes from our ship were already in the air, and they were sent to defend the Maddox. These pilots fired the first salvos in a new, naval side of what was fast becoming an American war against Vietnam. Two days later there were reports of another attack, this time against two US destroyers, the Maddox and the Turner Joy. Once again, our planes, as well as those from other carriers, flew off to the rescue, just as John Wayne would have done



in a Hollywood movie.

Much of the crew was frustrated and angry because the United States seemed to be letting the "gooks" get away with these so-called "unprovoked" attacks. Keep in mind, there were no real US casualties in these encounters, only those Vietnamese who had their boats shot out from under them. Tensions were high on the Ticonderoga, for we had been at sea for more than sixty days straight, the longest continuous sea period many of the younger guys had ever experienced. Mail deliveries were extremely slow or nonexistent, ship's supplies, like fresh milk and soda pop were low. We all wanted to see something done, anything.

On August 5, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam. You would have thought that every man on the carrier was a fighter pilot—we wanted to hit the "gooks" and hit them hard. LBJ managed to push through the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in Congress, and that opened the gates for further direct US involvement.

It had begun, and we all felt the release, not realizing or caring what the consequences might be for anyone. Later that year, some of us would even vote for Barry Goldwater because he promised to do more (or, we simply didn't trust Johnson). Suddenly, we had a reason to be out there on that rust bucket—we were now actively fighting "communism." We didn't really know or care what that was; we simply gave it a label and felt much better because now we were not wasting our time.

We puffed with pride when we pulled into Subic Bay or Yokosuka, Japan, because we had "done something." The whole crew of three thousand was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for our actions in the Gulf of Tonkin. We now had battle ribbons to prove our worth. Most of us saw no battle, fired no rockets, felt no fear—we just sat back on the ship, put on our ribbons, and collected the combat pay. What a way to fight a war!

Assuredly, I shared in all the excitement. However, some nagging questions were beginning to form in my mind. Official statements said that our destroyers had not provoked the North Vietnamese in the Tonkin Gulf, but I knew otherwise, and it began to bother me.

Some days after all the action, the Ticonderoga had occasion to refuel and resupply the Maddox. During these operations, one of my duties was to be above decks to time the process. As I stood there, I could hear someone shouting out my name from the deck of the Maddox. I looked across the expanse of perhaps sixty feet that separated our two ships, and I recognized a few of my former intelligence work mates from the Naval Security Group on Taiwan. Some of these guys had been at our wedding! Then I realized what the Maddox had been doing off the coast

of northern Vietnam—it was on a Desoto patrol.

Desoto patrols in the Western Pacific had actually been going on since sometime in 1963. A couple had been sent out while I was stationed in Taiwan, and, if I had not been removed from intelligence work, I was about due to go out on one. I have often thought that I might have been on the Maddox during its most infamous period.

These patrols were operations carried out by regular destroyers that were fitted with a temporary working space, an intelligence van (or "black box"), right on top of the main deck. Special intelligence personnel, Communications Technicians, were picked up from shore stations around the Western Pacific and carried on board for a couple of weeks while the ship would make certain maneuvers in an attempt to gather intelligence about enemy coastal installations. The personnel who worked in the van included people who were trained in the languages of the country (or countries) being investigated, in this case Vietnamese and Chinese. Recordings were made of any reactions (voice or electronic) to the ship's presence, and these recordings were then sent to the various shore stations where the Naval Security Group operated, such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, as well as to NSA headquarters at Fort George Meade, Maryland.

At times, the only way to get some sort of communications reaction was to drastically turn the ship landward and even enter the territorial waters of the country in question, as if heading up a potential invasion force. We all now know (at least since 1968) that the Maddox was engaged in such maneuvers when it was attacked by North Vietnam. Add this to the covert operations then being carried out against North Vietnam by the United States and South Vietnamese governments (OPLAN 34A), and it is not too surprising that the Maddox would be a target of North Vietnamese attack.

The questions produced by my knowledge of some of this background remained in the back of my mind for some time. As 1964 came to a close, these questions were pushed even further back in the excitement of returning to the States and seeing Hui-fang, who had already flown there to live with my parents in the Chicago area.

Of course, I didn't feel I could (or should) tell anyone about this reality behind the Tonkin Gulf "incidents," because I still believed in, or felt bound by, the security oath I signed when my clearance was revoked earlier that year. Much later, perhaps too late, as the carnage grew to monstrous proportions in Vietnam, I no longer felt bound by such paper promises.

The Ticonderoga returned to the

continued on page 29

Chapter Three: The Child

PAUL J. GIANNONE

Excerpts from the Chapter: The Child from the memoir A Life in Dark Places by Paul J. Giannone (Torchflame Books, 2019)

"In many ways, the most tragic figures of the war were those Vietnamese who trusted the Americans and believed in their own responsibility." - Frances Fitzgerald, Fire in the Lake.

All too often, even now, I find myself standing in the doorway of a cramped, damp and unclean space. I know it lingers only as a nightmare, yet I can still see it, still smell it. I can still feel the fear of those who lived the last moments of their lives there.

The center room of the Hoi An prison hospital was about the size of a large living room. The mold-covered walls of stark concrete surrounded a combination waiting area, nurses' station, and examination room. As it all comes back to me, I see again an old wooden desk and chair, a glass medicine instrument cabinet and wooden benches.

The cabinet held no instruments, no medicines. At the far end of this room, a hospital sheet was draped over a single metal wire, forming a flimsy barrier for the patient examination area. The sheet was splattered with blood, dirt, and what appeared to be bits of skin. An equally filthy and dilapidated ob/gyn examination table sat behind the divider.

This room was for women and children under the age of 12, with the ward at the opposite end of the building for males 12 and older. The entire building was permeated with the sour smell of unclean human beings living in close proximity to each other, a smell much worse than that of any refugee camp I have ever visited. This mixed odor of vomit, perspiration, and feces oozed out of the doorway openings, mingling with something more bestial and primordial—the aura of fear.

As I stare, the dirty floor of the female ward seems to be alive and moving, and I see that it is covered with bodies. There are no beds. The patients lay on dirty mats on the bare floor. You could hardly put a foot down without stepping on a limb or torso.

Barbed wire covered the barred windows and stretched over the ceiling, creating a nesting ground for the birds whose droppings covered the walls.

When I return there in my mind or in my dreams, I am rarely alone for long. Almost always, the smiling face of Mr. Quang—the prison commandant—appears at my side. Like most Vietnamese, he was short in stature, with jet-black hair and eyes, a round face and dark skin. He had a cruel smile and the rough hands of a peasant. This was the man in charge of interrogations.

As a US Army public health adviser, I was assigned to conduct inspections of this facility and bring what medical aid I could to help the prisoners. On my first trip there, I asked Mr. Quang about the capacity of the prison. He replied, "About 400 prisoners."

"How many are in here?" I asked, incredulously.

Smiling again, he informed me that the prison now held approximately 1,400 men, women, and children. I would later learn that the figure was closer to 1,600. Mr. Quang shrugged his shoulders and suggested I inspect the holding centers.

It was common knowledge that every major Vietnamese city and town had at least one political prison, supported by the US government, that served to detain political prisoners and gather intelligence about the communist/political infrastructure.

Why not? We were at war, weren't

we?

At each cell block, hands were thrust out between the iron bars, faces pressed against them. As I passed close to one of the cells, a little girl reached out and tightly grasped my hand.

After just a few minutes, Mr. Quang quickly moved me along to the male section. He did not want me to see any more women and children.

The silent guards unlocked the door, and we walked into a concrete room that could not have measured any more than 10 feet by 10 feet, full of prisoners squatting from shoulder to shoulder. Their ages ranged from about 12 to over 70. So many bodies were crammed into that space that there was no room to lie down or even to sit.

As we crossed the threshold, the prisoners immediately jumped to attention. Several obviously did this with a great deal of pain but they also moved quickly. Fear and torture are great motivators. I asked how many times a day these men were allowed to leave the cell to exercise, bathe, eat and relieve themselves. The response was an abrupt "twice a day for fifteen minutes and a bath once a week."

The next stop was the kitchen, the primary reason for my health inspection. A complaint had gotten to province headquarters, and rumor had it that there were actually queries about the prison coming from Washington.

Among other things, there had been outbreaks of scurvy and beriberi. Both are ancient afflictions with simple cures that have been known for centuries. Scurvy could be corrected by introducing fresh fruit to the diet; beriberi with more grain, yeast or meat. Neither should ever have occurred in a country as lush with vegetation and fowl as Vietnam. When the task was assigned to me, the implication was that this story might make the press if something was not done.

My first glance at the kitchen turned my stomach. The food was thin rice gruel, re-cooked so many times it was difficult to distinguish as rice. Looking through the large cooking pots I could see only a few bits and pieces of a substance that might have been fish or meat. An occasional strand of green leafy vegetable floated in the brew. It looked more like vomit than food.

The flies and rats got their portion of the meal long before the prisoners did, so it was no surprise that gastrointestinal problems were rampant in the prison.

Returning to the dispensary, I passed a two-room concrete structure that was entirely surrounded by barbed wire. This was where prisoners were tortured.

Some were tortured for information. Many were tortured for the sake of being tortured. There was no significant information or enemy secrets to be had from most of the prisoners, but they still became the victims in an escalating spiral of violence.

This building did not discriminate. Men, women, and children all spent time in the interrogation center.

Back in the dispensary, I set about preparing to see patients. My first was a girl, about sixteen or seventeen. She lay on her back in a corner of the women's ward, her head pressed tightly against one wall and her face towards the other. Her arms and legs flailed about frantically as if she were in the throes of an epileptic fit. As I approached, she made the most ungodly sound.

Then I saw that the girl was very pregnant, perhaps seven or eight months along. Her eyes were glassy. Drool came out of the side of her mouth. She was unaware of my presence.

Luckily on this trip, a US Navy

doctor had accompanied me to the prison and was now in the same ward. I yelled for him, and as he began his examination, I backed away to give him room.

Meanwhile, a male inmate had somehow had made his way to the doorway of the women's ward. He beckoned to me and I walked over. The man was in his late thirties or early forties and kept repeating the Vietnamese term "dau," meaning "pain." I examined him and found a long lateral bruise running six inches on either side of his navel. There were several swollen welts on his head. He had obviously been a recent guest at the prison interrogation center.

I was not allowed to supply any medicine, and with none in the dispensary, there was little we could do. I gently took his arm, gave him as many aspirin as I could, and told him in Vietnamese how to take them.

The doctor called me back to the girl. He slowly pulled off his stethoscope, handed it to me, and told me to listen to the girl's abdomen.

My untrained ears heard nothing. He took his thumb and middle finger and thumped it against the girl's stomach. She screamed and I heard an echo sound. He put his hand on my shoulder and told me that the girl was not pregnant. Instead, she had been through some sort of trauma that caused her to gasp in large amounts of air. Consequently, her stomach had blown up like an enormous balloon.

The dispensary matron said in Vietnamese/American slang that the girl was "dinky dau," meaning crazy. She had been brought to the interrogation center and tortured repeatedly for several days. Her captors had inserted live electrical wires into her vagina. Sometimes they would attach these wires to her ear lobes and electrify her brain. Other times they would drop water on her to intensify the electric current.

Sadly, this was not my first exposure to torture.

Once, at a short-term holding center for POW's near my compound, I saw an elderly woman who broke into uncontrollable spasms whenever she was touched. She had been tortured with electric current, and her "interrogators" were not just Vietnamese. Some were Americans.

The interrogators had discovered that women did not stand up to electric shock torture as well as men, and so that became the method of choice for them. The men got a combination of electric shock, beatings, sexual mutilation, and torture known as "waterboarding." The latter was performed by holding the subject down with a towel over his mouth. Hot soapy water would be forced into his mouth through the towel. The soap would clog up the towel causing the victim to drown or suffocate.

Another method of water torture was to force water up the victim's rectum with a high-powered water hose.

It was a Vietnamese version of the Salem witch trials. If an individual was labeled a Viet Cong suspect, he or she was arrested without warrant and then tortured. The torture continued until a confession was wrung out or until the prisoner died. Those who wanted the slightest chance of survival confessed to being a Communist. But they were unable to provide information on troop and weapons locations, so this prompted more torture.

I had heard the counter-arguments before: "But the Communists use torture." Of course, they did. But unlike the Americans, the Communists never professed the ideals of human rights and democracy.

Consider the girl whom I mistook for being pregnant in the Hoi An Prison. I found out that her father had

been a member of the political party that opposed the corrupt ruling Thieu regime in the 1968 elections.

To no one's surprise, President Thieu and Vice President Ky won the election in a landslide. One of their first acts to consolidate power was to declare that all the political opposition were Communist, and opposition leaders were immediately arrested—or, in some cases, shot on the spot.

The girl's father was arrested along with all his family. His daughter was separated from the others and taken to Hoi An Prison.

I approached Commandant Quang and demanded that this girl no longer be tortured. What information could they possibly get from her? For the first time in my career as an adviser, I raised my voice to a Vietnamese. I felt the cards were in my favor since they so urgently needed my presence to counter any negative press stories. To my amazement, the commandant consented without argument. As best as I could determine, the girl was no longer harmed.

Then a woman with a young baby showed up at the dispensary. I estimated her age to be about thirty, and she was terribly thin. Her skin was pale, and there were dark circles under her eyes. Her baby lay cradled in her arms, wrapped in filthy rags.

It was a baby boy, almost small enough to fit in the palm of my hand and in a severe state of malnutrition. His skin was stretched over his face and his eyes bulged out.

This was beyond my medical skills, so I left the prison and returned with another Navy doctor. He confirmed that something had to be done immediately. The best thing would be to transfer the infant to a hospital, somewhere clean and protected.

The commandant said he knew of the woman and child in question, but flatly denied my request to move them. He told me the woman was suspected of being the wife of a prominent Communist Party member.

The child and his mother were the by-products of Operation Phoenix, a US government-sponsored endeavor supported heavily by the CIA and intended to identify and eliminate Communist political party cadres in villages and hamlets.

The program did succeed in eliminating a large portion of the Communist infrastructure. Yet it also became a license to kill, arrest, or torture anyone labeled as a Communist suspect, and gave an already corrupt Thieu regime carte blanche to remove any of its opposition.

Foolishly, I thought I could rationalize with Quang. How could a baby this young be considered a Communist? How far could the mother and child get in their weakened states if they did try to escape? How did we know this woman was indeed the wife of the person claimed? I never got beyond his malevolent smile.

For the next few days, I went from one office to another at Province Headquarters. No one would see me, but I'm sure they were aware of my quest. Finally, my CO cautioned me to back off. American public health advisers had no business interfering with the internal affairs of the South Vietnamese government.

In desperation, I returned to the prison and begged Quang to release the child into my custody. I would take full responsibility. I would find a person to care for the child. The mother could stay secured at the prison. The answer was still no.

When I returned to my quarters that evening I was told by my CO that I had been ordered to report to company

continued on page 29

Fifty-five Years Ago

continued from page 27

States in December, 1964, for a six-month overhaul period at Hunter's Point, near San Francisco. My wife flew out from Chicago, and we lived just outside Chinatown for that whole period.

The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley was at its height, and civil rights struggles around the country were causing more and more people to question the truth of the basic principles of American society. I was not immune to these things. I found myself increasingly involved in reading more, questioning more, interested in digging below the surface reality of things.

By June 1965, much had happened, not least of which was the fact that Hui-fang was now four months pregnant. The war in Vietnam was now clearly a US "problem." In February, Operation Rolling Thunder, the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, was ordered by President Johnson. The first official American combat units (Marines) were sent to Vietnam in March. By June, the US troop levels had reached 50,000.

At home in March, the first of many "teach-ins" on the war was held at the University of Michigan. On April 17, the first major anti-war demonstration took place in Washington, DC, with some 20,000 participants.

My own thinking about the war was beginning to solidify as a result of digging into the history of US involvement in Indochina. The more I learned, the less I believed the official line on the war. I made no noise, however. There was no overt protest on my part. The questions remained and grew in intensity as I looked into it further.

Our ship was sent back to WestPac in late September 1965, months earlier than originally scheduled. There were grumbles from the crew, largely out of having to leave loved ones again. For example, I would now be 10,000 miles away while my wife was giving birth to our first child. No one among us seriously questioned our early return

to the war zone, at least not openly.

Things in the "war zone" were much more hectic. Carriers were now averaging 75-80% of their time deployed at sea. There were always three carrier groups on duty, two in the North and one in the South. Two other carriers and their escorts were rotated on "rest and maintenance." Generally, the schedule was two weeks on "Yankee Station," followed by two weeks on "Dixie Station," a visit to Subic Bay in the Philippines, then back to the war zone.

On the carrier, part of our "recreation" was to go above decks and watch air operations. Planes that could hardly stay above the water due to the weight of bombs and rockets get catapulted, one after another, from the ship. Of course, when they returned (if they returned), the weight problem didn't exist.

My awareness of the destination and targets of these bombs began to weigh on me. You see, we didn't have the pressures of combat or fire fights to keep us from quiet thought. For most of us on carriers, it wasn't "kill or be killed," it was simply "kill," or act in support of the killing from great distances.

Soon I began to discuss the war with shipmates, trying to prod them into questioning more about its origins as I had begun to do. We talked about the bombing, its effects on the civilian population throughout Vietnam, the real reasons behind our involvement, and so on. This was certainly not a massive propaganda effort—I was neither that sophisticated nor that brave. I merely tried to cause questions in the minds of others, questions that might lead some to search for their own answers. By the time I was transferred from the ship in February 1966, I felt I might have had some impact on a few individuals, but I would never know.

I was sent to Helicopter Training Squadron Eight at Ellyson Field, just outside Pensacola, Florida. Even in the southeastern United States, Vietnam was still with me. Most of the flight instructors were Marine or Navy

veterans of Vietnam combat, and most of the students would soon experience that combat for themselves.

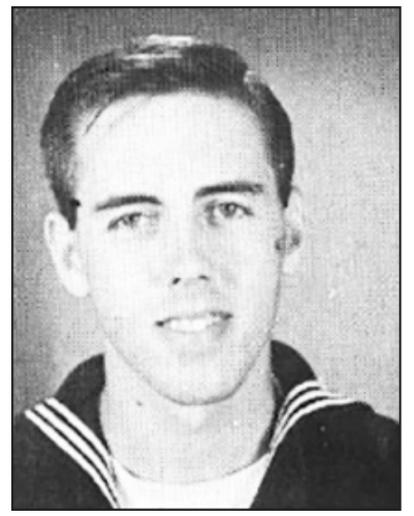
Once again I was jockeying a desk, but this time the desk itself became an overt symbol of my anti-war feelings. Political cartoons, quotes from anti-war senators like Morse, Fulbright, and McGovern were openly displayed on my desktop. Since I worked in the Squadron's central administrative office, many people tramped through each day. At times stares were directed toward my desk and rather pointed comments directed at me.

During this period, 1966-68, I also joined the American Servicemen's Union and the American Civil Liberties Union, subscribed to every underground newspaper I could find, and wrote letters to the local newspaper defending Bobby Kennedy's change of heart over the Vietnam war. In general, I was as visibly anti-war as I could afford to be. My wife and daughter were there with me, and I didn't want to bring them any grief.

Surprisingly, there was little in the way of overt harassment, though I did lose a part-time job with a local department store when the FBI came around to ask questions of my employer and other employees about my anti-war views—nothing more than that.

I worked at that squadron for two years and gained a reputation as a "good sailor" who was "too concerned with world affairs." I did not blindly accept the arguments for our actions in Vietnam, but all I would do was talk up my opposition. That was safe. It would not do to take any real action—to actually refuse to participate, for example. My discharge date was coming up, and it was convenient to tell myself that I could do more against the war outside the military.

That's as far as it went until my discharge on February 3, 1968, three days after the start of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. I had served "honorably," but the "honor" was all theirs. They got all they wanted out of me. What



Joe Miller on the Tico, 1964.

did any of us get in return?

Primarily, the Indochinese people suffered millions of deaths and crippling—all in the service of American "interests." Agent Orange continues to maim and kill.

As for the troops, for too many, it was death or crippling. Others received psychological wounds that never really heal. Still others went to prison for refusing to cooperate with the war effort. Agent Orange also followed us home and continues to wound us and our families.

Thousands of Vietnam veterans joined VVAW with a solid determination to see that it would all stop, the killing, the maiming, never to begin again.

We were determined then (and now) that we would not allow ourselves, our sons and daughters, or our grandchildren, to ever be sucked in again when those who run our government decide it is time for further bloodletting.

Today, in the face of the so-called "Forever Wars," we are still fighting that fight in whatever way we can.



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.



Operation Red, White, and Blind - Washington, DC, 1981.

The Child

continued from page 28

headquarters in Da Nang to clear up some "administrative matters." The next morning, I was on the early morning Air America flight to Da Nang. The "administrative matters" were negligible, but they kept me in Da Nang for four days.

When I returned to the prison, the mother and child were gone, and the matron refused to look me in the eye. I ran to the commandant's office.

Quang was standing behind his desk pouring two cups of tea as if I was expected, and before I could say a word he mused, "You know, at times, even I don't like this job."

He continued, "If I didn't do as ordered, like you, I would find myself in a place worse than this."

A pause.

"The baby is dead. It started the night you left. The fever got worse and it went into a coma. I was under strict orders to do nothing. My superiors hoped that, if the father heard of the situation, he might give himself up. He did not. The baby died. The mother has been transferred to Da Nang for security purposes."

I turned on my heel and walked out of that prison, then told my platoon commander that he would have to court-martial me or put me in a combat outfit before I would go back. The illusion that brought me to Vietnam—to help in the fight against our enemies, the Communists—was dissolving. Instead, I had discovered

that we were often the enemy.

My first tour there was drawing to a close. There was no reason to stay and many reasons to leave. And yet, I could not leave a place that had so thoroughly defeated me, body and soul, without some personal victory, no matter how small.

I once met a wise old Austrian doctor who told me that if I could save one life, make one person's living situation more bearable, then I had fulfilled my duty. It was so simple and so positive.

As a public health adviser in Vietnam, I had some power. Perhaps I could use it to help the people there, not necessarily the government.

I heard there was an active public

health organization in Thua Thien Province, and I could work for them if I signed up for a second tour. I decided to stay in Vietnam.



PAUL J. GIANNONE IS A 40+ YEAR CAREER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONDER, PLANNER, DIRECTOR AND AUTHOR. HIS PUBLIC HEALTH CAREER BEGAN "UNDER FIRE" AS A TWO TOUR (1969-1971) PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR WITH THE 29TH CIVIL AFFAIRS COMPANY IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (BRONZE STAR, ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL, AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PUBLIC HEALTH MEDAL).

Soft Targets - Part Three

JOSEPH GIANNINI

*Quang Tri Combat Base
Feb. 6, 1968
0600 hours*

We leave the Combat Base in the morning and slick west. Drop onto a hill. I notice, to our northeast, the minefield and ville by the stream. Fan out. Establish a perimeter. Send out three roving fire teams. Dig in. Set and clear fields of fire. Plot platoon defensive fires. The VC and NVA know we're on this hill. We know where they are. Around us. 78 Marines in the jaws of death. I'm not scared. Maybe I should be. I'm proud that the Battalion Commander has chosen me and Delta Three to come out here and establish a Combat Outpost. So far, so good.

Just before sunset, we chow down. I'm eating ham and lima beans, better known as Ham and Motherfuckers. My First Squad Leader, Sergeant King, approaches. He's holding a newborn pup in his right hand.

"Lieutenant, I found him down the hill. What should I do with him?"

"Sarge, it must be a pup from a VC tracker dog. Kill it, but silently. Slit its throat." Sergeant King turns away and walks off.

At dusk I order, "Stand To." Every Marine gets into his fighting hole and faces outboard. We do this at every dusk and sunrise. A few minutes later, I order, "Stand Down. Lights Out." No fires. No smoking. No unnecessary noise. Out here a lit match or a glowing cigarette can be seen from a great distance. Even whispers can be heard way off.

At Lights Out, three four-man listening posts, one from each squad, silently leave our perimeter.

Night black descends. We meld into darkness. Just before dawn, the listening posts return through our lines. So far, so good.

At sunrise I order, "Stand To." Mid-morning, I send my Second Squad out. My checkpoints will take them along a ridgeline to our east, then north along another ridgeline. Beyond lay the minefield and ville, west along a very large hill on the other side of the valley from us. Two hours pass. The Second Squad is approaching my last checkpoint. Boom! From across the valley. Near the crest of the large hill, a brown cloud rises. Second Squad has hit a mine. They radio back to me. Their Squad Leader, Sergeant Baker, is seriously wounded. They request a Priority Medevac. I call for the chopper. Then radio back that it's on its way. Every Marine on the combat outpost is standing. Facing across the valley. The Medevac swoops in. Hovers for several seconds. Rises with Sergeant Baker. Banks. Then turns east, headed toward the Quang Tri Combat Base.

A half-hour later, the Second Squad enters silently through our lines. Delta Six radios over. Sergeant Baker is dead. I pass the word. Baker was a "Short Timer"—less than 90 days to go In Country. A tall black Marine from North Carolina. Quiet. Led by example. Respected and liked by all.

From inside and along the perimeter:

"Fuck this shit."
"Fuckin' bummer."
"Got to get out of this fuckin' place."
"We're not here, man."
"Motherfucker."
"Don't mean fuckin' nothin'."
"What don't mean fuckin' nothin'?"

"Nothin' means fuckin' nothin'."
"Got to get some."
"It's fuckin' not right, man."
"Fuck this place."
"It's fuckin' not worth it man."
"Fuck these gooks man, fuck 'em."
"Damn, he was outta here."
"Poncho Rotation is a motherfucker."
Dusk. I order, "Stand to." Walk over to the 81mm mortar position dug in the middle of our perimeter. Approach the Section Leader, Staff Sergeant Hand. He looks up.
I order, "Fire Mission."
"Sir, no can do. You don't have authority to fire these babies. You need Battalion's approval."
"Sergeant, I'm the Commanding Officer on this hill. You understand?"
"Yes, Sir."
"Fire Mission."
"Grid 671413."
"Direction 2150."
"Visual. Enemy infantry in the open."
"High explosive 10 rounds."
"At my command."
"Fire for effect."
The Section, four mortars, bangs away. Orange flashes explode to our northeast. Thumping echoes through the valley. I wait. I'll do it again. My R.O. approaches.
"Lieutenant, the Battalion XO is on the line."
Damn, they must have heard the racket.
"Five, Delta Three Actual over."
"Lieutenant, you know the procedure. You must go through the Battalion Fire Control Center to use the 81s. What is going on out there? Over."
"Sir, I've got buku movement out

here. Over."
"Lieutenant, what do you mean? Over."
"Sir, I've got buku movement. At least 100 enemy troops moving our way. Over."
"Lieutenant are you sure? Over."
"Sir, I'm sure. Over."
"Lieutenant, you better be. You're in deep shit. Five out."
"Sir, Delta Three Actual. Out."
I look at Sergeant Hand, order "Repeat."
The four mortars bang out 40 more high explosive rounds.
I order, "Stand down."
Marines scramble out of their fighting holes and face northeast. Silently they watch the orange glow of the ville burning in the darkening night. Boom! Boom! Secondary explosions. Ammo and mines.
Sergeant King walks up. Stands on my left.
"Lieutenant?"
I turn to look at him. A glow, from the burning ville, on his face.
"I didn't kill that pup."
I turn to watch the fire.
"Sir?"
"What is it, Sarge?"
"Payback is a motherfucker."



JOSEPH GIANNINI, A LOCAL CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY, SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM 1967 TO 1968 WITH THE FIRST BATTALION, THIRD MARINES. A VICTIM OF AGENT ORANGE, HE IS CURRENTLY WRITING A BOOK OF SHORT, NON-FICTION STORIES ABOUT FATE, SURFING, AND WAR.

Beautiful Nicaragua

LOUIS DEBENEDETTE

Beautiful Nicaragua: I spent the latter part of July with Sandinista veteran Walter Paz and others in Managua.

On July 19, we joined maybe half a million people to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista revolution.

On July 23, Walter and I went to Boaco, 60 miles north of Managua, to visit the widow of a very dear friend, Antonio Oporta Mejia, who died

January 17, 2017.

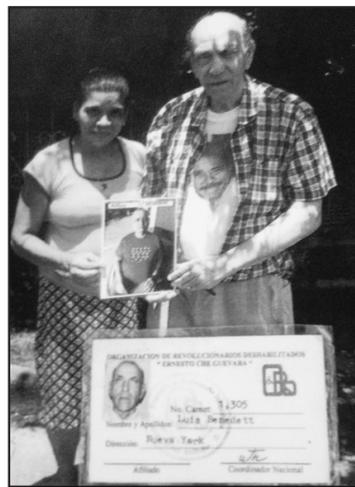
Paralyzed by a contra round, Antonio belonged to the Organización de Revolucionarios Deshabilitados (ORD), which I met in 1988 on the Veterans Peace Convoy. I now have my own ORD membership card, something you cannot buy.

I had only met Antonio's widow Estela by phone before; she is still a militant Sandinista. I continue to

help as I can, especially now that our President is promising voters in Florida that he will promote regime change in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.



LOUIE DEBENEDETTE IS A VIETNAM-ERA VETERAN AND LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



Vets Day in San Francisco.

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.



Dewey Canyon IV, Washington, DC, May 12, 1982.

RECOLLECTIONS

The Pizza Man

PETER MAHONEY

This is an old story. Back in 1973, I was on trial in Gainesville Florida along with seven other members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War for conspiracy to incite a riot at the Republican Convention in Miami Beach in 1972, the Gainesville Eight case.

We were in the second week of what turned out to be a four-week trial, and I had just had a particularly bad day in court. The government's case against us consisted almost exclusively of the testimony of informers, and day after day, we were subjected to a stream of former friends, associates, and colleagues taking the stand for the prosecution, admitting that they had been paid government informers, and testifying against us.

We already knew about some of them, like Bill Lemmer, the former VVAW Arkansas Coordinator. Some were a surprise to us, like Emerson Poe, the Florida Deputy Regional Coordinator, who was a trusted member of our Defense Committee up until the day he testified (in one of the more bizarre facts about the case, Poe testified that the key piece of evidence the prosecution was using against us—a leaflet put out by the Florida chapter that stated, if necessary, VVAW would defend itself and other demonstrators from police violence—had actually been reproduced using the FBI's copy machine).

On this particular day, it was

my turn to be surprised. A man I had considered to be among my best friends—Carl Becker—had just turned up on the witness stand as an FBI informer. Carl apparently enjoyed the undercover life—I heard after the trial he went to work for a retail store posing as a customer to catch shoplifters. In the preparation for the trial, we had gone over a number of potential prosecution witnesses, and many of my co-defendants were already convinced that Carl was an informer, but I steadfastly defended him. It cut me to the quick to find out how wrong I was.

Not only did Carl testify for the prosecution, he out and out lied in his testimony. You need to understand the situation of an informer. The government is paying them to become your friend, and to report on the bad things you are doing. If the informer continues to come back to his handler and reports that you are doing nothing wrong, then most likely, his paycheck is going to end. It is in the informer's financial interest to report that you are doing bad things. Most of the other informers in our trial stayed generally near the truth, bending it and stretching it as needed to whet the FBI's appetite, and, when testifying, to fit the prosecution narrative.

Carl just flat-out lied. We started calling him the Prosecution Garbage Man. There was so much garbage in the indictment against us for which

the prosecution had not a shred of evidence. It was put there to try to make us look as dangerous and violent as possible. Carl apparently was willing to testify to anything and everything the prosecution had no other evidence for, meetings that never took place, conversations that never happened, actions that had never been undertaken. After that day in court, I was feeling like crap, not just because of the utter betrayal of my "best friend," but also because I was stupid enough to consider him my best friend to begin with.

We were on our way back to the Defense House for one of the many lawyer/defendant meetings that happened every day after court, to go over the current day's proceedings and plan for the next day. When you have seven lawyers and eight defendants, coming to consensus can be a long and arduous process.

In preparation for the expected evening's marathon, we stopped by a local pizza parlor to grab a couple of pies. The guy behind the counter looked like a classic redneck—t-shirt, crew cut, beer belly, and an American flag on the wall behind him. His manner was gruff and inhospitable as he took our order. Needless to say, I and my fellow defendants were rather well-known in those parts in those days, and our bearded, pony-tailed, anti-war-buttoned appearance contrasted rather starkly with our



Peter Mahoney at Dewey Canyon IV, May 12, 1982.

pizza parlor host. As we were waiting for the pies, the man continually scowled at us in what seemed to be a particularly disapproving way; I was honestly worried he might jump over the counter and assault us, or maybe just refuse to sell us pizza.

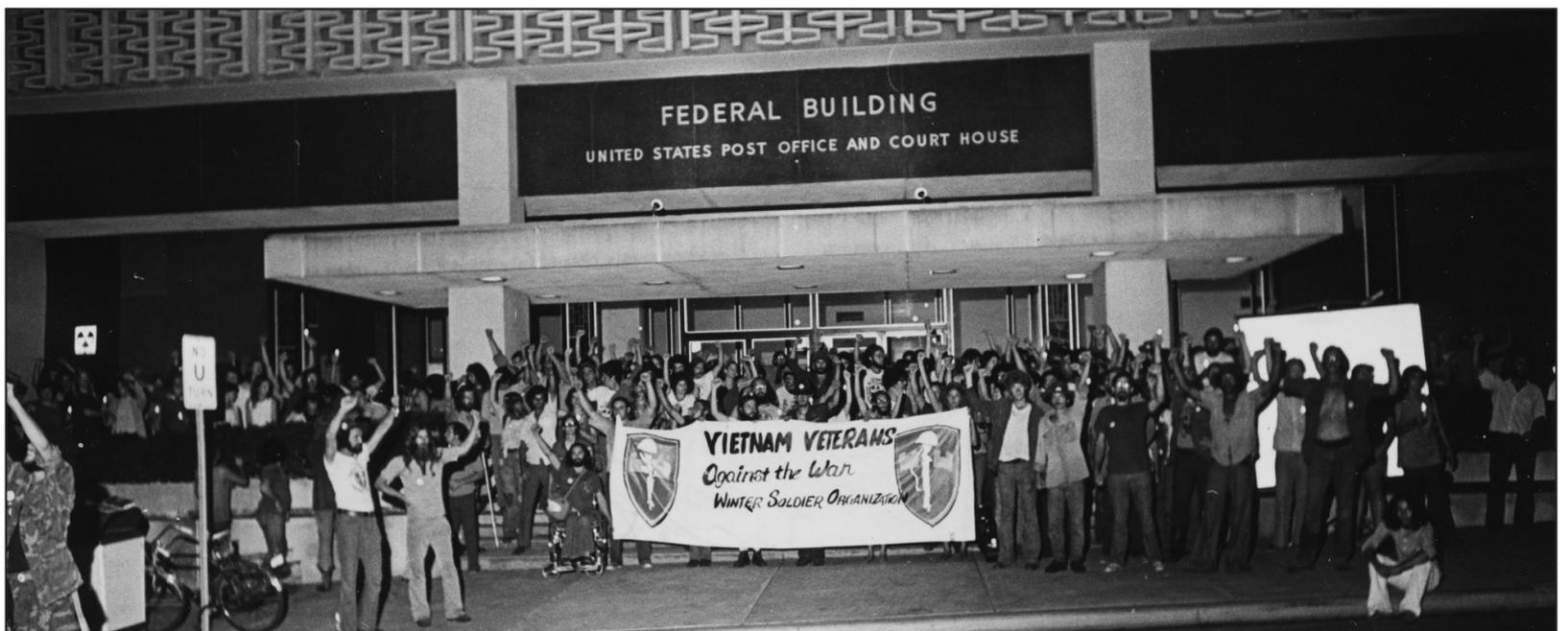
I was wrong.

When the pies came, the man scowled at us again, then gave us a big smile. He handed us the pies, shook each of our hands, and wished us all good luck. He also refused to take payment for the pies.

I needed that.



PETER P. MAHONEY WAS ONE OF THE GAINESVILLE EIGHT. HE NOW LIVES IN VERMONT.



VVAW Gainesville 8 demonstration, August, 1973.

The Base

