



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Why We Struggle

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

A large percentage of us volunteered for service in Vietnam. At the time, we bought in to the lies being told us about the war, and about America. Some of us began to see the truth during the war, but things didn't really sink in until we came home. Many of us who were drafted began to see the cracks in the myth of American exceptionalism while in the service.

When we got back, a lot of us were adrift. We felt used, abused, and discarded by the US Government. Our outrage when the National Guard gunned down students in Kent State set us on the lifelong path to struggling for change.

Taking many cues from the civil rights movement and their struggles for justice, VVAW provided a space for anti-war veterans and our allies to challenge the US role in the slaughter of Vietnamese, and the slaughter of our brothers and sisters in Kent and Jackson state.

The reason we fought and continue to struggle for change, is that we believe a better United States is possible. A better world is possible. While we fought an unnecessary war, we are under no illusion that our service helped the American people in any way. Our fighting back and fighting for change helped make the US a better place. We know that the bonds we forged and the lives we changed had way more impact than our picking up a rifle for Uncle Sam.

We also know that our resistance was opposed by the establishment with all means at their disposal. We were spied upon, charges were trumped up, lives were ruined, and some taken. Many of these attacks were led by the White House and the FBI. We



Veterans Day, Chicago, 1977. Ed Damato center.

were once again expendable. Our opposition to racism and imperialist wars qualified us as enemies of the state.

As we write this, Chump is still the occupant of the White House. He and his cronies have vomited continuous lies, sabotaged the fight against COVID-19, and attacked the VA and Post Office. Recently, Chump exhibited unprecedented public contempt for GIs. Those disgraceful and cowardly statements truly represent the attitudes of the oligarchs and their minions. They were not accidental. These people live only to stoke their own narcissism and toady to their rich masters.

We have always been used and thrown away. WWII was no exception. Chump is purely and simply acting out the exact attitudes that the ruling class endorses, no matter what their

"patriotic" rants might pretend. To them, we were cannon fodder, nothing more.

As we write this, the presidential election is coming. Will we be able to get out of this election cycle without a coup? Will the winner of the popular vote be able to take office? Will any compromises that occur actually help the majority of residents in the US?

We hope for the best possible outcome and encourage all to do anything possible to ensure that Chump goes down in the history books as a one termer.

Whatever the outcome, we know that the struggles VVAW has engaged in for over 50 years will still need to continue.

We know that a more just, humane, and equitable world is possible. We know that the policies we have fought for over the past five

decades can and will help those in need. We know the resources of the US can be put to helping people instead of engaging in pointless warfare, walls, and other distractions that put us down and enrich the ruling class.

We know that the militarization of America's police forces and the war on Black America has to stop. The ongoing privatization of the VA must be reversed. The troops deployed in the "Forever Wars" must come home. A massive effort must be made to end the COVID-19 epidemic. We need to turn the power of the state to equality, not oppression.

That is why we struggle. For peace. For justice. For veterans' rights. For a better, just world for all of us.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.

Honor the Warrior, Not the War

KIM SCIPES

Donald Trump has just gotten caught saying those who served, and especially those who died in combat, were "losers" and "suckers." Not a terribly astute thing to say when you're the Command-in-Chief of the US Empire.

Now, obviously, the men and women who have served in this nation's military have not been losers and suckers; while some have been folks forced into the military just to have any kind of a future due to lack of economic alternatives, some have been the finest men and women in our country. Most have served honorably by the terms of the military. There is much to be proud of in these men and women.

By Trump denigrating the military, however, he has encouraged

many to respond to him in a dichotomous fashion: they reply, Trump bad, my relatives and loved ones who served in the US military, good. I don't think this is a good way to do this; I think we need to develop much more nuance to address the situation.

One of the things being done, however, is to equate all US wars, and to generally say that serving in the US military at any time is good. I argue this doesn't hold.

In the 20th Century, there has been only one war that can even come near being called "good" and "necessary": World War II. Now, no war is ever good, and there is untold death and destruction unleashed. That was certainly true in WWII. But it was fought after being attacked by the

Japanese at Pearl Harbor, and with the real fear that the US was to be invaded with the chance of subjugation by the Axis alliance of Germany, Italy and Japan. Because the US was attacked by a foreign power, arguably, the US had no choice but to fight back. The horrors projected by our troops, and the difficulties and horrors suffered by them, were as close to being justified as we've seen since the US Civil War.

Yet military proponents have lumped all the other wars with World War II, seeking to transfer the necessity and honor of fighting World War II onto the other wars, whether they deserved this or not. So, I think we need to separate World War II out from any of the others; no other war deserves the "respect" due to the Marines, soldiers, sailors, aviators, merchant seamen, and coast guardsmen of WWII.

The other wars, either individually or collectively; the US war in the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century; World War I; the "incursions" in Central America before World War I and between the world wars; Korea; the invasions of the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1982); Panama (1989); Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos between the 1950s and 1975; Desert Storm (1991), the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and any others I might have missed, including CIA-led coups such as in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), and Chile (1973) and the hundreds of operations they attempted, such as the

invasion of Cuba in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs do not deserve this same level of respect. In fact, in my opinion, these deserve our condemnation.

Now, this doesn't mean that the men and women who served in the wars, invasions, occupations, coup attempts, etc., don't deserve respect. They were acting in general good faith to accomplish what they believed were "good faith" and lawful missions, despite whatever they did. Now, this is not to absolve them personally of the bad things some of them did, intended or unintended, but to recognize they thought they were acting to serve the best interest of the United States. For that, they deserve personal respect.

What must be understood, however, is that in each of these wars/ invasions, etc., besides World War II, and despite the lies we were told by governmental leaders, not a single one was fought to protect this country or its people from invasion and tyranny; not a single one. They each were fought to project US power and to attain domination over these other countries. The evidence is overwhelming: the US has not taken these actions to promote freedom and democracy (no matter how many times it has been claimed), but to dominate these other countries; whether by direct physical invasion and occupation, or through indirect control of its economy, polity, military and culture, the US has acted to subjugate these countries and

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Dewey Canyon IV, May, 1982.

VVAW Wants Your Stuff

Cleaning out the garage this Spring? De-cluttering? The VVAW Archive Project wants YOU, or rather YOUR VVAW or anti-war related pictures, old copies of local leaflets, posters and newsletters, VVAW National Steering Committee minutes and correspondence, PICTURES! Back in the Day, we were more interested in doing shit than recording it for posterity. So, there are many gaps in our coverage of VVAW's outstanding events, our meetings, the work we did on "PTS", Agent Orange, solidarity with movements and countries under the gun of US oppression, War on the VA, etc.

If you have some stuff, let us know. We can pay for shipping, if necessary. If you want to keep the originals, we can copy and send them back to you. Give us a call at (773) 569-3520 (warning, it's a robot), or preferably, email us at vvaw@vvaw.org!

Online Journal Seeks Vietnam Poetry

PAUL HELLWEG

Vietnam War Poetry has a new website and a new editor, and they are open to submissions. To be considered, poems must be either directly or indirectly related to the Vietnam war or its aftermath. Visit their website for complete guidelines: www.VietnamWarPoetry.com

Staff were not able to access the old website for many months. If you have submitted in the past and did not receive a reply, you are invited and encouraged to submit again.

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 and Aaron Hughes for the posters. Thanks to Chuck Theusch, Allan Meece, John Edwards, Lucy Rose Fischer, Roger Byer, Andy Berman, and others for contributing photos.

Veteran Staff

Jeff Machota
Bill Branson
Joe Miller

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



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Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

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 Champaign, IL 61824-0355
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 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

The Tuscola VFW Post has around 40 members, about 20% of whom I would call active. "Active" means that they show up at meetings, pitch in with fundraisers, march in parades, and in general do whatever needs to be done. Of the paid-up but not literally active members, I probably wouldn't recognize half of them if I passed them on the street. I'm guessing that they join and pay their dues so they can wear a VFW ball cap, and while they are sitting around at McDonald's every morning someone will thank them for their service. That means a lot to those guys.

Of the eight members who actually participate, we have two Korean War vets, five Afghan or Iraq vets, and one Vietnam veteran: me. I was sitting around at a recent meeting, and one of the Middle East vets turned and asked me, "What was it like when you got back from Viet Nam?" I don't think about that a lot, partly because I don't have any close friends in Tuscola who are Vietnam vets with whom I can talk about that experience. But his question was a legitimate one. What was it like to come back from the Vietnam War?

I'm guessing that if you ask ten Vietnam vets that question, you would get pretty close to ten different answers. Part of what I say will hit home with some of our readers, while I suspect that for others it will sound like

a foreign language. The only thing I'm pretty sure of is that it wasn't anything like coming home from WWII.

Actually, I have ten or twelve good stories I could tell, but *The Veteran* has strict wordage limitations on submissions. I'm quite sure that this is because of contributors like myself, so I'll just offer two or three "coming home" stories, and the reader may decide if any of them make any sense.

I ETS'd and returned home on June 2, 1968 - as William Manchester entitled it, "The Year Everything Went Wrong". Two weeks later I enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Just returning from an armored cavalry squadron in Vietnam, it was in one sense like landing on another planet. In another way, it almost seemed as if I had just returned after taking a semester off. Walking along the university quad, all I saw was happy-go-lucky young students playing Frisbee with their dogs. Conversations in the student union or in campus bars were about the same as you would have heard ten years earlier: what classes they were taking, whom they were dating, and next Saturday's home football game against Michigan, and we're sure gonna kick some Wolverine ass this time! (We almost never did.) And maybe Vietnam, but improbably. Too many other things were more important.

We did have occasional anti-war demonstrations, but they weren't large, and fortunately they didn't end like Kent State. And Urbana-Champaign was a long way, geographically and culturally, from Madison or Berkeley. I did go to DC a few times for some much larger protests, but that was DC and I was going to school in conservative little central Illinois. I would guess it was safer here anyway.

One more story. I was talking one day with a male student who was about to graduate, and would lose his 2-S student deferment. Lacking bone spurs, and this being the year of Tet, he was almost certain to be drafted. But he opposed the war, and had thought about going to Canada. As I had (finally) become anti-war, I responded that I would certainly support his decision to do that. Yes indeed. O Canada!

I will never forget his response. It was something like, "That is so nice of you. You came home safe and sound, you've got the GI Bill to pay for your education, you get to join the VFW and march in parades, and I'm sure you've got some real good war stories you can tell in bars. And you're giving me your permission to do what you didn't have the guts to do in 1966. Thanks but no thanks." And he got up and walked away and I never saw him again.

My first thought at the time had

been to go after him and punch him. Here I was, a good veteran who had done what our government told him to do, and this guy was calling me the coward. And I was even offering to support him if he went to Canada! Some guys just don't appreciate anything.

But, of course, there is another side to the story. What really took more "guts," submitting to the draft with the possibility that you would come back "safe and sound," or going to Canada with the possibility that you might never get to go home again? And you would be leaving your parents back home to deal with that decision.

Of course, there is also one issue which would seem to trump them all: how courageous, or how honorable, was it to participate in the invasion of a foreign country?

Anyway, that was 52 years ago, and I don't know whether that young man went to Canada or submitted to the draft. But just maybe he belongs to VVAW and is reading this column, and can talk about it. I think I would like to do that.



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

VVAW Library Update

CHUCK THEUSCH

Library of Vietnam Project Update

Veterans of the Vietnam War will recall the old classification of good and bad during the conflict—No. 1 Best, No. 10 Worst. Now in 2020 the Country's Cultural commitment to education matches VVAW's support of education with the commitment to Library Construction in Ben Tre Province.

Between the natural process of application of public school building construction and now the Coronavirus pandemic, the perseverance of VVAW and their recipients in Vietnam's Ben Tre Province is being tested. This is nothing new for the people of Vietnam. The "hold" on the VVAW project brought on just as the final meetings with the People's Committee and school with the Groundbreaking were scheduled in March 2020 brings to mind why we build libraries. Like most "events" of global impact, there is a message in the mission as we say in the Library of Vietnam Project. Education is "Number 1!"

Library Learning Center in Vietnam at Binh Thanh School, Giong Trom District in Vietnam's Ben Tre Province stands strong in the face of the global pandemic that has served as a block on international projects.

On the brighter side is the Vietnamese history of success in the face of struggles and challenges that makes them a success on a global scale. VVAW's funding of the Ben Tre Library Learning Center is in place. The contract with the People's Democratic Committee of Giong Trom District has confirmed the plan.

The death rate due to Coronavirus in Vietnam is among the very lowest globally. The kids are back in school as of September 2020 and the virus, after showing a modest spike, seems once again better controlled than in almost any other country. Still, the risk posed for kids in schools does not allow the continued closings. The parents deem the risk of a poor education far out-weighting the risk of Coronavirus infection...the schools are open.

education is among the very highest priorities, a central driving feature of the culture ranking just a bit below commitment to family. So it is no wonder that taking kids out of school is anathema to parents across the country.

What's Next

The Library of Vietnam Project has filed its permit extension with the Government in Hanoi for 2020-2023. The Library of Vietnam has a series of Projects and Programs to complete during this time that include the VVAW Ben Tre Library Learning Center.

Contact with officials in Washington, DC at the Vietnamese Embassy as well as the Hanoi leaders has us waiting for approvals pending resolution of international travel restrictions as well as construction restrictions domestically. They project an early 2021 return to normal. They are as anxious as we are to keep their kids' educations on track and improve the resources for them to do that.

A Final Note

The poverty of the nation gives way to the day-to-day innovations of

living by the people, the kids **will get to** the VVAW Library when it is built. The marked development of Vietnam's economy makes its progress a world leader in the last 20 years. But the remote regions still need help, and that is where the Library of Vietnam does its work and VVAW has come forward with its support.

This shared "Priority Number 1" is truly appreciated in these poverty stricken, war-torn areas where the Vietnamese people continue to deal with war legacy challenges such as landmines, unexploded bombs and Agent Orange exposure.

VVAW's promise of a Library with a computer lab and English instruction capabilities inspires the hopes and dreams of the poorest kids in this remote region of Vietnam and it will be kept.



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

Coronavirus in Vietnam

The commitment to build a new

Education in Vietnam:

A Proud History

The cultural commitment to



Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

I am writing this well before the election has happened. I expect that the election will have resulted in some sort of chaos. I couldn't say if this was a major or minor chaos, but it won't be normal. If you step back and look at the Trump years it's all been pretty bizarre.

In addition to being bizarre, the Trump years have given us a window into what fascism looks like. There has been disregard for constitutional principles and rule by whim, opening the door to fascism. The President has taken the lead, and his toadies have followed. Consider. He has invited his supporters to beat up protesters and other political opponents. He has floated the idea of postponing the election. He has used his Attorney General (of all people) to violate the law. He has talked about not accepting legitimate ballots (such as mail-ins). He has praised armed supporters and their activities. He has illegally used the White House for partisan politics. He has pardoned convicted former aides. He has talked about rearranging the constitution to give himself three terms.

Trump is not the lone ranger in this kind of leadership. It is not uncommon to see countries drift toward fascism these days. This includes leaders who are elected as well as dictators and monarchs. There is Bolsonaro in Brazil. There is Sisi

in Egypt. There is Orban in Hungary. There is Duterte in the Philippines. There is Erdogan in Turkey. And the poster boy for adding office time - Trump favorite Putin. Often the issues these people use to rally forces are similar. Appealing to problems of poverty and excessive immigration is popular. The appeal always comes by playing on the element of fear. The immigrants are here to take your job. The immigrants are committing crimes here. They'll attack your daughter. They're probably bringing in disease. They're spreading COVID. Lest you have doubts about immigrants being a problem, you do know that the government is in a deep state being run by a cabal of pedophiles. That's this country. Other semi-fascist states have their own made-up problems to keep their supporters active.

One of the characteristics of fascists is that the issues on which they build support don't have to be true. Actually falsehood probably sells better. You can give your followers a nice belief in something. Whether it's immigrants or the deep state or ethnic superiority it's something they can rally around. The right wing talking points are appealing to many, especially the fear of immigration. European countries are the destination of many immigrants fleeing war zones. Millions have fled home as a result of wars facilitated by the United States in

the Middle East. Now they're coming to the shores of Europe, giving right wingers an issue on which to create the fears needed to access support. It shows in the increasing power of the Right in Europe.

Meanwhile, at home we have to deal with seemingly impossible situations and choices. Stress walks the land. We have parents going through the agony of deciding if they should send their children to school and have them risk the virus or keep them at home and retard the education they need to make it in this world. If that agony isn't enough, the economy has fallen apart. Jobs are lost. Rents and mortgages can't be paid. Health care is lost. And the Black Lives Matter Movement has exposed racial injustice and police out of control. That is a good thing, but it is another hit on the stress bar. Meanwhile the climate crisis is hitting home. All these things and hanging like a shroud over it all is COVID-19.

This has left many people feeling overwhelmed. It becomes borderline too much to handle. Those who have supported the cause for peace and justice for most of our lives are not immune to this feeling of too much to handle. Just because you do the right thing doesn't mean that it's easy. In fact it's usually hard. That's the nature of the beast.

For what it's worth let me relate

a personal anecdote. This was a different fear and danger than COVID Life, but it gets to my attitude. When I was helping out at the Gainesville 8 trial. Wow that was almost fifty years ago. So at that trial there was a lot of intimidation coming from the government. Legally there was a gag order for those of us who were "in concert" with the defendants. We (at least myself) were intimidated. I felt like it feels today to people facing COVID Life and the likes of people like Trump. Back then, facing up to the government was difficult and awesome. Then I heard a speech by VVAW's Tony Russo. He began, "I am "in concert with the Gainesville 8 . . ." What a concept! I was probably still intimidated, but what the fuck. Just do it. Just live it. This is not the same thing as fighting the good fight today with a pandemic hanging around our thoughts, but there is a similarity. When the opposition seems too powerful and overwhelming you have to say "fuck it" and go from there. It's tougher nowadays on individuals, but choices are limited.



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

Honor the Warrior

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their peoples. In fact, the best way to understand this is to recognize that the United States has a global empire, and its military and other strengths are not to protect the American people, because no one threatens them, but to dominate the rest of the world. And, in fact, they will divert resources away from the American people to advance the interests of the US Empire; most recently, to the tune of about \$750 billion a year, more than most of the countries of the world combined.

Once we understand that the US has an Empire, and that it works to advance its interests even when they come at the direct expense of the American people as a whole, then we can better understand what's been going on since the end of World War II: the US has been trying to dominate the world.

(Now, the Soviet Union, before its collapse in 1991, also had an Empire and it defended its interests, especially from the US, hindering the US efforts. It was no saint. But the US has been trying to destroy the Soviet Empire and then, once successful, trying to make sure it never revives. These US efforts, especially in Eastern Europe, continue to date.)

The point is that those who

served in the US military since World War II—including myself, a US Marine from 1969-73, have each been serving a metastasizing cancer on the world. No matter how honorable our intentions, no matter how noble our pursuits, no matter what, this is true.

So, honor your loved ones and the ones who served for their personal ideals and attributes. They deserve that.

But also keep in mind that our country failed them; we taught them that military service was noble, that they were serving the needs and concerns of the American people, that they were advancing the well-being of good people around the world. And we taught them to obey the sociopaths that run the US Empire. They were no bigger "losers" or "suckers" than most of us. That's the problem; it's just that they wore the uniform.

**Honor the Warrior,
Not the War
nor the Sociopaths that
Direct the US Empire**



KIM SCIPES SERVED IN THE USMC FROM 1969-1973.

John Kerry: The Vietnam War and the Virus

"Obviously it's a stark reminder that if you don't learn the lessons of history you are doomed to repeat them. It's a different kind of dying but it's coming from misinterpretation, from ignoring reality. It's coming from an unwillingness to respond to the truth and to the lessons that we have learned. The fact is that Coronavirus may be America's moment of truth in the sense that a lot of us were despairing that we were losing the capacity to decide in our country, in our democracy, what the baseline of truth is. And there has been a different kind of war taking place. It's a war on science. It's a war on scientists. It's a war on facts. It's a willingness to completely distort the truth in favor of an ideology, or a personal election pursuit, or whatever. And we're losing lives for that. It's not dissimilar to what Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson and others engaged in during that time of deception when America was lied to about the war in Vietnam."

—Former Secretary of State, Senator and Vietnam veteran John Kerry
Morning Joe, April 22, 2020

Memorial Day 2020

Bury 'em six feet deep
Or stand six feet apart—
Clutch your heart,
Adjust your face mask—

Memorial Day is very
Different this year—
COVID deaths surpassed
War dead in weeks—
Body bags stacked
In corridors, backs of trucks,
Hastily bulldozed graves—

Never such a death storm
Since World War Two—
Casualties in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq,
Afghanistan topped in three months—

Shouldn't we fly
The flags at half-mast—
Display gold stars in the windows
Of those so suddenly lost?

Obits jammed into newspapers—
So many lives snuffed out
Like candles at a nursing home
Birthday party—
Can you count them all—
Blazing in their 20s, 30s, 40s,
50s, 60s, 70s—
Virus sweeping through
Veterans' homes
Like silent machinegun fire—

May Day, May Day!
The high flying life is crashing—
Fly overs by war planes
Won't raise the dead, the dying—

—Jan Barry



Bill Davis at Dewey Canyon IV, May, 1982.

Fighting VA Privatization: A Personal Story

ANDY BERMAN

Everyone who lived during the US war in Vietnam has a personal Vietnam story of some kind, regardless of what they did during those intense and horrific years. Certainly all those who went to Vietnam in whatever capacity have a story to tell. Those who protested and those who resisted the war in any way were also deeply affected and have personal tales to tell. Even those who lived through those times seemingly without conscious awareness of the hell going on in Southeast Asia have stories to tell. The Vietnam War was integral to the consciousness and coming of age of a generation and more.

My own personal Vietnam story is somewhat unique. In brief, I was a Vietnam anti-war activist from the early days of US intervention in 1964 until the war ended in 1975. And for 3 of those years, I was a soldier in the US Army.

As history recounts, the US Vietnam anti-war movement was diverse, divisive, intense and widespread. It was also filled with frustration that for all the large and creative actions we took, nothing seemed to stop the madmen LBJ, Nixon and so many other criminals directing the slaughter in Southeast Asia.

One of the key things that kept us together was the opposition to the war that emerged in the US armed forces. This dissent took many forms, including fragging in Vietnam, refusals to be sent to Vietnam, and demonstrations by active duty soldiers and veterans. These developments made a major impact on my psyche. The idea slowly took root in my mind: Perhaps the best thing I could do would be to enlist and spread the anti-war message from within? This idea finally came to reality: On December 2, 1970, with a 4F classification for draft resistance, I enlisted voluntarily in the US Army for the sole purpose of spreading the anti-war message from within. It was crazy. I admit that now fifty years later. But when you are 22 and immortal, you think you can handle anything.

The story of my three years of anti-war work within the Army is recounted in the "Vietnam Full Disclosure Project" at <https://couragetoresist.org/podcast-andy-berman/>

I was in basic training at Fort Lewis in April 1971 when VVAW held the Dewey Canyon III action in Washington DC. The intense and sober

reaction it caused among my fellow new recruits was palpable. You could tell by their nervous banter, worry and troubled looks.

Dewey Canyon III inspired me to put VVAW as the beneficiary of my Army life insurance policy. In my stressed out mind perhaps I thought that was a good way to insure my survival? In any case, I sent a copy of the beneficiary form to the VVAW national office and received a very kind supportive letter in response.

I spent 3 years spreading the anti-war message at the bases I was sent to: Fort Gordon, Fort Bragg, Fort Polk and Germany. By fortune or fate, not to Vietnam. I got into trouble, but with many civilian supporters and progressive legal assistance, I avoided court martial.

But the focus of this article is more on what happened as a veteran after I left the Army at the end of 1973. I have developed serious medical problems and experienced the impressive care in the Veterans Administration healthcare system. I have also seen the grave threat to that care in the ignoble effort to privatize the VA's highly successful public single payer medical system.

As soon as I left the Army, I enrolled in the University of Illinois, and promptly joined VVAW and participated in its countless Memorial Day and Veteran's Day commemorations.

In one of the sweet ironies of life, after the 1995 normalization of relations between the US and Vietnam, I went to Vietnam, fulfilling a deeply felt desire. I was working as a telecommunications engineer for AT&T when the need arose for technical assistance in a joint venture between AT&T and VNPT, Vietnam's public telephone company. For a week, I worked with Vietnamese counterparts in Ho Chi Minh City and explored the city I knew only from news reports. Before returning home, I visited the Cu-Chi Tunnels, now a tourist site, where you can crawl through the tunnels where Vietnamese fighters hid, literally underneath a US Army base.

Not long after, I was diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL), a blood cancer. CLL is known as one of the diseases caused by Agent Orange. Any US soldier who has CLL after service in Vietnam is presumed by the Veterans Administration to have a service-connected disability

as a result of Agent Orange.

I wondered if it was possible that I had contracted CLL from having crawled in the Cu-Chi Tunnels many years after the end of the war? I contacted an Agent Orange specialist who told me that it was unlikely, but could not be proven one way or the other.

In any case, I went to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. There I have been treated for many years for my cancer. On a monthly basis I get a checkup and blood analysis that tracks the disease. Every month I receive a 3 hour intravenous injection of blood plasma rich in antibodies to support my immune system impaired by leukemia.

At every step, I have been treated with great professional care and dignity by VA doctors, nurses and technicians who listen as well as talk. I am able to lead a normal life, maintain physical activity, continue to work teaching math and enjoy a rich family life because of the excellent care I receive at the VA.

Yes, there have been some minor problems encountered. The VA is a large bureaucracy and it sometimes demonstrates the shortcomings of bureaucracies. Internal communications and coordination have sometimes struck me as wanting. At times, the fact that there are staffing vacancies left unfilled has led to waiting times that seemed excessive.

My worst experience was when, presumably a staffing shortage, led the VA to outsource a part of my care to a private medical provider. The VA discovered that I needed an operation to remove a large sarcoma that lit up under a PET scan, indicative of a cancerous growth under the skin.

I was sent to a local university medical center for the operation, where things did not go well. It was a classic example of the advantages provided by the VA healthcare system over private medical care. The surgeon who performed the operation to remove the cancerous growth was not aware of the side effects of the newly released oral medication I was taking at the time to suppress the CLL. Did he not read my medical records? Was he so specialized that he did not follow the latest developments in leukemia care? I don't know. But his failure to know that my anti-leukemia pills should have been suspended for a week prior to the operation led to serious

bleeding for weeks afterward. Had the operation been performed at the VA itself that complication surely would not have happened. Full information about my medical history would have been passed from VA Oncology to VA Surgery which would have been fully aware of the need to temporarily suspend my leukemia medication.

With the coming of the COVID-19 crisis, the Minnesota VA took on the infamous "Fourth Mission" of the Veterans Administration. It began accepting non-veterans needing hospitalization for the COVID-19 virus, providing much needed relief to private sector hospitals. But because of the danger of exposure to the virus at the VA hospital, non-urgent appointments by veterans at the hospital were limited.

Thus my monthly IV infusions could not take place as usual at the VA. To its immense credit, on a monthly basis the VA has sent a nurse to my home with the medicine and equipment to administer the infusion in my living room. I am enormously appreciative of this, which has saved me from possible exposure to COVID-19 at the hospital.

The nurses sent, however, were not VA employees. They were working for a private contractor engaged in providing medical care in home visits. Alas, it was absolutely obvious that they did not have the level of training and skills that I have consistently encountered at the VA itself. While nothing terrible happened, there were some uncomfortable mishaps that left me yearning to return to the VA hospital.

And so, my loyalty to the SOVA (Save Our VA) movement is a personal one. I join the monthly SOVA informational picket at the Minnesota VA with members of several veterans' organizations and the AFGE union of VA employees. This is our joint fight against the reactionary effort to destroy the most successful public single payer medical system in the US, a guiding light for the universal public medical system that is the need and the right of everyone in our nation.



ANDY BERMAN IS A LIFE LONG PEACE AND JUSTICE ACTIVIST. HE WAS A VIETNAM WAR RESISTER INSIDE THE US ARMY 1971-73. HE IS CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN THE SOVA (SAVE OUR VA) MOVEMENT IN MINNEAPOLIS.



A demonstration by GIs just outside Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC in the fall of 1971.

War and COVID-19

FRED SAMIA

It may be a cliché to say that we are at war with a microscopic bug (Donald Trump has even likened himself to a war-time president, although saying so doesn't make it so, especially in his case) but the novel coronavirus does put all our lives in jeopardy, and in that sense, is closer to threatening our very existence as a species than any war has ever done.

In war, you have to acknowledge the fact that you are in a lethal situation. In combat you learn, and if you're smart, quickly accept the reality that you could die at any moment and from an unseen enemy. Denial serves no purpose and puts you in more jeopardy. Acceptance allows for planning, action and the ability to adapt to changing situations.

A Marine's tour in Vietnam was 13-months, an interminably long time when you were at the base of it. If, in the beginning months you thought about how much time there was still

in front of you, it would have been devastating to your ability to cope. So it is with the pandemic. Focusing on the immediate few days ahead serves better than stressing about how many months it might persist. Accept but don't obsess.

The first priority as a troop fighting in a war is survival, that of yours and your buddies.

There is always an element of the unknown in combat, and even when those that should "know," whose job it was to know, shared information with us, we never solely trusted it or them. It became almost a standing joke that when word came from "Intelligence" that there was no enemy nearby and therefore no likelihood of an attack, our senses heightened, we increased our watches and made sure that we were prepped to meet one. We had learned firsthand how to read the enemy from our experience in the field on "search and destroy" operations

and in manning combat bases hard up against the DMZ, the northernmost part of South Vietnam, something many of those in G-2 (Intelligence) had never done. Prepare but don't obsess.

Similarly, with the pandemic, we need to hear what is being told us but leaven it with our own knowledge, experience and common sense. Rumors ("scuttlebutt" in Marine slang) were rife among the troops in the field. Someone always knew someone else who was privy to inside information about the next operation or NVA (North Vietnamese Army) attack. And almost invariably the information was false or only partly true. With the 24-7 news cycle of the mass media, the need for content drives many stations and networks to air anything that seems related to the pandemic, no matter how far afield or lightly researched it might be. Keeping one's intake of that kind of "rumor" to a minimum helps keep the stress

down. Be informed but don't obsess.

The single most important "weapon" a combat Marine has is the Marine standing next to him. That, too, is a cliché, repeated endlessly in otherwise unrealistic war movies, but it is also a truth. You fight for your survival and that of your buddy. If either you or he can't or isn't able to do what you've been trained to do, then you both are in mortal danger. Looking out for your buddy was looking out for yourself. So, in this time of deadly threat, look out for your "buddy"—your family, your friend, your neighbor. Be safe, be smart, be a hopeful warrior.



FRED SAMIA SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH A CO, 3RD TANKS, 3RD MARINE DIV, 1967-68; HIS EIGHT DECORATIONS INCLUDE THE PURPLE HEART. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1970.

How I Became an American War Hero

Navy Combat Action Ribbon:
for getting shot at

Purple Heart Medal:
for getting hit

National Defense Service Medal:
for behaving myself for ninety days

Good Conduct Medal:
for behaving myself for three years

Republic of Vietnam Service Medal:
thank you for being in our war (from the US government)

Vietnamese Campaign Medal:
thank you for being in our war (from the Saigon government)

Presidential Unit Citation:
for randomly getting assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Marines

Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation:
for randomly getting assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Marines

Civic Action Meritorious Unit Citation:
for randomly getting assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Marines

Rifle Expert Badge:
for hitting a paper target with a rifle

Pistol Sharpshooter Badge:
for hitting a paper target with a pistol

—W.D. Ehrhart

War and Sanctions: Trump's Escape Route for COVID-19 Failures

MARC PILISUK

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, the Trump Administration continues to pursue sanctions, which prevent certain countries from receiving needed medical equipment.

The virus knows no boundaries and requires help from every part of the world community. As sanctions limit the flow of medical equipment from China to the United States, states like Oregon are forced to send scarce materials to other states like New York, who need them more. Cuba, which has long faced US sanctions, has supplied doctors to Caribbean countries and to Italy. International cooperation, rather than sanctions is desperately needed.

Even before the spread of the virus, sanctions have been punishing the most needy and innocent parts of the population by creating impediments to needed food and causing resentment towards the US. Now, while the world needs to come together to stop the pandemic, the US government instead adds to the worldwide humanitarian crisis, through continuing its use of these inhumane sanctions.

The Trump Administration has been found by the scientific com-

munity to have underestimated the threat of COVID-19 and delayed the emergency measures that might have saved thousands of lives. The administration assumes no responsibility for the cuts it endorsed in the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and has recently, against the information provided by the public health community, sought to cast blame on the World Health Organization and threaten its funding. These actions repeat a pattern of willingness to say anything or take any action that the President feels may prevent public criticism in his effort to be re-elected.

Such a President may find the tragedies of the virus and its economic consequences to be overcoming his power to blame others and to congratulate himself. What is his most likely option? In the past, US Presidents have been able to arouse patriotic support by pointing to an immediate foreign threat that requires retaliation. The President has prepared us for such military action in Venezuela and Iran.

Critics of the Trump Administration, including the Democratic Party, have been vocal about the inadequacy of his response to the COVID-19

pandemic and, increasingly, to the suffering imposed by economic sanctions. They have not been very strong however in warning that a President, such as Trump, would select the appropriate moment to find or create an incident justifying a military intervention and potentially, riding him into office for a second term. In the first week of April, as Americans faced soaring numbers of deaths and infections from COVID-19, President Trump announced the deployment of a large counter narcotics operation, specifically aimed at Venezuela: "We're deploying additional Navy destroyers, combat ships, aircraft and helicopters, Coast Guard cutters and Air Force surveillance aircraft, doubling our capabilities in the region." If the issue of narco trafficking were of genuine concern, the pressure would have been upon Colombia, which supplies far more of the cocaine flow into the US than Venezuela.

Another military event for which President Trump has primed us goes back to threats made against Iran in January in which he said the US had identified 52 sites, important to Iranian culture, which would be "HIT VERY FAST AND HARD" if Iran struck at

the US. Iran has neither the capability nor the reason for military strikes against the US.

Wars, large and small, have been precipitated by incidents later shown to be false. The Gulf of Tonkin incident led to the Vietnam war taking 68,000 American and 2 million Vietnamese lives. The Iraq War, based on false charges of nuclear weapon development, has left a legacy of extremist groups, some engaging in terror. Such wars were lies serving military contractors and the hawks in government who deluded the public. That script must not be repeated. The lack of unified efforts to combat the virus, the suffering brought by sanctions, and the use of war to divert us, are all parts of the dangerous threat before us.



MARC PILISUK IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, FACULTY AT SAYBROOK UNIVERSITY, AUTHOR, NATIONAL AWARD WINNER FOR TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE



The Decline and Fall of America?

JOHN KETWIG

When I was a boy, television was brand new. We got off the school bus, parked our lunch boxes, and hurried over to a neighbor's house to watch *Mickey Mouse Club* on the only TV in the neighborhood. In those days, the small black and white screen brought heroes like Roy Rogers, The Lone Ranger, and Sky King into our living room. The good guys always defeated the bad guys back then, and we expected real life to follow suit.

As we matured, we became fascinated by *Leave It To Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*, the first space flights, *American Bandstand* and rock 'n roll music, and the *Ed Sullivan Show* every Sunday night. Then President Kennedy was murdered, an unthinkable act, and we began to be aware of politics. Barry Goldwater became George Wallace, and the conservative point-of-view began to challenge everything America had accomplished in 200 years of an experiment with democracy. Batman and Robin became camp TV heroes, and the Beach Boys made us all dream of surfing in California. The Beatles and Bob Dylan dared us to imagine peace and love, but then we were confronted with Vietnam.

Everything changed the day

President Kennedy was murdered. The draft kidnapped many of us and sent us to Vietnam, and far too many of us came away disillusioned by the terribly unnecessary violence, death, and destruction we had witnessed. America's efforts to "bomb them back to the stone age" were all too successful, and any thoughts that we were the good guys overcoming evil were dissolved in an ocean of blood and tears. America has never been the same. Nixon prolonged the war to help his re-election, and hired a gang of incompetent thugs called "The Plumbers" to cover up the evidence while he and Henry Kissinger destroyed the Constitution. "Tricky Dick" was chased out of town, but President Ford pardoned him. Henry Kissinger is still there. No one is held accountable in Washington.

Reagan brought us catsup as a vegetable for school children, a record 138 administration figures indicted or jailed for criminal conduct, and the travesty of Irangate. He is widely revered as some sort of savior of America, despite the fact that his "covert" minions defied Congress and sold arms to Iran in order to raise illegal funds for the Contra terrorists attempting to overthrow

the democratically-elected Sandinista government of Nicaragua. The Contras utilized tactics identical to those of the Taliban and Isis a few years later. Again, no one was held accountable. The two Bush regimes were corrupt and incompetent, except when it came to gobbling up unprecedented shares of America's wealth and political power. Does anyone remember the Savings and Loan scandal? 9/11 was not really a turning point in American history. The George W. administration was obviously steered by Vice President Dick Cheney and a new brand of "conservatives," the neocons, who created the wars in the Middle East due to their tragically mistaken belief that Democracy would overwhelm the Arab world like the thoroughly discredited "Domino theory" that got us involved in Southeast Asia. Although Washington is still loath to admit it, we lost the Iraq War the day the photos from Abu Ghraib prison became public. History will surely question our disastrous twenty-year wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that have accomplished nothing but to make the military-industrial complex wealthy, and the national debt all but insurmountable.

The sad truth is that every experiment with "conservative" government has proven to be incredibly corrupt, expensive, and disastrous. If the American people would ever just step back and look at history, it is obvious that conservatism simply doesn't work. The Trump regime has exceeded all the conservative administrations that came before. Trump struts his lying as if it is a measurement of his cleverness, all concepts of dishonesty be damned. He routinely fires ambassadors, decorated military heroes, Inspector Generals, chiefs of staff, Press Secretaries, and anyone else who endeavors to safeguard American ideals and ethics by telling the truth. Today our national debt is somewhere beyond twenty-five Trillion dollars! Our country is essentially bankrupt, both financially and morally.

Today, cable or satellite TV offers most homes an incredible variety of channels and outlooks. The three big networks, NBC, CBS, and ABC have become corporate spokesmen with every newscast twisted by the corporation's vested interests. The infamous Citizens United decision by the Su-

preme Court decided that corporations are due the same rights as citizens, and TV will never be the same until the unlikely day that Citizens United is overturned. The big corporations are now free to donate huge sums of money to influence our "representatives" in Washington, and to construe their news coverage to conform with top management's political slant. As a result, Fox News offers a sad satire of what's happening, and a certain segment of the American public devours their preposterous ideology like it was candy. The coronavirus pandemic has created a critical moment in American history, with disastrous levels of business failures, unemployment, and more than 200,000 dead. Like the old Roman emperor Nero, Donald Trump fiddles on his golf courses while the empire burns. A recent article in *The Atlantic* magazine reports that Trump has described America's war casualties as "losers" or "suckers," but his base will never abandon him.

Sadly, it appears we are seeing the final stages of the decline and fall of the United States. Oh, there will be impassioned protest at that statement, but the good guys have long since hung up their six guns and left us for the happy hunting grounds. There are no TV westerns, and Mighty Mouse no longer attacks trouble singing "Here I come to save the day!" Today, the two candidates for the highest office in the land are Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Does anyone really believe that either of them can inspire a return to the accomplishments, optimism, decency, or compassion we used to know in the Kennedy years? Authoritarian leaders have come to power in Brazil, Poland, Turkey, Belarus, and Saudi Arabia, and if Trump is re-elected it will happen here. We have witnessed a lot of history in our "baby boomer" lifetimes, and I'm afraid we will also witness the end of American Democracy. Having brought children into the world, and with grandchildren bubbling over with energetic optimism, I hope I'm wrong.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO BOOKS ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR.



A Vet on Russians Killing Our Troops

BOB ANDERSON

I have no idea if Russia paid some of the Taliban to kill American troops in Afghanistan and I am no fan of Donald Trump but I have some questions about how our media is presenting this new issue. I say this because I saw similar actions myself while in Laos during the 1968 Battle of Tet. It was our government paying tribesmen to kill North Vietnamese soldiers.

I was an E.O.D. (Explosive Ordnance Disposal, bomb disposal in civilian terms) technician with the US Air Force. On paper I was assigned to Thailand. Some of us with Top Secret security clearances would often be sent on covert assignment with the CIA into Laos. We had no official military presence in Laos so this had to be kept from the American people. Everyone else knew we were there. On these missions we flew out of Thailand dressed in civilian clothes and carried State Department ID cards.

One day during Tet some of us were picked up at a base in Thailand on an unmarked CIA Plautus Porter special short runway take off and landing aircraft and flown to a forward location. This time it was South of the plain of Jars along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. One of our aircraft had been shot down and all the ordnance onboard had

to be recovered or destroyed quickly.

We landed OK and our supplies were quickly unloaded from the small plane. I was sitting on a stack of boxes of C-4 plastic explosives listening to a couple American military personnel who were dressed like me in civilian clothes. They were talking to a group of very young Laotian men, boys. The Lao were sitting around with their rifles which seemed larger than themselves. The American men had opened a box that contained a 35mm camera. They were passing it around to the men who I later learned were Hmong tribesmen, our version in that war of the Taliban.

The Americans were instructing the Hmong how to use the camera. I did not think this odd until I heard the message being translated that they were to stop bringing in the ears of men they killed to get credit. Now they only needed now to take photos of their kills of North Vietnamese soldiers along the Trail to get paid.

On one trip I was on a C-47 flying from one CIA location to another loaded with a big bundle of poppy plants, which were to be processed into opium to pay the Laotian regular army soldiers who worked for us.

Years later after the war I got to

know a Navajo ex-Green Beret here in Albuquerque who told me the type of missions he carried out in South Vietnam. Because Navajo can pass for Asian, he had been assigned to a unit of American soldiers who dressed in black pajamas. Some special units of the North Vietnamese Army wore black pajamas. My Navajo friend and his group would go into South Vietnamese villages and kill leaders who might be neutral or not fully supportive of our war efforts. The goal was to force others over to the American side. This we learned was part of the infamous Phoenix Program run by the CIA and our Army which killed an estimated 40,000 South Vietnamese before the war was over.

So many of us were involved in this these kinds of actions that in the latter part of the war some of us formed Vietnam Veterans Against the War. We held an event called the Winter Soldier Investigations to expose these actions to the American people.

When you think about it, in our war back in the 1980s in Afghanistan we did the same thing by hiring Osama bin Laden and his followers to kill Russians. This later backfired on us with the attacks of 9/11.

One has to wonder why this story

of Russians paying Taliban to kill Americans in our current Afghanistan war is anything new or different than what appears to be part of larger war strategy. The question to me now is the politics of it. Why is this being pushed now with an election so close? The Democrats in the campaign of Joe Biden are using it as a way to revive the Cold War as we go to November. But a larger question is why is the American media are being so one-sided and blind to the historical context of these kind of stories.



ROBERT ANDERSON OF ALBUQUERQUE, NM WAS IN THE US AIR FORCE 1964-1968 SERVING DURING THE TET OFFENSIVE IN LAOS, THAILAND & VIETNAM. AN E4 HE WAS ARMING & DISARMING EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE; RECOVERING DOWNED PILOTS; HE SAW CIA MEMBERS PAYING HMONG TRIBESMEN TO KILL N. VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS; HE HELPED FOUND VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR IN NEW MEXICO. HE WAS AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE WOUNDED KNEE 1973 INSURRECTION WITH THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT. HE CO-AUTHORED THE DOCUMENTARY BOOK: VOICES FROM WOUNDED KNEE. HE IS RETIRED NOW RAISING THREE ADOPTED TEENS.

The Papers Said It Was Just A Military Conflict

ALLEN MEECE

Down in Key West, where I went to the Fleet Sonar School in the Navy in 1963, we get a lot of tourists walking around who refuse to wear protective masks on the narrow sidewalks and who risk infecting others with the COVID-19 plague which is spreading strongly in nearby Miami, where they're from.

Some of them don't care if they infect me with deadly virus and kill me as they preserve their precious "Freedom" not to wear a virus mask. They are concealed within the herd and can't be traced or blamed or pay the price if I should die from their spreading a disease.

American airmen, soldiers, spies and sailors treated the Vietnamese people that way. It was safe to kill them to protect the nebulous "Freedom" of our country, seven thousand miles away across the wide Pacific even though we weren't actually threatened by their socialist leanings.

"The 'Communists' want to steal your green '59 Plymouth Belvedere convertible with a 318 cubic inch V-8 and they want to rape Carrie, your buxom brunette babe," is what my crafty Boot Camp Company Commander told me. "Those rabid millions want to amphibiously land on Malibu Beach and take all our women and toys," was the scenario the lie was promulgating. Newspapers bought and sold the swill. "China and Russia are waiting in the wings," said the dim-witted propaganda parrots.

In the sixties, after the US had saved the world in The Big One, we believed everything the media said about world politics. We knew for certain that Our Side never printed propaganda. It told us that the armed skirmishes in the Republic of Vietnam were nothing to worry about. A little push and shove and slapping-around. Nine to five on weekdays with weekends off for recreation. No Big Deal.

Fifty-eight thousand Americans would die there, along with a few million locals while unspeakable terror took place. It was an atrociously horrendous BIG Flocking Deal. The media still cannot stop itself from lying but thankfully the scale of the wars are smaller than then.

My Philosophy going into The Nam was that since I had grown up on Air Force bases, I knew The Government was Noble And Infallible. It could be Violently Firm, if need be, to Defend Us, but it was benevolent and Just Plain Nice. I was a kid, I didn't know what propaganda was. I know now. It's anything the government says.

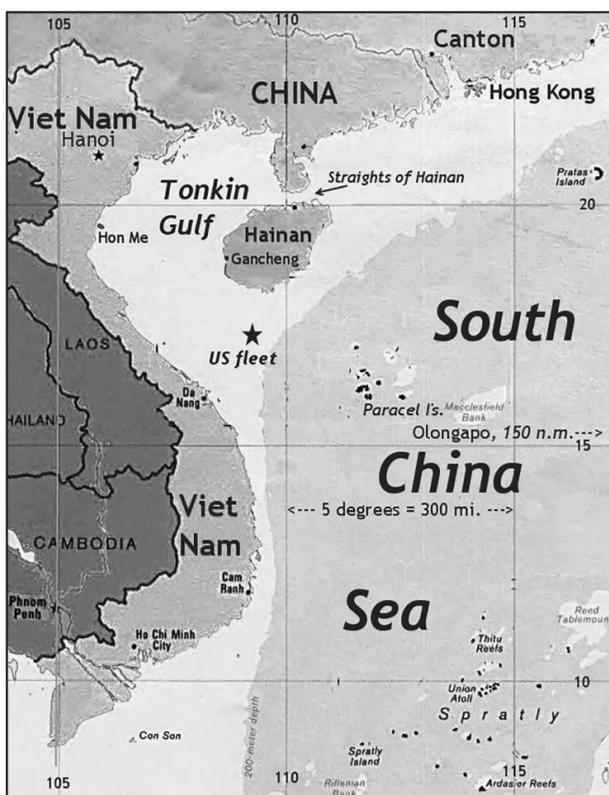
My warship, DD950, anchored offshore of Vietnam, Republic of, and did "Gunfire Support." We shot five-inch projectiles into the lush green rainforest hills, day and night for a week at a time. They never shot back. Never sent fighter-bombers after us but we wouldn't stop shooting them.

If they can't fight back, aren't we just slaughtering them? They have no artillery that can reach us out here. Through the big Search Binoculars, on the Flying Bridge, we could just barely see their outrigger fishing canoes pulled up on the beach. They had no missiles to shoot down the B-52's flying five miles over them and dropping bombs while they're trying to earn a living by catching fish from canoes. How am I supposed to hate them enough to kill them? It was an insane expedition. I was getting combat pay for being exposed to supposed danger. Fifteen dollars a week, the same as I had made on my paper route.

If this is just a Military Conflict for Political Concerns, why don't we stop killing them and negotiate in the Diplomatic Theater like a country of mature adults?

These explosives are meant to scare them into making a political decision in the capitalists' favor. This is coercion by fear of death. This is not the diplomacy of a respectable nation. Somebody was making big money out of this lethal nonsense. Warfare is corporate welfare. The weapons of war are the highest-priced luxuries that national treasuries can afford.

Weapons are costly and need continuous repurchase and replacement. They become obsolescent in one day when the enemy invents a deterrent. Then they get buried and thrown away or jettisoned. In battles, they are destroyed, damaged



and stolen. The perfectly profitable product is a weapon of war during a war.

When national survival is at stake, big shots will spare no tax to defend big shot property. Death-dealing becomes a meteoric growth industry. Corporations want it to go on forever. They pay their mouthpieces to tell Congress to Hang In There for a hundred emotional reasons. They conceal the truth that warfare Pours Peachy Profits into Plump Portfolios.

My Philosophy after the lessons of the Vietnam American War was that congress never learns.

Congress has supported five tacky wars since Vietnam and it proves that it always needs watchdogs and the oversight of veterans who know better, like VVAW. Unjust laws proliferate under the power of primitive people who gain leadership roles through force of will and ambition rather than through any intellectual good sense.

Hatred for Socialists by the top financial echelon is always with us.

To protect their personal fat-ass wallets; they always revert to type: Will kill for money. Not pretty but there you are. In this enlightened modern day and age, we have moneyed killers who are still in charge of many big things. It's the human condition.

VVAW helps me cope when it reminds me that the herd, the system, the power structure, The Man, was obscenely wrong sixty years ago and hasn't improved much. So I don't feel alone when I scoff at their cliché patriotic lies that justify foreign murder. Same as it ever was. It is still every American's patriotic duty to suspect and Question Authority.

The media still lies about chauvinistic US bullying of third-world nations such as little old poverty-stricken Yemen, of all places. This VVAW newspaper is one media that speaks of the reality of power, pretty or not.

That's why I wrote the fictional novel *Tin Can*. It is a way of committing an imaginary conscientious mutiny where men with Codes of Honor take their Destroyer away from The Navy and escape the Insanity In The Tonkin Gulf.



ALLEN "SOMERSET" MEECE WAS A SONAR TECHNICIAN ON THE USS EDWARDS, DD950 DURING ONE OF THE 1964 TONKIN GULF INCIDENTS. HIS BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM

**TROOPS
STAND DOWN
FOR
BLACK LIVES**

**If you have concerns about mobilizing, you're not alone.
You have options. You have rights.**

Contact veterans who can help: support@aboutfaceveterans.org
or the GI Rights Hotline for confidential advice: 877-447-4487

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THE VETERAN

SECTION B

Volume 50, Number 2

Fall 2020

The Early Days of Our Paper

EDWARD DAMATO

In your hands is Volume 50, Number 2 of VVAW's national newspaper, The Veteran. It started off as First Casualty, then Winter Soldier, and then became The Veteran. We decided to look back at the early days of VVAW's newspapers and get memories from some of the key organizers who worked on the paper over the years. See last issue for recollections from Barry Romo and Pete Zastrow and elsewhere in this issue by Bill Shunas. Here are excerpts from an interview with former VVAW National Office member Ed Damato

Fifty years is a long time, but give it a few moments, and memories can come flooding back. I first worked on the paper when it was called *Winter Soldier* in 1973. Before that it was *The First Casualty* the name drawn from the words of Aeschylus, the ancient Greek writer, "in war, truth is the first casualty..." It then became *Winter Soldier* based on Thomas Paine's words "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." We saw ourselves as the opposite, winter soldiers. Next it was named *The Veteran*, a very simple, fitting explanatory name of what the paper represented.

When the paper was first published in New York City I remember that the great Larry Rottmann was the editor. Larry, the editor and writer of *Winning Hearts and Minds* and *American Eagle* was from New Mexico and I remember him flying to New York to work on it. It was a great resource for the organization and it was a point of pride for me to sell them or hand them out.

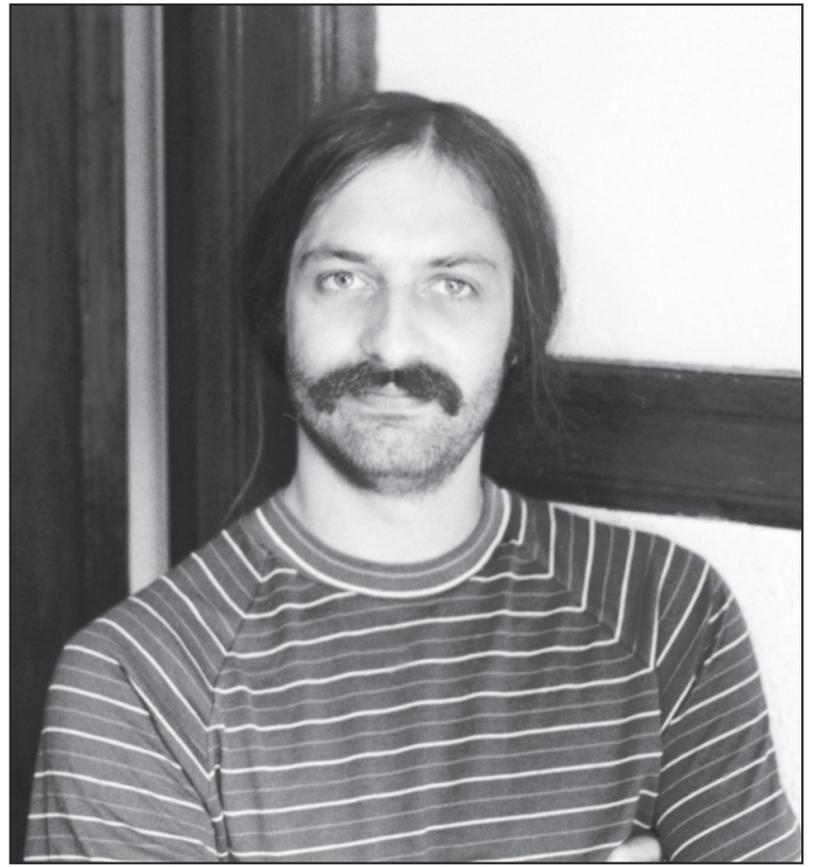
When I first began working on the paper in 1973, it was my first year in the national office. We would meet in our office (which was the floor above our living quarters) at the house at 827 West Newport in Chicago. We would discuss what we should include, then assign the articles and see what pictures we had. We also solicited articles and photos from all the chapters particularly about events

such as anti-war demonstrations and Veterans Administration hospitals and benefits. Of course we included news about Vietnam and other important events of the day. Once everything was planned we would begin the process of writing and editing, then typing and layout. Barry Romo was responsible for the layout. Marla Watson was at first a staff member and her contributions and typing skills were invaluable. The others were Sam Schorr, Brian Adams and me and Bill and Charlie Branson, the two national staff. We also had Carol Fisher who did all those wonderful drawings and in color too that were on our last pages! I remember if Carol wasn't in Chicago we would anxiously await her drawing through the mail. Peter Zastrow joined in when he was elected to the national office. Later came Bill Davis.

Let me interject a note here... In last month's article about the paper Pete said that once he caught me polishing the toaster instead of writing one of my articles. Let me explain myself. It has always been my style to come up with a first sentence, a good one where the article would just flow from there. When I was in college writing many, many papers a good number of my first sentences would come to me while I was jogging. I would literally run home and set in down on paper and it made the rest of the article easier to write. Polishing the toaster was my Chicago equivalent. I hope Pete can appreciate my artistic inspirations!

The paper was done before we had computers so everything was typed on electric typewriters. We used a font (I can't remember its name) where if you made a typo you had to backspace to erase, with white-out, either one, two or three spaces (the M was three spaces.)

Brian Adams and I did lots of photography and we set up a photo lab on Newport, and later when we moved at 7719 South Fielding, where we would develop and print. The great thing about developing our own photos was that we could enlarge them to fit the spaces they needed to be. Brian was much more experienced than I was and I would watch in awe as



Ed Damato at the VVAW National Office in Chicago, 1973.

he stuck his hands in the black bag and took the film from the camera, rolled it into the developing container where the developing chemicals were added. I was always afraid to somehow ruin the film if I did it, but he was a pro. I remember one of the things that I was very particular about was to make the picture as dramatic as you possibly can. If that meant zeroing in on just the lower right hand of the negative or focusing on the very middle and cutting out all the rest, then that was what would tell the story better.

The whole process of planning and executing would take about three weeks and then we had a week to catch up on our other duties before we would begin the whole process again for the next month's paper. It was a lot of well-worth-our-time work.

Once the paper was finished we would take it to the printer in Palos Hills, a nearby suburb. I remember the first time going to pick it up. Seeing all those bundles and the printed finished copy was a thrilling experience, all that work coming alive in my hands. We would put the papers in the garage out back and I would get cardboard

boxes and tape and box them to be sent out to the chapters all over the country. We took them to Greyhound to ship. I remember saying that we had to buy boxes because the ones we took from the grocery store dumps were none too sturdy to ship. We would tell the chapters to recycle for their needs.

One of the things I am very proud of in addition to the anti-war coverage and the needs of veterans was our articles and work around bringing a Universal and Unconditional Amnesty for All Draft Resisters.

I left the national office in November of 1977 and headed back to New York City where I was born and raised. Those years in Chicago and working on the organization's newspaper were among the most memorable of my life; very rewarding and I think important. I would love to see the folks again I mentioned in this article. I think we did a great job.



EDWARD DAMATO HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1970 AND LIVES IN NEW YORK.



Operation Raw, September 7, 1970 - (l-r) Ed Damato, Joe Zingale, and Jim "Caps" Beckenhaupt.

After Kent State: Finding My Way to VVAW

JOE MILLER

In the two years after my discharge from the Navy and my return to the Chicago area with my wife and daughter, Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered; Robert F. Kennedy was murdered; Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were murdered. And, the immoral war against the Indochinese people expanded. Now it was 1970's turn.

May 4, 1970, 9:00am. I completed my overnight shift at the *Chicago Daily News* and drove over to Circle Campus for a full day of classes. I had one more quarter to go to finish my bachelor's degree in political science at the end of 1970. Though I had a full-time job and a family to support, I was taking a full load of classes each quarter. The GI Bill was not going to waste.

Sometime after 11:00am that day the news hit campus about the National Guard shootings at Kent State. People coming out of classes were huddling together, discussing what apparently happened. There was an immediate need to express anger and dismay. For many, classes were now the least of our concerns. In effect, we students "cancelled" all classes for the rest of that day.

Small groups of students carried makeshift protest signs around the campus. Wild rumors flew around campus that nine, then 10, students had been shot and killed at Kent. I joined one small group of about ten or fifteen fellow students who marched with signs along the edge of campus on Halstead Street to be more visible to the public.

After a couple of hours, I decided to head home, since I needed to get some sleep before my night shift. I shared the day's events with my wife, had some dinner, and got to sleep. I wondered what the situation would be at work that night.

When I got to work at 11:00pm, the city room was somewhat crazed. This overnight shift was the busiest time for the *Daily News*, as it was an early afternoon paper. All the editorial work was done overnight. The focus this night was the events at Kent and the aftermath beginning to hit campuses throughout the city.

By Tuesday morning, May 5th, newspapers were filled with stories of protests across the country. In Chicago, most, if not all, colleges and universities were dealing with the question of a national student strike. [Eventually, this would also include many high schools!]

I got to campus around 9:00am, wondering if there were going to be

any classes at all. There was a planned noon meeting at the Greek Forum, a central gathering place that was often used for anti-war activities. I joined approximately one thousand other students at that meeting to discuss and debate the need for a student strike.

Coming out of that meeting, according to campus reports at the time, around 800 students (me included) marched from the Forum to the ROTC offices located inside the Roosevelt Road Building (RRB). Nearly one hundred students actually managed to get inside. There was some destruction, broken windows and such. Some plainclothes cops and university police were injured while removing the students who occupied the offices.

Most of us stayed outside to see what the cops might do. Though not part of the activist student organizations at this time, SDS, PL, YSA, I was certainly a partisan to the general mood of anger over the Kent killings and the role that ROTC played in sucking young people into war.

After I left campus that afternoon, a group of students marched to University Hall, where the administration offices were located. They occupied the whole eighteenth floor.

At some point a fire broke out on the sixth floor, causing \$20,000 damage, according to the fire department.

In more ways than one, things were heating up on Circle Campus, as was the case on more and more campuses across the country.

One thing I should point out, for those who may not know. In 1970, Circle Campus had no dorms where organizing activities might be planned. This was a "commuter university," with students taking buses or subways from wide areas of the city, or driving in from the suburbs. One could say that the majority of students were NOT from privileged backgrounds, this was actually a working-class campus in many ways. It is useful to keep this in mind as we see the high level of organizing and action that took place over the ensuing days and weeks.

By Wednesday, May 6th, the *Chicago Daily News*, as well as other papers in the city, headlined some of the Tuesday events: "3 colleges shut down here"; "NU closed for rest of week; student strikes spread".

Once again, after work, I headed back to campus.

Some four thousand students and faculty participated in another huge rally to decide whether or not



to extend the strike. The answer from all of us was a resounding "Yes!". What a sight that was! This was real education, involved education, actual participatory democracy.

Following the rally, we marched through campus to urge the faculty to dismiss classes and join in the strike activity. Some eighty students returned to the ROTC offices to sit-in. The University issued a warning that all persons remaining past 9:30pm would be arrested for criminal trespass.

Though the students were "assured" that Chicago cops would not intervene, a task force was stationed outside the building. Thirty-five students who decided to remain were arrested. More than one hundred students were gathered outside the building to protest the arrests. When they refused to disperse, the cops used force to clear the area.

Forty-one students were arrested.The "Circle 41".

Thursday, May 7th, there was another large gathering of nearly 3,000 students. I came to campus after work to join in whatever was going on, though I was wary about getting caught up in anything involving the Chicago cops. This meeting called for the dropping of charges against the "Circle 41" and for an immediate and total shutdown of the university.

Then, another march, this time to the Chicago Circle Center (student union). Some groups broke off to enter lecture halls in an effort to disrupt classes and barricade some classrooms.

Later that day, Chancellor Norman Parker finally announced the closing of the university until Wednesday, May 13th. In addition, the Art and Architecture Building (AAB) was opened to students for use as "Strike Central" for the whole city!

Very little was being written about activities at Circle Campus in the

"movement press". Most focused on the larger, more well-known campuses like Northwestern, the University of Chicago, or the campus in Champaign-Urbana. Our "commuter university" seemed to be rather insignificant.**

However, for me, this week of activities and the sense of being a part of something larger, something nationwide, pushed me a little further along the path of activism.

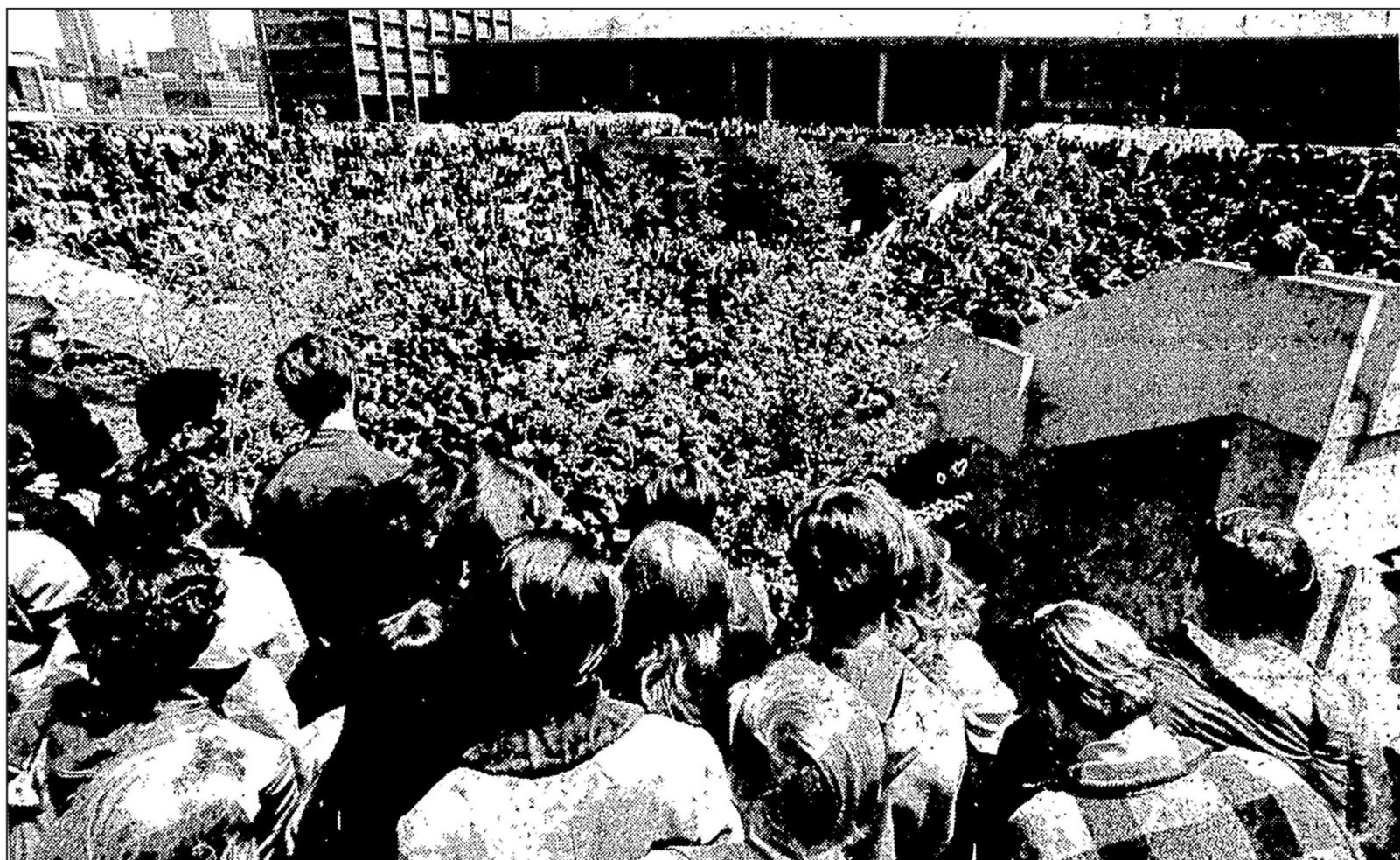
By August of 1970, I connected with Bart Savage, then a leader and central organizer of the Chicago Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I finally realized that I must belong to an activist organization that connected my veteran status with my political beliefs. It was time to join something meaningful. I could no longer deny that I was a Vietnam Veteran against the war, against the political repression of social justice advocates, and for a radical reconstruction of the way the world worked.

Since that time, though I could not always participate actively in VVAW events, no matter where I was, home or abroad, I never looked back. I would always be a Vietnam Veteran Against the War.

***: One exception was a piece by Randy Furst for the May 19, 1970, issue of The Militant (weekly newspaper of the US Socialist Workers Party), "Students Press for Control at University of Illinois".*



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.



My Long Road to VVAW

JOHN EDWARDS

Recently I was in Coffee Cartel, a favorite hangout in Redondo Beach. Megan, a barista there, often wears pins on her vest. I had some pins marking special moments in a drawer, so one day I brought them for Megan to browse through. She asked about the VVAW/WSO pin. She is about nineteen years old. So I was surprised that she was interested in VVAW, and what I knew about it. When I was her age, I knew nothing about politics and cared even less.

When I was her age I was a high school dropout swabbie on the flight deck of the USS Ticonderoga. We were in the Gulf of Tonkin. I was there for the Gulf of Tonkin Incident that triggered the Vietnam War. I was a plane handler between the catapults near the bow of the ship in V-1 Division. My friend, John Schmied, was the talker in flight deck control working the large metal Ouija board that showed positions of aircraft on the flight deck. On 2 August 1964, our destroyer escort the USS Maddox, was fired on by North Vietnamese PT Boats. Four of our F-8 Crusaders engaged them, crippling three of their boats, and killing four Vietnamese.

Two nights later, our aircraft scrambled to defend the Maddox and the USS Turner Joy, who reported they were under attack. When Commander James Stockdale, the lead VF-51 F-8 Crusader pilot returned, the flight deck control officer asked him what happened. Stockdale said our ships were firing into the dark, with no enemy ships in sight. My friend Schmied told me about overhearing that exchange. On 5 August, President Johnson ordered us to launch a large attack on North Vietnam. On 7 August, he signed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which gave him authority to engage the Vietnamese without declaring war.

We carried nuclear bombs that were regularly loaded onto A4 Skyhawks, and we drilled for nuclear attacks. The satirical movie *Dr. Strangelove* was fresh in my memory. I realized then that nuclear war was not a joke. In this situation it was a real possibility. The bombs were right in front of me on the Ticonderoga. If we used nukes on Vietnam, the Chinese or Russians would surely nuke the US. Even if I even survived on the ship, the world would be changed forever. Politics suddenly became important.

So as we returned to San Diego for Christmas, I bought our cruise book. It had diagrams of how the "Reds" had attacked our destroyers and how we counter attacked. Recalling 4 August it said, "Aircraft from the Ticonderoga again were immediately

on the scene and joined in repelling the enemy torpedo craft. As a result of the engagement, two PT boats were reported sunk and two others damaged." The account about the second attack did not square at all with what Commander Stockdale had said. I felt betrayed that our own government would lie about such an important event, and even start a real, but undeclared war based on it. What could I do with that information? I realized I was ignorant, and decided to get educated.

My enlistment ended in 1966, so I enrolled at Los Angeles Harbor College to finish high school and get a degree. The GI-Bill provided me \$100 per month, which together with my part-time job income, enabled me to survive in school.

In 1969, when I entered UCLA, Bruin Walk bristled with anti-war groups handing out flyers and information. I was skeptical of all of them, but I was open to reading the government's own *Pentagon Papers* published in 1971. I took a class about them from Tom Hayden to learn what secretly happened in Vietnam. I told him about my experience in the Gulf of Tonkin. He was the first person who had any interest in my experience. That dovetailed into his class on the *Pentagon Papers*—which revealed that our government had secretly pushed us into the war for years, while hiding critical information from Congress and the public. Hayden included the history of Vietnam, which for centuries fought off the Chinese, the Japanese and the French. They would never give up unless we killed everyone.

Meanwhile, my younger brother, Rob, was subject to the draft, several kids I grew up with were in Vietnam and one high school friend was killed there. Putting Rob's and other friends' lives in danger for a futile and dishonestly promoted war infuriated me. If he was drafted, I planned to go for him. I knew the ropes and knew he would not survive there. I joined anti-war actions. I marched, protested and occupied the UCLA administration building with Bill Walton and others.

Part of my activism included working on a film called *Still At War*, which was the first time I heard about VVAW. Bill Hager of VVAW was the prime mover in the film. I was honored that he gave me the VVAW button/pin that I eventually offered to Megan.

Once I received my Environmental Engineering Masters, I was hired to work on the Space Shuttle program for the Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC). It felt good to work on the inside of the military



The US Navy aircraft carrier USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14), refueling while operating off the coast of Vietnam, 1966.

to make it better environmentally. I helped them move from solid rockets to liquid rockets which significantly reduced ozone depletion. There I was invited to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Even though they had long ago promoted the GI-Bill, they became outdated, supported the war and required belief in God, so I decided as I am an atheist, to pass.

When 9/11 hit, the deceptions took hold again, in the run up to the Iraq War. I knew it was a repeat of Vietnam, misleading the public and Congress. Signs of it were everywhere. Most notably, fifteen of the 9/11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, none were from Iraq as the government and news glossed over, because the narrative drive was to attack Iraq.

Another example: Bush alleged Iraq was seeking nuclear weapons they would provide to Al Qaeda to attack us. In 2002, Joseph Wilson was sent to Niger to determine if Iraq was buying yellowcake uranium needed for nukes. When he reported Iraq wasn't doing so, the Bush Administration outed his wife, Valerie Plame, as a CIA agent. This was retribution for challenging the party line driving us to war with the wrong country. It was distressing that most people could not see through the Bush and Cheney hype. I wrote to my representatives to oppose the war. Barbara Boxer was not snowed by the hype but Dianne Feinstein fell for it.

In 2003 on the first night of "Shock and Awe," I was in DC and felt compelled to protest in Lafayette Park with many others. Our government was starting another war based on deception. Sadly, we are still suffering the repercussions, while still at war in the Middle East.

Then fast forward to when Megan asked me about VVAW, she put me on the spot! I told her what I could remember about VVAW. I didn't have answers so I went to Wikipedia, then on to the VVAW website to learn

more. And I was drawn to your blunt truth, so I joined. When my copy of *The Veteran* arrived, I read it cover to cover.

VVAW's approach seems similar to that of Thomas Paine. He was a lone voice, but his message in pamphlets like *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* and books like *The Rights of Man* was amplified because it so clearly and powerfully stated the facts. VVAW assembles and documents the observations of returning veterans, analyzes them, writes about them and publicizes them, first in *The Winter Soldier Investigations* and now in *The Veteran*. Like Paine, VVAW was attacked. Powerful interests did not want VVAW to speak out or be heard. Unable to refute the message, they attacked the messenger. VVAW has had the strength and perseverance to carry on all of these years, addressing the issues I've been writing about.

So when I went back to Coffee Cartel in mid-pandemic, Megan was there in a mask, a working hero dealing with customers, some prattling conspiracy theories, some arguing about wearing masks. I sat outside writing an answer to VVAW's call for articles.

I shared my research with Megan: VVAW's understanding, organizational memory and drive to create a just nation are needed as much, or more, now as they were during the Vietnam War. VVAW helps vets and organizes vets to help our country avoid descending into tragic, senseless wars. In these "times that try men's souls," the Winter Soldiers of VVAW are here now to support Megan's generation.



JOHN R. EDWARDS, USN, ENLISTED JAN. 1962 - MAY 1966 USS TICONDEROGA CVA14. USAF CIVILIAN ENGINEER, SMC, OCT. 1979 - JAN. 2010. HE HAS A DAUGHTER AND SON.



John Edwards in USS Ticonderoga starboard gun tub, 1964.



Megan, barista at Coffee Cartel, and John Edwards.

Recollections: Statue of Liberty Xmas 1971

JIM MURPHY

December 26th, 2021 marks 50 years since 15 of us VVAW members took over the Statue of Liberty in NYC. Also with us was a young reporter, Paul Fisher, from WBAI. Bob Barracca and Gene Halpern are in touch with me and I'd like word to get out to the other 11 of us that may still be alive. Mike Parker passed away in 2009. I will buy the coffee on Liberty Island but this time we will pay the cashier instead of leaving the \$15 we left on December, 28, 1971. "Bring Our Brothers Home."

Reprinted from the Spring 2009 issue of The Veteran.

Motivated by hearing about the loss of Mike Parker, who was one of the four Maryland VVAW members in the Christmas 1971 takeover of the Statue of Liberty, I thought I would share my recollections of the event.

To Michele Osborne. I knew your Uncle Mike. Mike was the most clean-cut VVAW member I ever saw. He was sincere, insightful and helped with our precision. My memory of our conversations includes his reminiscing, while we were in control of the statue, about his having done duty at Governor's Island USCG and falling asleep at night waiting for the Lady's arm to fall off.

I am sad to hear that Mike has passed. He was a really fine brother. In Peace, Jim.

I was coordinator for the Maryland VVAW chapter during the period that "Operation Peace On



Earth" occurred. We hammered out the week of demonstrations at Len Sproehle's apartment in Philly. The main ideas for the Statue demo were conceived by Ray Grodecki and Bob Clarke, PA VVAW.

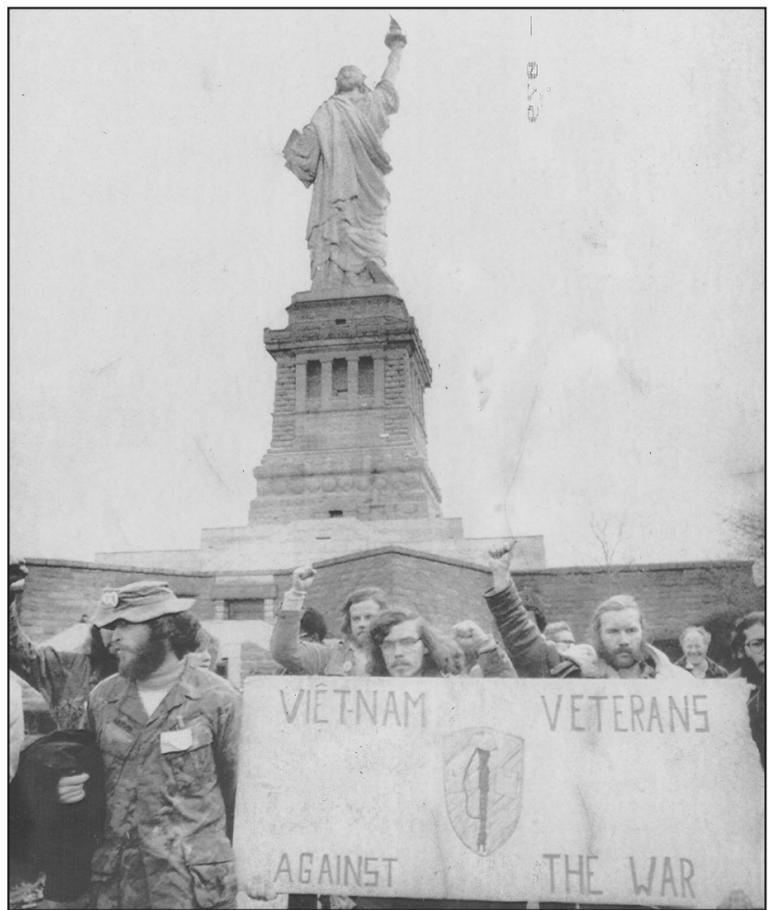
We camped out at Valley Forge beginning December 24, 1971 (we were big on symbolism; still are). After a great campfire and "Do you remember Boone's Farm?" fourteen of us left for NYC on Xmas Day, staged at Gene Halpern's house in NJ and took off for NYC and the Statue early on December 26th.

There were four of us from Maryland, four from PA. and the rest from MA and NY. Ray Grodecki, Gene Halpern, Bob Clarke (these three were the creative minds); Jim Murphy, Steve Juli, Bob Barracca and Mike Parker (R.I.P.) - Maryland/D.C. Dave Shafran, Bill Garvin, Andy Mellor (CT.), Tim Holmes Tim McCormack, Don Carrico (MA), Paul Fichter, and Lou Pichinson.

"Vietnam Veterans take the Statue of Liberty, December 26th 1971." Fourteen members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War "liberated" the Statue of Liberty with a sit-in to protest resumed US aerial bombings in Vietnam. They flew an inverted US flag from the crown as a signal of distress." There was one extra member, an unheard from member of *Pacifica News Service*.

It went like clockwork. Steve Juli and I were the first two to get on the Island along with Ray Grodecki and Bob Clarke, the gatekeepers, letting us up through the locked gate into the arm of the statue. There were two locks on the gate to the arm, one high and one low. Ray and Bob cut the lower lock and we were the last ones up the stairway which was sealed and circular. No one could see them bend back the wire mesh gate and let us squeeze in. I was first so I got to watch lower Manhattan all day till 5PM, sitting next to the lights at the top of the torch as VVAW brothers two by two came up into the arm.

By the last boat of the day, there were 14 vets and one young reporter from *Pacifica* standing on the ladder going up the arm. When the lights



came on, it was time to move. There was an old night watchman on the first level. We told him we had peaceful intentions and that he could join us if he wished. The "Bring Our Brothers Home" leaflet was given to him but he left pretty quickly. Then we barred the doors and put up a minimal barricade with the bar metal that was available from construction of the "New Immigrants" display.

The Director of the National Park Service (NPS) was hunting in Alaska and out of contact. He and the NPS Police had jurisdiction, not the NY or NJ police, although they were said to have wanted to help. Our legal advisor, Peter Weissman (?) tied up law enforcement reaction for nearly two days letting our message play on an international stage for all three days. Ray and Bob had all international and US media outlets notified the moment we took over. The media kept the police at bay and, as we all know, we were entitled to make our continuous anti-war statements. We had to vote on taking an order of contempt. It was eight to leave and six to go to jail. I

wanted to go back to the campfires in Valley Forge.

Rod Kane (DC Coordinator VVAW/DCVC) mentioned in his book *Veterans Day*, "neither the government nor the 15 of us realized that the doors opened outward. Our saving grace (in my opinion) was the hordes of press that were present (thanks again, Ray G.) made it impossible for a heavy-handed response."

Years later I met Sherman Adams who was the corresponding new face token for NBC (Jerry Rivers aka Geraldo Rivera was the other). He was at the desk at NBC and took a call from the White House demanding that the story not play in the evening news. Some things never change.

We have lost Mike Parker. We should find a way to reconnect. I know that this event, this crazy moment of trying to end the war and bring our brothers home, is something that we all carry with us. It was a fine moment in our lives. ☮

JIM MURPHY IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW FROM NEW YORK.

42 Years of Fraggin' with Bill Shunas

BILL SHUNAS

When I got back from Vietnam, it was during the period of the invasion of Cambodia and the demonstrations resulting in Kent State. That was just the time I got out. So, I went downtown to join the anti-war march. I saw signs for some guys from Vets for Peace. I had a beer with one of them afterwards. I guess he sent my name to VVAW. So, then I started receiving the VVAW Chicago chapter newsletter, beginning in 1970. But I didn't become active until 1972. By 1972, I was a chapter member and going to demonstrations, leafleting, whatever. I went down to Gainesville to work on that. That was 1973, I think.

That was the trial of the Gainesville Eight, eight members of VVAW who were accused of conspiring to disrupt the Republican Convention in Miami. Down there, I was part of a group trying to get VVAW's outlook on the trial, raising people's consciousness, doing media work, that kind of stuff.

I went down there with Walter Klim, out of the Milwaukee Chapter. There were about a dozen of us organizing for a demonstration at the beginning of the trial. Four or five of us stayed around to monitor the trial. Bart Savage was there. Brian Adams was there at the start. They were both National Officers, at that time. They were supposed to be running the show, I guess.

Well Gainesville, that was an

eye-opener. Three months, I think. It was kind of a heavy situation. They put a gag order on us. We broke the gag order and figured "We're all going to jail." We were going to go one day at a time, call a press conference, one day, one person presents it; one person goes off to jail. On the next day, the second person; the third day... I think I was number eleven, or something like that. They actually didn't arrest the number one guy, who was Bart Savage.

One thing I remember about that. The language the judge used was "acting in concert with the Gainesville Eight." So, when we had this rally before the thing started, one of the speakers was Tony Russo (of the *Pentagon Papers*) and the first words that came out of his mouth; "I am in concert with the Gainesville Eight." I said: "Wow!" That's the correct line!

I stayed through the whole trial. We didn't have contact, too much, with the actual defendants, because their lawyers didn't want us outsiders to influence the judge's rulings; acting in concert with them.

The VVAW National Office was in Chicago, so I knew the people. I did leaflet writing and stuff like that. Someone I was talking to from the National Office came up with the idea for me to a column. I came up with the title Fraggin' - that was the Fall of 1978

At the time, most of the people

weren't signing their articles. But I signed mine as Spec Five Willie. I think part of the reason for anonymity was we looked at it as a mass movement that was going to make changes. So, you suppressed the individual a little bit. Plus, the paranoia.

Early on I would also give out the Grenade of the Month to someone who did something outrageous, usually a politician type or officer type, or something like that. There was an incident; I don't know if it was Navy senior officers or who; had some kind of convention with naked ladies running through the hallways and so forth. You know, that kind of thing. I would give them a grenade of the month

I still do the column because I feel an obligation to people who like it or want it. Every once in a while I get feedback that they like it.

I've finished five books, I think. I only published two. The others are in my basement, smelling of mold. *Wilson and Jernigan* and *Remembering Gage Park* are the two I finished.

I found out that I enjoyed writing.

That's why I started out with it. I submitted *Wilson and Jernigan* to the publishers. I found one who would do it. But, I had to pay for it. That's the way they work. *Remembering Gage Park*, my thought was that it was more important, in terms of questions of the day.

The three that are in the basement? Well, let's see, I wrote one mystery. I actually wrote one about VVAW, an informant in VVAW. It was fictionalized. The guy I wrote about, or I had in mind, as I was writing, he was real. I never found out whether he was an informant or not. Yah. He was conflicted. I had his character being conflicted between thinking he was doing his patriotic duty versus his feelings as a veteran, and so forth.

So that's about it for my writing. During the mid seventies I was Chicago Chapter co-ordinator. Then I got a real job (postal service). I became active in my union, mainly as editor. So I had less time for VVAW organizing so I once again became a grunt.



Excerpts from an interview conducted with Bill Shunas.



"Lady, we are the troops": Vietnam Veterans and the Anti-war Movement at Kent State University

THOMAS GRACE

Originally prepared for the Peace-PHS Joint Conference, Kent State University, October 25, 2019, Kent, Ohio.

By 1971, Americans wearied of the Vietnam War while many were tired of those protesting the conflict. Since the massive introduction of US forces in 1965, Washington, DC had been witness to large scale anti-war protests. More were planned that same year for April and May. Dewey Canyon III, begun on April 18, 1971, with Kent State's Tim Butz being one of the principal organizers, would be like no other. This protest would not involve the often reviled college age activists; rather it would mobilize veterans of the Vietnam War.

As with other conflicts in which America has fought, concern had been voiced over troop morale being adversely affected by dissent. On the first day of the veteran's protests in April 1971, a group attending a convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution looked on disapprovingly as an anti-war formation neared the capitol. Knowing not to whom she spoke, a matronly woman reproached one of the fatigue-clad marchers: "I don't think what you're doing is good for the troops." The former soldier replied: "Lady, we are the troops."

No protester could have answered a DAR member with more earned authority. Tom Hayden was to write of the vets, "They carried with them a credibility that could perhaps be ignored—as indeed it was—but never refuted."

Whether the public ignored VVAW in the early 1970s is debatable. What is less arguable is how poorly understood is the role of veterans in campus protests against the war at Kent State and elsewhere in the long sixties. In my 2016 book, *Kent State: Death and Dissent*, space demands necessitated that their story be abridged. This article represents an effort to more fully chronicle their part in the anti-war struggle in Kent and elsewhere.

Today, specialists of the Vietnam era better recognize the working-class character of the student body at Kent State in the 1960s. What's more, historians of the Vietnam War are acquainted with Christian Appy's book, *Working Class War*, which established that 80 percent of the soldiers that fought in Southeast Asia were drawn from a blue-collar stratum. Putting the evidence together, it becomes easier to appreciate that by the 1969-70 school year at Kent State, 10 percent of the male students had served in the military.

Veterans were among the pio-

neering activists at Kent State in the early 1960s, but most had not served during wartime. Not until the late sixties were veterans returning home to oppose a war in which they had just fought. Some became active in the Students for a Democratic Society. Undergraduates like Mark Lencl, Ken Johnson, Ray Hudson and Mike Gorup added an edge to an organization known for its escalating radicalism. Gorup developed specific skills that later saw him work for the radical press in Chicago. Hudson and Johnson functioned as strategists for the campus movement, while Lencl gained visibility as one of the local group's foremost militants.

A Cleveland native, Lencl lost his draft deferment by inadvertently failing to carry enough semester hours at a community college. Drafted, his time in Vietnam had shaken him. He witnessed atrocities perpetrated against children. Lencl transferred elsewhere in the airborne unit, becoming a Pathfinder, the dangerous duty of scouting helicopter landing zones.

After leaving the service and becoming an activist at Kent State, Lencl took risks that established for him a martial reputation. In April 1969, he fought off rightwing students who attacked SDS members at a rally. Later that day he could have easily been shot when police pointed their weapons at Lencl after he menaced them with a metal pole. Such volatility had already led to the banning of the group from campus and to injunctions against students such as Lencl and Gorup.

Restricting SDS from the university didn't end campus radicalism. However, no organization filled the void created by the prohibition against SDS. While various bodies organized anti-war marches in 1969 and 1970—some involving thousands of students—no established group seemed prepared to respond when President Richard Nixon announced the Cambodian invasion on April 30, 1970.

When veterans at Kent State next stepped forward to provide direction to the anti-war movement they did so without the aggressive pose that had characterized SDS. Nixon's presidential broadcast of April 30 generated consternation on and off the campus. Jim Geary, a graduate student and veteran of the 101st Airborne, hurriedly decided on a different approach. He put together an improvised group and called a rally at noontime on May 1 to condemn the invasion. Geary and his fellow students declared that the constitution had been "murdered" by the White House failure to obtain congressional war making authority for the move

into neutral Cambodia.

Awarded for his bravery for Vietnam duty in 1965, Geary addressed a crowd of 300 students. Butz, who survived the Tet Offensive, stepped forward to assist in the burying of the constitution, the text of which had been torn from a history textbook.

The noontime rally on May 1, 1970 proved to be one of the last peaceful gatherings of a weekend filled with fury. That evening young people rampaged through downtown Kent breaking windows. The following evening, militants fired the campus ROTC building, destroying the WWII barracks that housed the program. National Guardsmen, policing a Teamsters strike raging throughout northeast Ohio, were redirected to the Kent State campus. A third night of confrontation ensued, on May 3, this one involving the bayoneting of a half dozen students by guardsmen and the liberal use of tear gas.

Veterans are known to have been involved in the mayhem, though there is little evidence that significant numbers partook in the disorders. Monday, May 4, the first day of classes since Friday's rally, proved different with respect to veteran participation. Guy Perneti set foot on the university grounds for the first time on May 4, having come to campus with another veteran to inquire about enrollment. Soon students were running by him screaming that the National Guard was killing people. Thinking back to Dallas, he thought "Fuck, it has happened all over again." Butz also avoided the rifle fire, although his closer proximity to the killing area caused him to understand more readily what had occurred. Within a day Butz learned that he knew several of the dead.

Ken Johnson, a sergeant in the First Infantry Division, numbered among dozens of veterans who survived the thirteen-second salvo. He likened the shootings to a Vietnam "firefight," and ran zigzag for his life. Later he noted that "You know that only a very short time passed... [yet] it went on forever." He saw fatalities in a parking lot he had fled, remembering how one student's "arms and legs were starting to twitch. The guy trying to help her asked me what he should do. I...shook my head... Maybe somebody saw a survivor of a wound like that in 'Nam. I never did."

John Conklin came home from Vietnam physically unscathed, only to find himself standing feet from soon-to-be casualty Jeff Miller when the blast of gunfire began. Taking cover, he grabbed a young woman and threw her and himself to the pavement taking shelter in an access road. He survived as did the female

student he had helped protect. As we know from John Filo's iconic photo, Jeff Miller did not.

No former soldiers were hit. But army veteran Frank Zadell, who had been in the same parking lot with Ken Johnson where all four students died, almost certainly spoke for some other ex-servicemen that day in saying that he came closer to dying at Kent State than he did in Vietnam.

Dozens of former soldiers experienced the moment of the shootings, aided the wounded, and watched the ambulances leave the campus before they departed the university grounds once the county prosecutor ordered the campus closed. In Kent and elsewhere, the killings shocked thousands of veterans who had returned from Vietnam that swelled VVAW ranks. Butz became a national leader of the organization, while Johnson and veterans like Dave Childes, who testified at the Winter Soldier hearings, Al Morris and Mike Carmedy all contributed to the growth of the local chapter that emerged as the most important anti-war group on the campus.

The Vietnam anti-war movement is often dismissed as having been the domain of spoiled middle and upper class kids seeking to dodge the draft. Knowledge that combat veterans were fired upon at Kent State, while trying to stop the war in which they had fought, greatly complicates the false narrative conservatives would rather tell.

As long as the war would last, so would opposition to it by veterans at Kent State. John Morrison, a resident of industrial Barberton, Ohio who saw extensive action in the 1st Air Cavalry, dropped out of Kent State after 1969, but continued to attend annual commemorations of the killings there. "I'm proud I served my country," he said in November 2018. "I just wish I would have had a better reason, a belief in why I was there."



THOMAS M. GRACE, PH.D., A MEMBER OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE AT KENT STATE, WORKED WITH THE SIBLINGS OF THREE OF THE STUDENTS THAT WERE KILLED IN 1970, AND ALL OF THE SURVIVING CASUALTIES, TO ORGANIZE THE MAY 2020 TRIBUTE. THE YEAR-LONG REMEMBRANCE BEGAN IN JULY 2019 AND CULMINATED WITH A "VIRTUAL" ONLINE PROGRAM ON MAY 4, 2020. GRACE, WHO WAS WOUNDED IN THE SHOOTINGS, IS THE AUTHOR OF *KENT STATE: DEATH AND DISSENT IN THE LONG SIXTIES* (2016) AND TEACHES AMERICAN HISTORY AT SUNY/ERIE. IN THE EARLY 1970S HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE BUFFALO VVAW-WSO CHAPTER.

Soup Can Blues

Our president says the left-wing mob are throwing soup cans at our cops instead of bricks. Easier to throw, and if you're caught, you can always say you're only trying to feed the kids.

It's true that you can get a better grip on Campbell's Cream of Mushroom or Progresso Italian Style Wedding than you're going to get on a brick, and a can's more aerodynamic, too.

But what's all this about soup? What's the matter with baked beans, canned peaches, pineapple chunks, Chef Boyardee Spaghetti O's? Surely hungry kids'll eat that stuff.

Or even tuna fish? Those little cans, like flat stones or silver dollars, man, you'd get some wicked speed with those, like throwing fastballs at a batter's head. Cruising the aisles of a looted grocery

store, the possibilities are endless: Armour Star, Amy's Organic, Wild Planet. That's the trouble with our president: he can't tell the truth to save his ass, and still has no imagination.

—W.D. Ehrhart

Standing On Our Children's Shoulders

DIANE FORD

Fifty years ago, VVAW was called upon by Martin Luther King, Jr. to help fight racism in Watts, Los Angeles. The union of anti-war veterans and The Southern Christian Leadership Conference was powerful stuff. The community demanded an end to the deadly practice by local police of pulling the wrong people, from the wrong beds, at the wrong addresses with no recourse. Combining the strength and resources of multiple peace organizations terrified President Nixon. By written accounts documented by historians like Gerald Nicosia, the president feared that these leaders would ultimately create a coup, storm the White House and pull them all from their beds. To lay these efforts down, Nixon called upon expensive public resources to stop the efforts of anti-war leaders and the demonstrations they organized in places like Miami, San Clemente and yes, Watts. This is exactly like the illegal actions of the current administration—using public resources for political purposes against peaceful protesters—in places like Portland and Minneapolis today. George Floyd's life matters. Black lives matter. VVAW's half century of grassroots efforts matter. And you can be damned sure, if you pay attention, that history matters, too.

In the early 1970s, as a naïve, anti-war beach bunny from Huntington Beach, California, I fell in love with Willie Hager, one of the West Coast VVAW leaders that Nixon was so worried about. This union, in itself, matters nothing to the world. It is blowing in the wind. But what does matter is the education I received in his company and that of other VVAW combat veterans.

Willie keeps a room in LA, and one night, we leave a party of VVAW anti-war leaders at his house to see the movie *Deliverance*. When we return, we park down the street, resting in the van as we often do, Willie's back against the driver's side door, my back against his chest, staring up at the street lamp like a moon. In our own time, we make our way into the house. Willie unlocks the door and turns on the lights as I rush past him to answer the ringing phone. Wrong number; we're used to that. I look in Willie's direction and see that his sweet, almost loving expression is gone. At his feet, a small, aquarium planter is overturned with dark earth leading across the furniture and carpet to the front door. A note on the table says: "We're all busted, they're taking us to LA County. Please work on a bondsman."

Something was definitely happening to the veterans around me that went beyond the paranoia of the day. On side trips as far away as San Diego or Monterey, the police pull us over, ripping the van apart at the seams, looking for—for what? How do they know what vehicles we are driving, where we are going, and the routes we will take to get there? VVAW is on the top ten list of subversive groups in America, but I'm sure that says more about them than us. I hang out with the West Coast inner circle, don't I? We eat meals together, rally together, party together. Scott Camil from the east, one of the Gainesville 8, has camped on our couch, playing Holly Near music late into the night; he is so committed to ending the war that I don't think he ever sleeps. In San Francisco, we all crowded onto Jack and Lydia McCloskey's couch, listening to Joan Baez's new album, *Come from the Shadows*, reading and re-reading the liner notes which describe Scott Camil as a "man with a face like a Puerto Rican Angel, and a body count of 390."

VVAW is not a flock of angels, true, and they're pretty damned angry. And I'm getting frustrated, too. What am I missing here? Are all of these vets quietly plotting armed revolution only on the days I'm not around? There are some people who say that a peace movement like this, however much it raises consciousness, cannot succeed because it, too, pits one side against another. But others see the byproduct (the joining together of diverse people and causes working toward a common goal) as key.

So, when Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference invites VVAW to join in an anti-police brutality march in Watts, we are honored and psyched. Willie's van holds seven people, two in the front and five in the back. We're cheerful as we drive through the streets of LA to the church where we will be meeting. Along the way, we see a VVAW guy on the side of the road, looking strangely nervous, his antique MG sports car apparently broken down. Willie stops to help, which causes a delay of about a half an hour to the march. When we finally arrive, there are police cars everywhere, but I figure that they're there to ensure a peaceful protest.

But that is not it at all.

Before Willie even turns off the van, every door opens at once, except mine. One cop pulls people out of the back and two grab Willie in the driver's seat, hissing for him to get out his "operator's license." Willie reaches for his pocket; they react like he is reaching for a gun. I think it is their sirens screaming as they pull him all the way out of the van by his legs, toss his body against the side of a police car and smash his face against the fender. And when they spread eagle his legs—the legs of a decorated combat Marine—kicking them apart until he falls face first on the ground, I fly out of the van. I am white, educated and dressed in a long granny dress and glasses, hanging out with vets who have seen a lot more than I have. This is not lost on a few of the cops around me.

"Are you with him?" the cop holding my arms finally asks, motioning in Willie's direction with his head. His tone is gentle; does he want me to say no?

Well, their handcuffs are as cold as their toilet seats, and my eyes cinder hot, as I watch officers terrorize the very same people they are charged to protect. All we did was pull up to a church for a demonstration; we hadn't even gotten out of the van. Yet, here I am, under arrest at Firestone Jail, watching police officers belittle a pregnant young woman with talk of watermelons and chicken. I watch as they throw the contents of my purse over a long table, and say how my boyfriend will miss "fucking me" while I'm in jail. "And by the way are there any dirty pictures of you in the purse that we can take home for later?" As a female officer quietly, even apologetically, searches me in front of these men, I begin to sing:

I could be your daughter, I could be your wife.

I could be your daughter...

But that is a song I never finish.

Arrested at 3pm Saturday, the sun rises on Sunday and we're not yet released. All night we ride the freeways in a full-sized police bus. The two female protesters, me and a woman named Denise, are separated from the men by a locked cage behind the driver. Denise doesn't say much to me, but I don't despair; from where I sit, I can see Willie, Alfredo and the others, chained at the legs and hands, but still breathing, even after being maced in their cells. Many hours later, the bus pulls up to the Sybil Brand

Institute for Women. The woman across the aisle peeks at me through the wire mesh and says: "What did you do to deserve the murdering jail?"

"The murdering jail? We went to an anti-police brutality march in Watts yesterday; the charge was loitering but we never got out of the van."

"Holy Jesus," she tells me. "They is teaching you a lesson, honey. They is saying, 'Don't fuck with me now,' that's what it is."

Somehow, I am not getting the message they are trying to send.

The bus parks close to the prisoner intake doors, and Willie and the others watch as the driver handcuffs me to Denise and someone drags us, bound together, inside the murdering jail. When the door slams behind us, I hear someone cry out—but it's probably just the bus starting up, as it heads to LA County Jail to dispose of the others. Once inside Sybil Brand, I am alone, moving in fear and awe through the booking system, as they strip me of my granny dress and pig-tail ribbons and bend me over for yet another flashlight search, toss me in a shower, spray my hair and body with anti-lousing chemicals, and throw me into a holding cell with a bunch of women with holes in their arms and not much else to sustain them.

The next morning, the toast has green jello on it, and my ponytail ribbons are laid out with my dress in a wrinkled heap. And I realize that by marching against unnecessary and criminal police violence, I have come face to face with the same violence myself.

"Get dressed," they shout at me. "Bus leaves in three minutes for the courthouse." They never do anything quietly in jail. I dress quickly, mechanically, completely undone, and board the bus and am told I'll be in court all day for my arraignment. Is that possible? It's Monday! How can they hold us for more than two days if we're not guilty of anything? The woman next to me laughs a jaded laugh and asks what I'm in for. I tell her the story; she jumps up onto her seat and tells the whole bus.

Some prisoners, hearing what I had come to Watts to protest broke into cheers of "right on" and "way to go, girl!" For a moment, I'm a working class hero but I don't feel like one. Then the door busts open and a cop shouts: "Is Diane Ford on this bus?" Removed from the vehicle, I am brought back inside. By then, two of us remain in custody: me, possibly to tweak Willie, and Bill Unger, a vet with long beautiful blond hair and a very bad attitude.

Just like in the movies, as I reverse through the system, I face a gate at the end of the ride. Beyond it, I can see Willie following my progress with red, blazing eyes. Slowly, I walked toward him through the gate; to the man who had lost three fathers to war; who had turned down an appointment to Annapolis to become a Marine; and who had endured two combat tours in Vietnam backed by an honorable discharge. Once through the gate, afraid I might teeter, topple and upset him, Willie rushes me with those arms of his, spinning me around and around so many times, there is no time to cry. He holds me so tightly that, wrapped in those all-inclusive arms, I think this might all go away.

"Fuck," I say weakly, but we are way beyond profanity.

We walk to Willie's van and take the back streets to LA County Jail to get Bill Unger. We arrive there just as the police release Unger into the marble-floored release area. But the anger and frustration of two days of false incarceration rises to his hands and Unger flips the bird at a group of officers. Within seconds he is trashed,



his long hair used as a handle to slam his head against the cold, hard floor.

As Nicosia wrote: "Unger had been badly beaten at a demonstration in Watts; and before he was released from...LAPD lockup downtown, he was worked over again, this time by a police judo expert twice his size, who shoved his head against the cement floor. The beatings exacerbated Unger's concussion from the battle of Khe Sanh, and he began having epileptic seizures."

We help Unger from the floor, his eyes on fire with rage and pain. I look into them, and know that right there, on the bloodied, marble floor of LA County Jail, I am probably witnessing the birth of a revolutionary. Unger is trashed, we are trashed, and obviously the authorities feel trashed. Once again the desires and needs of the people of Watts are lost in the scuffle.

Escorted to the county line by a patrol car creeping along behind us, I realize that the authorities really can decide if we'll make it home that night. With Unger in the back, Willie drives silently forward as I hug the passenger window, looking over the suburban Southern California jungle of car lots, shopping malls and industrial smokestacks. And I wonder, "Who is orchestrating all this? Who feels it is so important to silence us? Who has authorized the throwing of all of these public funds at us? Are we really that important in the scheme of things?"

As a peaceful person working to end an unjust war, I had already been gassed in Miami; watched Trotskyites hit our tires with bottles and sticks; faced scores of rifles aimed directly at me by National Guardsmen; endured searches of my home, cars and body by police; ignored vehicles parked discreetly across from our house manned by stalkers I didn't know; and lived with a bugged phone that never worked.

Why do some authorities continue to believe that by attacking and imprisoning opposition, that they will somehow contain it and we will back down? Bill Unger's epilepsy progressed from petite to grand mal; Willie and the others continued a lifelong relationship with protest; and I was turned from a Valentine princess and Nixonette into a skeptic for life. Like the senseless death of George Floyd and others in recent times, those events in Watts fifty years ago showed me bullying and racism in action. It showed me that where there is smoke there is not always fire. Just because someone is arrested for something, there could be other forces at work and they could be innocent. And witnessing the day-to-day lives of combat veterans in VVAW left me truly in awe of their stamina and commitment.

Scared, saddened, and a little too humbled by yet another reality, I rested my head on Willie's shoulder on that long drive home and finally understood, at least in part, some of

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In War, It Is The Innocent Who Suffer

MELISSA MADDOX

I spent all afternoon reading my copy of *The Veteran*. I came to the article, *McNamara's Mistake* by Hamilton Gregory. (Fall 2017)

As I read, I came to the phrase "McNamara's Morons". My eyes filled with tears. My hands were shaking so bad that I put the paper down. If I'd been standing, I know that I would have fallen.

I remember years ago my dad told me that when he was in Vietnam, there were a couple of men in his unit that had IQ below 75.

I thought that it had to be a mistake, that those men were there by accident.

My son was in LD classes all of his life. When he turned 17, recruiters called the house all the time. I'd cuss them as though they weren't human.

After graduation my son couldn't find a decent job. So without telling me he went to a National Guard recruiter and signed up.

When I found out, I fell apart. Everyone around me knew, but they were afraid to tell me.

I called the governor, senators. I wrote letters. I called the National Guard. They had some high-ranking lady call me back. She said, "Your son will go to Afghanistan with his unit when it deploys."

I didn't give up. I told my son that we would go to Canada and live there. Inevitably, all I did was push my son away.

Through bootcamp, if it hadn't been for the help of the other soldiers, he wouldn't have made it.

He wasn't making enough money so he went and signed up with the Army. I knew that this would be our out. I knew that the Army wouldn't take him. They not only took him, he was in Germany a few weeks later to train, then Iraq.

He was told to sleep during the day and drive a truck at night.

Many times, when they were in the convoys at night there would be explosions from IED's. He went and spoke to his company commander and told him that he was having a hard time due to his Asperger Syndrome. His commander told him to keep his mouth shut. He was bullied and ostracized by the men in his unit. He came home on leave, got into trouble, and was incarcerated. We went through years of the court system. He wound up with a felony on his record and a dishonorable discharge.

5,478 human beings did not come home from Vietnam. My son came home Iraq. And his discharge was changed from dishonorable to a General discharge.

After my son in law's suicide, (Iraq Vet) I met Barry Romo, truly one of the best moments of my life. He told me about his brother, friend and nephew, Bobby.

It still devastated me when I read

it in *The Veteran*, yesterday. They knew that Bobby should not have been in Vietnam, they knew that my son should not have been in Iraq. How many Bobby's and Landon's are there?

I would like for this article to be mandatory reading. We don't matter, except to each other. All war is wrong. It is the innocent that suffer. But if you knowingly send young men and women to war who are incapable of defending themselves, your sentence should be death.

I come to VVAW to say thank you. You're all still saving lives.

I felt lost and alone before. I now feel like I have a family.



MELISSA MADDOX IS THE DAUGHTER AND NIECE OF VIETNAM VETS. SISTER OF TWO AIRMEN. MOTHER AND MOTHER IN LAW OF IRAQ VETS. I KNOW WHAT, "LOVE THE WARRIOR, HATE THE WAR, MEANS."

Democracy—Not

WILLIAM JOHNSTON

As I listened to some Trump Administration crony recently drone on about "American democracy", I recalled with sarcastic irony President Obama in Cuba lecturing Raul Castro on democracy. At the same time Republican officials in the State of Arizona and several other states were and are working to block as much citizen access to the voting booth as possible. There is nothing new here. When it comes to promoting "democracy" around the world the United States Government has a pretty dreadful record. Our role in assisting the overthrow of elected governments is on-going. Be it Iran in 1953 to Honduras under Obama and Clinton. Did someone mention Vietnam? As usual not a whisper from the corporate media. As pointed out by political theorists, "media" is simply the propaganda vehicle for the dominant ideology.

The democratic republic established by our constitution in 1789 muddles along as a shadow of what it aspired to be. We are not a democracy. We have become an oligarchy (i.e. rule by the rich). Many Americans blame "Citizens United", the US Supreme Court decision legalizing bribery in our political system. The court has blessed a corrupt system making a mockery of democracy and gave the green light to the rich to buy politicians at every level of government. In a real democracy money does not count as freedom of speech.

Take a look at how we "elect" the president of the United States. We know from the 2000 and 2016 elections that people don't elect the president. Something called the "electoral college" does—using the total number of Representatives and Senators from each state and at times the perverted legal logic of the US Supreme Court! Clinton received three million more votes than Trump in 2016 but Trump is "elected" under a system designed to give slave holders more power when the constitution was ratified in 1789.

How about Congress? For starters take the United States Senate. Consider Wyoming has fewer than a million people while California has nearly 40 million. Both states have two Senators—would anyone in their right mind call that equal representation or democracy? I think not! Additionally California has one of the ten largest economies in the world while Wyoming ranks down there with the third world.

Twenty-five million more citizens voted for Democratic Senate candidates in the last election, yet the Republicans have more US Senators and legislative control. Thanks to Senate rules and the filibuster, Senators coming from states making up only 27 percent of the total population of the country can kill any legislation. And do the math on how US Senators from low population states affect the electoral vote. One

hundred of those votes for president are totally unrepresentative of the people. This is how it works out when low population states vote one way and a majority of the population goes another. California senators represent people and Wyoming—cattle! How does a majority prevail in such an undemocratic system? The answer is that it doesn't and it is getting worse by the day.

Consider the House of "Representatives"—so called! Thanks to Republican gerrymandering of congressional districts in 2010, millions more Americans voted for Democratic candidates as their congressman only to have the Republicans take control of the House! Now good old Democratic Party incompetence can be blamed for some of this problem. The National Democratic Party was asleep at the switch in 2011 when the Republicans redrew districts guaranteeing their candidates would win.

Take the State of Pennsylvania. Congressional Democratic candidates won over 100,000 more votes than Republican candidates statewide but fewer than one-third of the congressional seats. And this was repeated all over the country. The Democrats took control of the House of Representatives in 2018 only because they increased their popular vote by almost 10 percent over the Republicans and they need to do better in 2020 to keep the House and retake the Senate. Trump and Republicans

don't care about majority voting. That is why they put all their effort into their right-wing base in the states that gave them a minority victory in 2016.

Take a moment to review our "democracy" shall we? A Congress that does not even begin to represent a majority of the people; a campaign "contribution" system that operates on bribery; a media owned by a half dozen corporations only concerned with profits and a professional military (opposed by the founding fathers) has replaced a citizen army. We have more people in prison than any other western country. We torture suspects. Election laws are written so only two parties have a chance at being elected. The constitutional right of the working class to join a union (First Amendment Freedom of Association and industrial democracy) is gone.

As Marx wrote: "The oppressed are allowed every few years, to decide which representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and oppress them."



BILL JOHNSTON IS A USAF VIETNAM VET (SGT OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE) 1966-70. HE'S A RETIRED UNION STAFF FOR THE UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION (AFL-CIO). HE WAS A POLICY ANALYST: WASHINGTON STATE SENATE – 1988 TO 1991.

Standing On Our Children's Shoulders

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his sadness and disillusionment.

In my life, change has proven to be more a process than a single event. We are all lucky enough to stand on somebody's shoulders; that is history. With the death and aftermath of the loss of George Floyd and others, combined with massive, heartfelt protests all across the world, true change is in the air. Each day, I learn more from my children than I've ever learned before about race, gender, war and more. Sometimes it feels like I am back in social change kindergarten. This is because they are starting from a place where inclusion is second-nature to them, not something they learned in a book or on the streets. They live integrated lives. They are already integrated. And to me, that is a hell of a start toward change. It has got to mean that as a people, as a species, in some ways anyway, we are almost there. There is something new in the air.



DIANE FORD IS THE MOTHER OF TWO 20-SOMETHING WOMEN WHO HAVE A LOT TO SAY ABOUT EVERYTHING. THERE IS MUCH TO LEARN FROM THEM, AND HISTORY AS WELL. WALKING BESIDE VVAW DURING THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT CHANGED ME FOREVER, IT SHAPED MY ENTIRE WORLD. THIS WAS HARD TO SEE AT THE BEGINNING BUT I SEE IT NOW AND AM GRATEFUL FOR IT ALL. THE BEST PARTS OF MY LIFE HAVE BEEN SPENT AS A MOTHER, A SINGER-SONGWRITER AND A WIFE IN PLACES LIKE ALASKA, CALIFORNIA AND THE MIDWEST. AND WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, I STILL BELIEVE LOVE, NOT VIOLENCE, WILL BRING US ALL HOME.



Fighting Racism in the USMC

KIM SCIPES

By 1971, the Marine Corps had suffered racial outbreaks at every major Marine base in the world, except one. In Vietnam, some units were disarmed after coming out of the bush, as there had been firefights between white and Black Marines. A celebration of Martin Luther King's life by Black Marines at Chu Lai in April 1969, one year after his assassination, had been surrounded by tanks. Racial "relations" were terrible. (As was true in all the other branches, in Vietnam, the US and on bases in Europe.)

The one base that hadn't had an outbreak of racial violence was the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona, where I was stationed. We were a base where Marine pilots came to learn bombing and gunnery practices.

I was an avionics technician, trained to work on communications and navigation equipment in A-4 Skyhawk aircraft; but my lack of seniority had knocked me down to work on vacuum-tube radio equipment in CH-47 helicopters. I wasn't very good at it; I guess the night I threw a 75 pound radio against a cement brick wall in frustration kinda gave me away.

Unknown to me at the time, the Commanding General of the 3rd Marine Air Wing had decided to set up a "human relations" program at Yuma; obviously not to do anything, but to cover his ass in case something jumped off.

Somehow—I was never told why—I was ordered to join Gunnery Sgt. Thomas A. Robinson and Sgt. Michael G. Courtney in the unit. Gunny Rob and Mike, both African Americans, had decided to make this project real, and the first day I reported to work, Gunny Rob gave this white boy literally a two-foot high stack of some of the most revolutionary literature of the 1960s—books like *Soul on Ice*, *Die, Nigger, Die!*, *Soledad Brother*, and a number more—and ordered me to go back to the barracks, to read these books. "If you're going to be any good to us, you've got to know what's going on with the young Black Marines." Little did I know my

life began changing the first day on the job.

I read and learned. Although I had been raised in a conservative Arizona working class family, I had not been raised a racist. Our small town had poor blacks, poor Mexicans and poor whites, and we all seemed to get along pretty well. My step-father had known Ira Hayes, the Native American Marine who had helped raise the flag on Iwo Jima. I was able to "get" what the writers had said.

I came back to work, and for 18 months under the tutelage of Gunny Rob and, after Mike got out, Cpl.

Black got in his face, and another white Marine intervened on the side of his white friend; in the struggle, the second white Marine got thrown out of the bus and was run over by a following car and killed. Our team investigated, and found out what had happened, as I stated above. I got chosen to report what we'd found to the dead Marine's unit, a light anti-aircraft missile battalion, many of whom had just come back from Nam.

The guys in the unit were not pleased to hear my report. Soon, I got death threats left on our phone, particularly warning me to watch

the lifers did not like it; not one bit. Over the 18 months, we had numerous undercover CID-types come in, and tell us they were going to kill this motherfucker or that one. Usually, we knew those named needed to be straightened out, but a death threat put us on the spot: do we report it or not? Gunny Rob ultimately reported each threat, and strangely, nothing ever happened to the one making the threats. I'm sure it was only a coincidence.

After 18 months, we were shut down. There had been no large racial confrontations on our base; we think we played a part. I had made Sgt (E-5) by then, so even though I was sent into the A-4 Squadron that we'd really found a lot of problems, no one harassed me. I ran the Avionics Department—my Staff Sgt. liked to spend his nights at the Staff NCO club—and got out after four months, and headed to college at Florida State University, where I ultimately got my Bachelor's of Science degree in 1975.

But no college has ever taught me anywhere near what Gunny Rob, Mike and Jim taught me. And based on our experiences, when the *Pentagon Papers* came out while I was still on active duty, I turned-around.



By 1971, the Marine Corps had suffered racial outbreaks at every major Marine base in the world, except one. In Vietnam, some units were disarmed after coming out of the bush, as there had been firefights between white and Black Marines.

James E. Kolloch (another Black Marine), I fought racism and white supremacy as my official duty. We learned of example after example, how Blacks were treated differently—and worse—than whites. We intervened when we could, and we fought this shit. We fought non-judicial punishments, bad paper discharges, general mistreatment—we were in the thick of things. Over time, Gunny Rob expanded our work to defending the many white Marines who had "drug problems," such as getting caught with a single marijuana seed in their car. Before long, it seemed we were taking on the entire Marine Corps "world."

Two cases stand out in my memory. On the liberty bus going into town, a white Marine had called a Black Marine the N-word; the

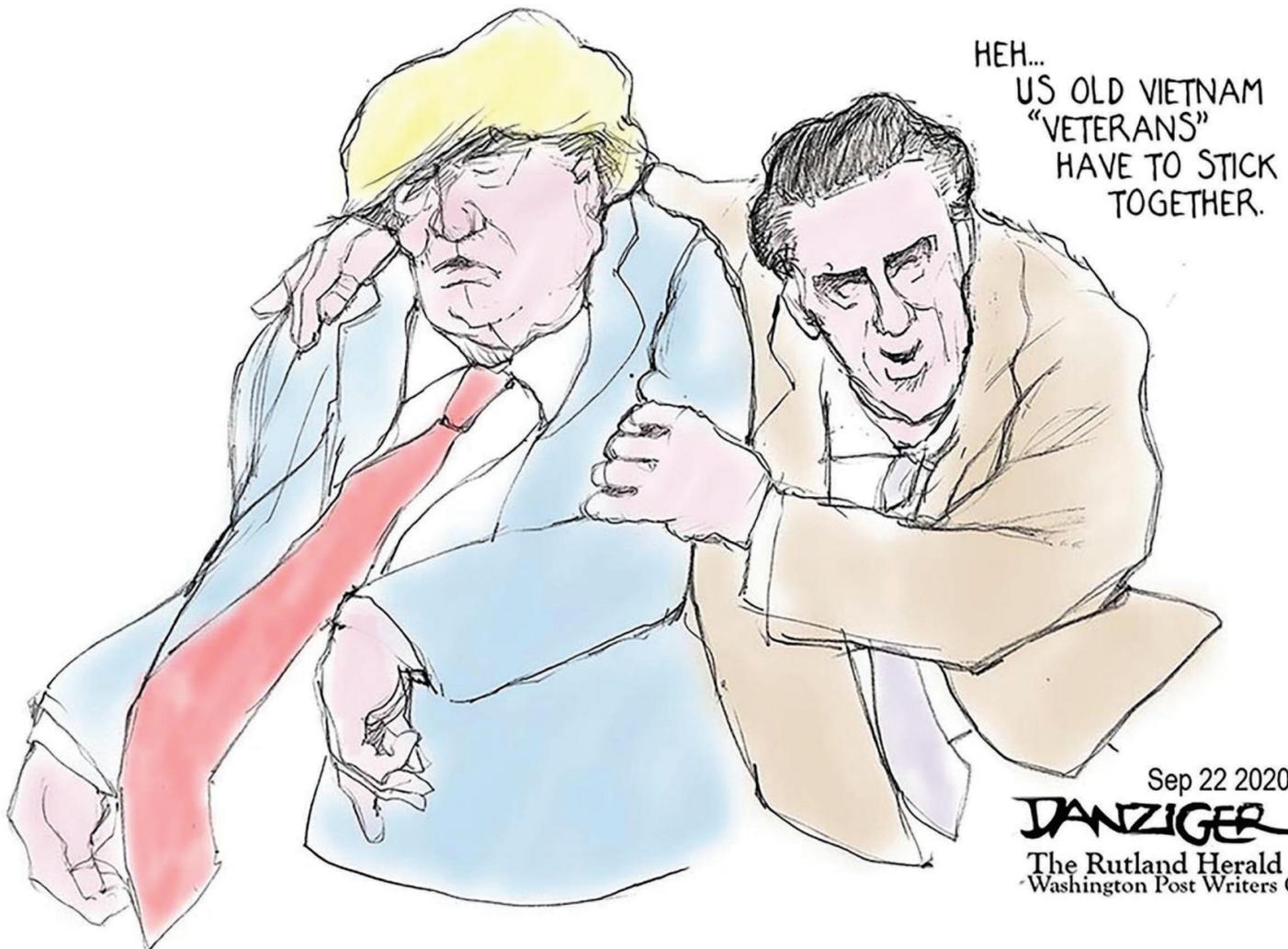
myself in the chow line. I can remember putting copies of *Life Magazine* under my utility jacket to protect my kidneys in case of attack. Fortunately, no one ever tried to hit me.

Another example was more fun. We had a F-4 Phantom Squadron in our Group, run by a Lieutenant Colonel. They had a continuing number of racial "problems." Gunny Rob called the Commanding General, who told him to "take care of it." Rob sent Jim and I—two, 19 year old corporals at the time—to meet with the Lt. Col, and this Lt. Col. had to explain to us two corporals why he was having continuing problems in his unit, and why he had not successfully dealt with it! One of the highlights of my life!

The General had set our program outside of the Chain of Command, and

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER GETTING HIS BS, SCIPES RETURNED TO ACADEMIA, GETTING HIS MA AND THEN LATER, A PH.D. HE HAS BEEN TEACHING SOCIOLOGY AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST IN WESTVILLE, INDIANA SINCE 2004, AND HAS TAUGHT OVER 50 SEMESTERS OF "RACE & ETHNIC DIVERSITY." HE HAS BEEN MARRIED, DIVORCED, RAISED TWO KIDS, AND HIS FOURTH BOOK "BUILDING GLOBAL LABOR SOLIDARITY: LESSONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES, SOUTH AFRICA, NORTHWESTERN EUROPE, AND THE UNITED STATES" SHOULD BE PUBLISHED BY THE TIME THIS ARTICLE IS OUT. HE WAS INCLUDED IN THE BOOK "MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE: GI RESISTANCE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR" BY WILAL SEIDENBERG AND WILLIAM SHORT FOR HIS WORK IN FIGHTING RACISM AT MCAS YUMA.

Mitt Romney Decides to Back Trump



Sep 22 2020 (9173)

DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group



THE VETERAN

SECTION C

Volume 50, Number 2

Fall 2020

John T. "Buzz" Noyes

JOHN LINDQUIST

Buzz was born on International Women's Day, he was proud of that and always let people know, especially his girlfriends.

We were Marines together in Vietnam and very good friends. Both of us were in the 3rd Marine Division. We first met at Dong Ha in September 1968. Buzz was a proud East-Sider from N. Stowell and E. Bellevue. The day we met I was returning from the mess hall to the hooch. I turned down his row of hooches and I saw him reading a copy of *Kaleidoscope*, Milwaukee's underground newspaper. I said "Hey man, you from Milwaukee?". He said "Yeah! what's it to ya!" "I'm from Milwaukee" I said, and from that day we were best friends.

In April 1971 we met up again at a VVAW benefit event at UWM, they were raising funds to send vets to Washington DC. We left the next day, 14 of us, to the VVAW demonstration, Dewey Canyon III. Buzz was very active in VVAW. He did speaking engagements, helped organize demonstrations and he was "Michael Maggot" in our Gorilla Theater group, The Badger Liberation Tribe. Our Chapter "Artist", Billy Curmano, put together a short play in which Michael Maggot enlists, survives Boot Camp and Vietnam, and comes home and joins VVAW. Buzz helped a lot and will be missed. His help with Plan 47 will also be missed.

He was a proud Marine, and applied this ethos at work, in his

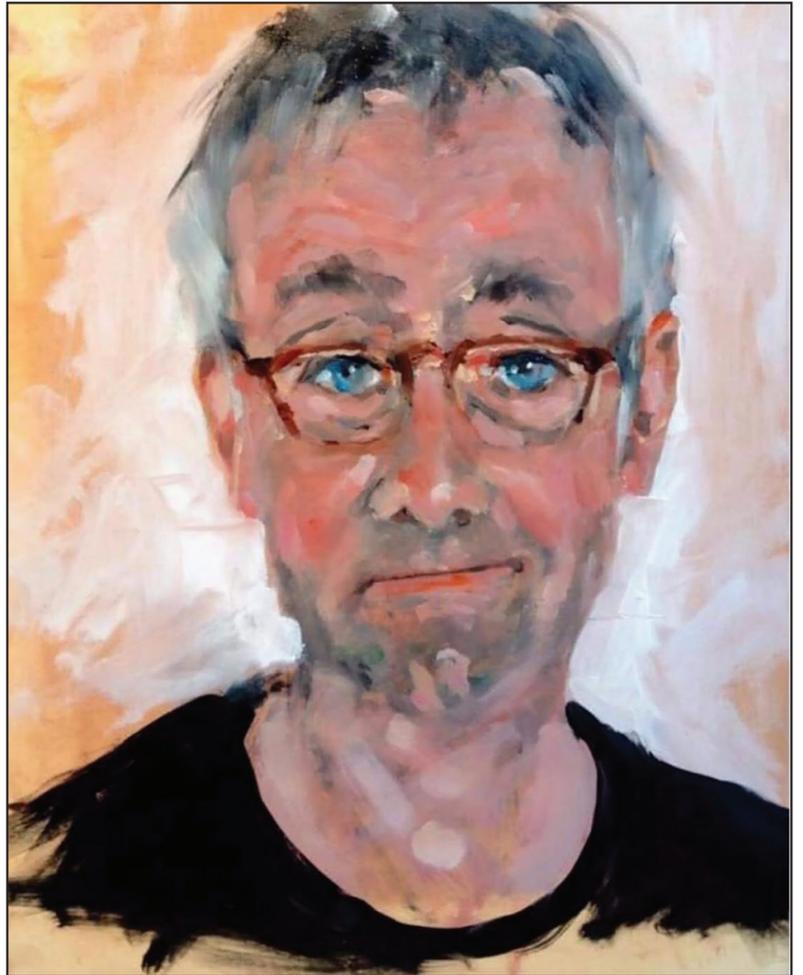
VVAW work and in how much he cared about others.

In Vietnam we both were in the same company, H&S Co. F.L.S.G-B Force Logistics Support Group - Bravo. He talked often of his sisters Ann and Emily. They sent him the Beatles' *White Album* and we took it with us on the convoy to Vandergriff combat base. He always shared his albums and care packages from home.

John T. Noyes was also a proud railroad man with thirty years service. He started as a switchman, then a conductor, and finally a train engineer. He also taught kindergarten but was glad to leave that and go back to the railroad. We were proud of Buzz and so was his family.

Buzz helped his friends and community. He joined in on VVAW work parties, clean ups and veteran's work. He was involved in the Agent Orange work along with other veterans groups including VVAW, which helped secure the great VA system that now exists.

Buzz helped plan our two peaceful occupations of VA offices in Milwaukee. He helped with the demos for decent benefits for all veterans, recognition of PTSD and testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange. We all remember the VA of the 60's, 70's and early 80's. Look at the VA hospitals and its systems compared to the old days. We now have decent benefits and they test, treat and compensate for 14 Agent Orange disabilities. Buzz, WE



WON THE WAR! Thank you for your perseverance.

On our refrigerator here in England a USMC magnet holds a picture of Buzz. I salute the old Marine every day. You are sorely missed and so will be your good deeds.

Semper Fidelis, you will not be forgotten.

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember him."
—Poem by Lawrence Binyon printed in the Times, London Sept. 21, 1914.



JOHN LINDQUIST IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER FROM MILWAUKEE, NOW LIVING IN ENGLAND.



Buzz in Vietnam.



John Lindquist, Jack Klein, Sean Newton, and Buzz Noyes

Memories of Dennis Kroll

BARRY ROMO

Dennis was involved in VVAW since the early days. He was a leader of the Madison, Wisconsin chapter. One of the first things that you would notice about Dennis was that one of his hands was missing a finger. What had happened was he was a squad leader with the 101st Airborne, in Vietnam. He was blown up in a landing which was thoroughly FUBAR'd by Military "Intel." Dennis woke up, just tore up. He ended up having close to sixty operations on his arm.

In 1987, he and I were part of a VVAW trip to Vietnam that was pretty incredible. We were told by the US government not to go to Vietnam at that time. That didn't stop us.

He helped organize Dewey Canyon IV in 1982.

He was a regional contact and leader in the Madison Chapter. I remember a giant Agent Orange demonstration there. It involved VVAW assaulting the Governor's



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

Mansion from the lake. VVAW used to like to tie in our actions with military type operations. People landed and demanded that the Governor stop the use of Agent Orange or Dioxin based sprays.

Everyone liked Dennis. He was a nice guy. He had a nickname, "The Emperor" because he was a super leader.

Dennis was a cool character.



BARRY ROMO HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1971.

LZ 24 (Campsite #24)

How could they know
that a war
was raging on
at Campsite #24
Their motorhomes and limousines
Plugged into their own realities.
I in mine, a poncho hootch,
I lock and load a magazine...
Now almost thirteen years later
since I was traumatized and abused
I light my heat tab
and warm my beans.
I'm bitter for having been used,
So when they hear my cry
and wonder why
a helicopter disturbs my sleep,
I'm not dreaming
only weeping
from scars
buried
deep.

—Dennis Kroll
The Veteran, Spring 1985

The War Toy Song

I don't want my sons to play with guns,
And I don't want your daughters to patch him up;
I don't want those war toys on your shelves;
Send it all to Washington and build another wall.

Hey mister, that's no toy to buy your boy
M-16's with ammo clips won't bring him any joy;
And don't buy your son that GI Joe,
If there's another Vietnam would you want him to go?

And when your son goes out to play
With his toy grenade;
Tell him young men who played for real,
Aren't marching in anyone's parades.

—Dennis Kroll
The Veteran, Feb/March 1986



Dennis Kroll, Ed Damato, and Tom Wetzler in Hanoi, 1987.



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

From the A Shau to Hanoi: It Will Be Different

DENNIS KROLL

Reprinted from *The Veteran, Fall 1987 issue.*

After being back in the world for 17 years, my only recollections of the Vietnamese people were the ones that haunted my dreams, the people I had learned to wipe out of my dreams as I had learned to do in combat. After 17 years, my recollections of Vietnam had not changed. Vietnam was a land of misty mountains and steep valleys. I had been a squad leader with the 101st Airborne in 1970, working with the highlands of I Corps west of Hue and Phu Bai, skirting the A Shau Valley (when possible) and on either side of the Laotian border. The only cities I had seen then were Cam Rahn Bay where I came in country, and Hue which I saw from the back of a truck.

Waiting to return to Vietnam was both exciting and unsettling. The chance to visit in Vietnam in peace, to experience the people and their culture for the first time was exciting. The uncertainty was in part due to my imagination. Although I knew it would be different from my first trip there, the nights before I left were full of thoughts. One night while staring at the ceiling, I tried to remember the correct sequence for calling in artillery. There were many times I didn't think I could make the trip, but I'm glad I did.

As we made our descent into Hanoi International Airport, the details of the land below became clearer. Hamlets populate meandering rivers, rice paddies stretched for miles, and bomb craters still scarred the lush green surface below. My mouth was dry, my heart was pounding, and the now-familiar mantra echoed—IT WILL BE DIFFERENT.

As we hit the runway I expected to see a stronger military presence. Instead, as we touched down, a young boy rode his bicycle up a dirt path and onto and down the runway. We saw several planes along the strip as we taxied to a stop. The boy on his bicycle went by and onto another path leading to a road.

It's about a 45-minute drive from the airport into Hanoi. Along the way we saw a lot of rebuilding going on. There was a pallet of bricks near most houses. Along the roads were new trees, donated by the Australians according to Mr. Quang, our guide who had met us at the airport. The bridge that spanned the Red River was a joint Swedish/Vietnamese project.

Hanoi was a pleasant surprise for me. I say that because we had spent a couple of days in Bangkok getting visas before going to Hanoi. In Bangkok the streets were dirty, canals were open sewers, and I saw children digging through piles of

garbage looking for food. My first thought was: "This is it—this is what it's going to be like in 'Nam just the same as I saw it 17 years ago from the back of a truck."

Hanoi is a beautiful city. The parks, ponds, rivers, and lakes reminded me of Madison, Wisconsin where I live. Flowering trees lined the streets. Ancient trollies carried their passengers. French and Vietnamese architecture intertwined.

We stayed at the government guest house in Hanoi. This was not an attempt to keep us from exploring: we were free to come and go and, when our day's itinerary was done, we did. We spent many nights walking in the streets of Hanoi and never had reason to feel threatened or uneasy—remarkable when we remembered what we had been doing the last time we were in Vietnam. Few US cities of Hanoi's size have streets where a traveller could feel or be safe, a fact that Vietnamese had a hard time understanding.

Hanoi's serenity is not a product of a strong police or military presence. We were there for both the anniversary of the liberation of Saigon and May Day. Rather than a strong military show, we saw a Vietnamese rock band entertaining spectators from the steps of a National Bank on both nights. The few uniformed soldiers

we saw seemed to be just home on leave, enjoying the show along with everyone else.

The people we met at various meetings or on the street were genuinely sincere in their warmth and respect for us and our organization. At times I felt like we were folk heroes to them: it seemed everyone had heard about the soldiers who fought the war and then went home and fought for peace. In the War Museum in Hanoi there is a glass case that contains two old VVAW buttons. I wouldn't be surprised if the next group of veterans to visit the museum will find a VVAW t-shirt proudly displayed.

The trade embargo against Vietnam has impeded their progress of rebuilding after so many years of conflict. Spare parts for machinery are a constant problem. Lack of medicine adds unnecessary suffering to the lives of the sick. The Vietnamese however, continue to use the same determination, resourcefulness and pride to overcome these problems that they did years ago to drive out occupying forces.

For the immature foreign policy of the United States toward Vietnam, there is no pride or honor.



DENNIS KROLL WAS A LEADER IN THE MADISON VVAW CHAPTER.

Alton Foss (1946-2020)

PETER MAHONEY

Alton C. Foss Jr, one of the VVAW Gainesville Eight defendants, died on April 28, 2020.

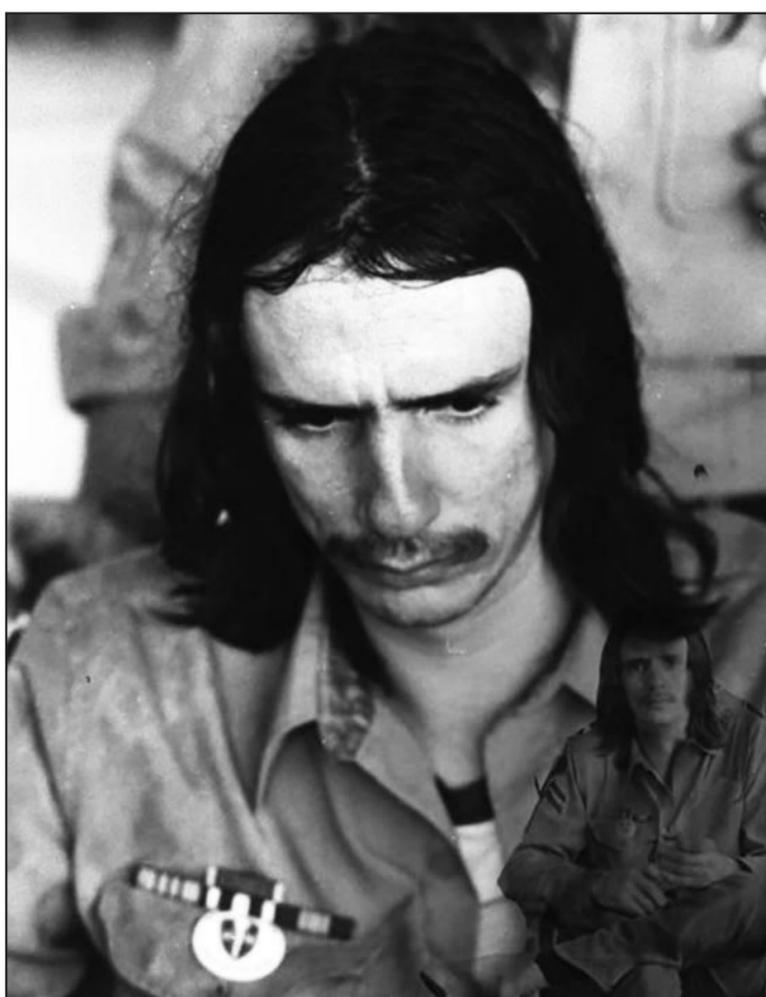
Alton grew up in Hialeah Florida, and went to Hialeah High School, where he starred on the basketball team. After school, Alton joined the Navy and became a Corpsman. As a Corpsman, he was assigned to a Marine unit in Vietnam, where it was his job to save the lives of Marines wounded during combat.

On one mission, Alton was shot in the leg, and medevaced out. It was a relatively clean wound, and while in the hospital, the leg was put in traction. For over a week, Alton continually complained of the pain he was experiencing in his foot from the traction, but the medical personnel just kept feeding him painkillers. It turns out the traction had severed his Achilles tendon, and Alton was doomed to spend the rest of his life in and out of VA hospitals, undergoing multiple unsuccessful operations to ease the pain in his foot, and to deal with the severe addiction to painkilling drugs his condition foisted on him.

After coming home from Vietnam Alton did not allow his wounds to keep him from speaking out against the war. He joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and soon he became the coordinator of VVAW for Dade County Florida. In 1972, both the Democratic and Republican conventions were scheduled to take place in Miami Beach, and Alton was heavily involved in the organizing and plan-

ning efforts for VVAW's demonstrations at both conventions. VVAW, at that time, had been heavily infiltrated by federal, state and local law enforcement agents and informers, a gift from the Nixon administration for the hugely successful and highly publicized Dewey Canyon III demonstration in Washington DC the previous year. Alton's chapter in Dade County was infiltrated by two local police undercover agents. In July of 1972, a federal grand jury was convened in Tallahassee, Florida that subsequently indicted seven members of VVAW and a supporter for conspiracy to incite a riot at the Republican Convention, which was still a month away from happening. Alton was one of those indicted.

The government's case against the Gainesville Eight consisted exclusively of the testimony of agents and informers, and they decided they could significantly strengthen their case if they could turn one of the defendants to testify against the others. They chose Alton as the potential weak link, because of his wounds and his use of painkillers. The two undercover cops grabbed Alton, and held him in a motel room for several days. They pushed him—HARD—threatening to bust him on drug charges if he didn't cooperate. Despite the intense pressure, Alton stayed strong, and refused to turn on his brothers. In August of 1973, the case was brought to trial. It lasted for four weeks, and the jury took four hours to find the defendants



Not Guilty (according to reports, the jury was ready to acquit after less than an hour, but one member—a Black Vietnam veteran—convinced them to stay a little while longer so they could get one more free meal from the government).

Alton lived a difficult life after that, battling his Vietnam demons. He

was a kind and gentle man, who served his country in war, and served it even better afterwards fighting for peace.

Rest in peace, Brother.



PETER MAHONEY WAS ALSO A DEFENDENT IN THE GAINESVILLE 8 CASE.

Memories of Alton Foss

JIM HALE

The Miami Florida VVAW chapter sometimes showed up at Nixon's winter White House on Key Biscayne, when tricky Dick was in town.

I'll never forget the time we were protesting in front of the gate. Alton was on crutches and hobbled up to face the Secret Service guards and said something I could not hear.

In a rage he removed his Purple Heart medal from his fatigue jacket and hurled it over the gate.

I heard it hit smack against the side of one of the SS cars and ping as it hit the pavement.

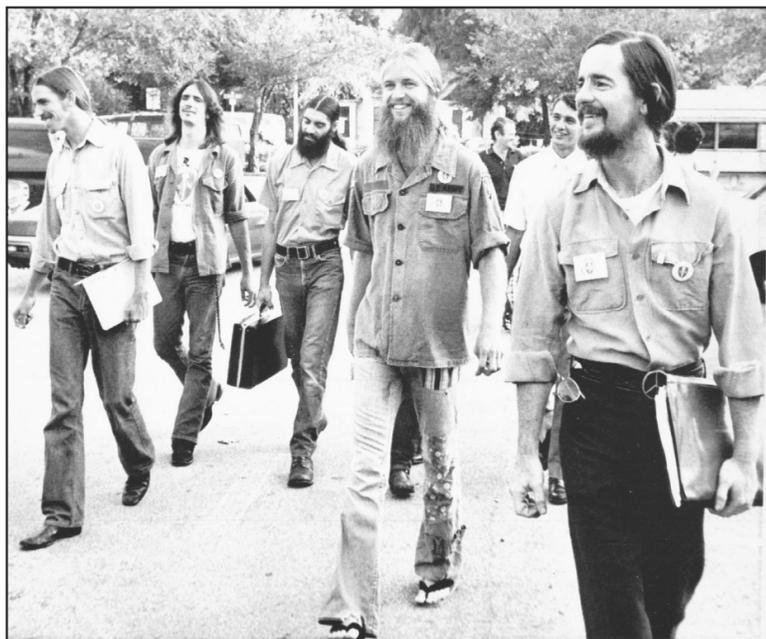
The guards bristled and started to move toward Alton.

But after a few steps they halted.



JIM HALE IS A VIETNAM VET WHO SERVED IN THE AIR FORCE FROM 1965-1969.

HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS.



Some of the Gainesville 8 defendants walking to courthouse, July 31, 1973. John Briggs, Alton Foss, Scott Camil, Stanley Michelson, Jr., Don Perdue, and John Kniffen.

Notes from England

JOHN LINDQUIST

Hello to VVAW!

John Lindquist reporting in from Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire, England. More on why I am here in England later in the article.

First, I need VVAW to help one of its old members, Ann L. Bailey. Annie has been house bound for the last two years. A neurological condition has rendered her unable to stand or walk. She does get lonely and could use mail from you.

Annie was an early member in 1971. At the time, she was one of the few women non-veteran members and very active in VVAW. She was at Dewey Canyon III and IV and lots of national meetings. She was active in our anti-war struggle, the Gainesville 8 trial, War on the VA, and especially the Agent Orange battle.

Who could forget the VVAW national campouts! She did more than a lot for this outfit and could use some mail. If you want her address, email vvaw@vvaw.org. Sorry, Annie does not do email.

Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire is a lovely village in rural England. Old Minster and Little Minster were on the tax rolls in 1086. The Romans had villas in the area until 410AD.

Our part of Minster Lovell is from 1857. We were a cooperative farming attempt to help try to let people out of the factories and on to the land. It was part of the Chartist Movement to get regular people the vote. You had to have land to vote. It failed because parliament would not register the land deeds. It did not work, but the village is still here.

We have three pubs. The best one is the White Heart, opened in 1588 as a coach stop on the way to London. I'm the groundskeeper and get paid in free beer. We are 72 miles west of London. The White Heart is a meeting place, once a month, for a Veteran's breakfast. They invited me to join. It is a great meeting place. We meet on the first Saturday of the month and on March 17th, 2020 we had 27 veterans, men and women from here and surrounding villages.

Our oldest member, Ken, is a WWII Arctic Convoy vet. Sadly, Patrick, our WWII Royal Marine D-Day vet passed away. There are other Royal Marines, RAF, Royal Navy, and Army vets. We have lots of Iraq and Afghanistan vets.

The picture I included is a mural on the West wall of the White Hart. It



is a line of WWI troops. The Poppies of Flanders Fields. The line on the bottom is part of a WWI poem by Lawrence Binyon, *For the Fallen*. It was published in *The Times* on September 14, 1914.

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Right now, just like you, we are dealing with the COVID-19 virus. We have it easier because we are in the country. The whole world must work together on this battle. Remember your social distance, and no hoarding!

P.S. My daughter Jessica was born in London, while I was in Vietnam in 1968. She lives in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. I also have a 12-year-old grandson. I do a lot of volunteering with the Wychwood Project and help clean my village.

Semper Fidelis.



JOHN A. LINDQUIST, 3RD MARINE DIVISION, 1968-1969. JOHN IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.

The Life of a Stringer in the Early Stages of the Vietnam War

ED WHITE (REVIEWER)

The Journalist: Life and Loss in America's Secret War

by Jerry A. Rose and Lucy Rose Fischer

(Spark Press, 2020)

This is a book about an American teacher in a Vietnamese university who stays in Vietnam to be a stringer for multiple publications. But, it is much more. Jerry Rose is a very articulate observer of Vietnam. His short essays—they are called 90 chapters—bring the reader along as he shares his thinking and reflecting on the situation in Vietnam in the early 1960's, a time when there were few on-the-ground reporters with a personal commitment to tell the real story.

One of the insights Rose provides the reader is the life of a stringer, a writer pitching stories to the media. From his two years as a professor of English at the University of Hue, Rose developed a keen sense of the Vietnamese through his students, colleagues, and other reporters. At the end of a contract with the Asia Foundation, one reporter was leaving Vietnam and suggested Rose take his position. Rose said yes, and he stayed until his death in 1965.

Jerry Rose's essays bring us into his life in a very intimate way. He vividly describes an affair with an American Consul's wife; his meeting of his future wife; connection to his family stateside; marriage and kids; and, particularly his reporting. To add to his talents as a reporter, Rose was an artist, photographer, and fiction

writer. Icing on the cake!

A stringer pitches a story line to publications. In Rose's case, the publications included *Time Magazine*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, the *Washington Post*, the *New Republic*, and the *New York Times*, to name a few. If he got permission to write the story, Rose would do the research, and send his article off. The editors could reject it, edit it, or ignore it. He also included a pitch for photography to be included with the story. In many of the stories, the publication had their own photographer. The publications generally paid no living expenses, but they did provide office space. And after all the work put into an article, it could be rejected.

Rose brings us through the relationships with other known reporters in the region. His particular nemesis was Stanley Karnow, who later became his boss in Hong Kong. More on that later. If Rose got an assignment, the editors would pay for transportation to other countries in Asia. Oftentimes, his love for the Vietnam war story got pushed back as "So What" from editors who were far away from the events on the ground in Vietnam.

Rose had many contacts in the Vietnamese society in Saigon and Hue. All of this brought him in the end, 1965, to being a Special Advisor to Dr. Phan Huy Quat. OK, a five point quiz: who is he? Quat was the Prime Minister of Vietnam in 1965 and served in that capacity for several months. South Vietnam had gone through many variations of

short time leaders. Rose first met Quat when he was sick in Hue, and while a professor at Hue University. Quat was his doctor. Fast forward to when the government asked him to advise them, and to write speeches and do investigations, among other duties. The US government agreed with the arrangement, and actually after Rose died in 1965, the government gave his widow, Kay, a pension.

What is interesting to me is the amount of freelancers that were in Vietnam in the early 1960's. Overall, sixty-three journalists died in the 20 year period from 1955 to 1975. Jerry Rose is included in this number. Earlier on, they were freelancers with no formal connections as employees; yet, they wrote great insights on the war. What is also interesting is that all reporters could go anywhere in the country. Rose convinced the *Time-Life* bureau in Hong Kong to travel in the countryside around Saigon, and into the hills, a dangerous venture at the time. His fifty-three page report of this travel was sent to Stan Karnow, his boss, who considered it "creative writing," even though the article went into the despair of the country with the Saigon government.

When you look at the Library of America's impressive compilation of a two-volume set on *Reporting the War*, Jerry Rose is not listed. Yet, his story with photos in the *Saturday Evening Post* on March 23, 1963 made people sit up and notice, not only his photos and writing but informing Americans about the war, a real war. Rose eventually wrote two books:

Reported To Be Alive, and *Face of Angels*.

I found it interesting that in the Chapter 64 essay, Rose casually remarks that he has seen a secret report indicating JFK wanted to leave Vietnam at the end of 1963. And Rose was in Vietnam! This is the planned withdrawal that LBJ rejected when he got into office and is the beginning of the US total involvement in Vietnam. This is something I emphasize in my classes.

This book came to my attention because Jerry Rose's sister, Lucy Rose Fischer, an accomplished writer, saved his writings and photos. She aptly calls this a "memoir/quasi-novel." All of the Jerry Rose material is at Stanford University. Fisher had a dispute with Karnow over not citing Rose in his book: *Vietnam: A History*. Actually, Rose had agreed to help Karnow write the book, but Fisher cites sentences that came directly from her brother. These were not acknowledged by Karnow.

I find this to be well worth the read because it offers a view from the eyes and experience of an early and passionate journalist who witnessed the many problems that eventually the United States could not solve.



ED WHITE IS A MARINE VIETNAM COMBAT VET WITH MEMBERSHIPS IN VVAW, VGP AND VVA. HE HAS TAUGHT COURSES ON THE VIETNAM WAR AT TRITON COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS.

What's Going On: A History of the Vietnam Era

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

what's going on: A History of the Vietnam Era

by Michael Hayes

(Trine Day, 2020)

what's going on: A History of the Vietnam Era by Michael Hayes is a thin trade paperback that includes a quote from yours truly on the back cover. "*what's going on* by Michael Hayes is not quite a history book, and it's not quite an oral history, but the mix, like the organization of individual notes in a piece of music, combines to create a moving, insightful, powerful and important multi-faceted portrait of the Vietnam War era. Hayes is non-judgmental, allowing his subjects to voice their opinions and relate their stories. The result is as colorful and poignant as the times. A very worthwhile study."

Further down, the back cover informs us that "Mike has been a long-time high school social studies teacher." This information certainly applies to my review of this unusual book. High school social studies or history teachers are always rushed, especially in the crucial final semester. In many states, they have to cram in a large chunk of twentieth century history after approximately World War I, and the Vietnam War is always the final piece of the puzzle. As a result, it becomes a cramped little presentation, almost an afterthought before the students take their final exams. Just outside the classroom windows, spring is firmly established, summer is fast approaching, and students are restless. For many, their fathers or grandfathers are Vietnam veterans, so there is a natural curiosity about "our" war. They want to talk about Vietnam and all the turbulence that took place in this country, and they feel cheated when so little time or attention is paid to the subject.

what's going on reads like a lesson plan prepared by an energetic

high school history teacher to address a multitude of questions from his students. Don't get me wrong; that is a good thing! Hayes doesn't hesitate to include a lot of information about the anti-war movement, and the tragedy that was America's involvement in Southeast Asia. He labors to present all sides, but only dribs and drabs of each. That's not a criticism. He is used to preparing concise lessons, without intricate detail. His book is a fine example, and it offers young students a very worthwhile introduction to the subject. This is not a detailed history like John Prados's or Stanley Karnow's *Vietnam*; it was never meant to be.

Whole World is Watching includes Yippies, Hippies, pot, LSD, Timothy Leary, and the 1968 Democratic National Convention, while *Violent Revolution* is about SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the Weathermen, and the Black Liberation Army. *America, Love It or Leave It* describes the kickback to the anti-war movement and hardhat violence, followed by a mention of the shootings at Kent State University. Throughout all of this, the author avoids taking sides.

LZ Delta is a chapter titled *Living the Era*, an abbreviated oral history from veterans Jim Slattery

happened.

LZ Easy, or *Their Own Words*, allows another collection of disparate voices. The chapter starts with a heart-wrenching statement by Chuck Searcy, the veteran who has spent the last twenty-odd years working with the Vietnamese to clear the land of UXO, or unexploded ordnance. A tragic legacy of the war, the Vietnamese countryside is littered with thousands of "duds," the defective, unexploded bombs or artillery rounds that inexplicably explode today and grievously wound hundreds of children and adults. Thanks to the efforts of Searcy and others, more than 70,000 have been found and disarmed or blown up, at great risk to the workers. Following that terribly important testimony of today's Vietnam and the horror and suffering our war left behind, each of the people featured earlier in the book are allowed to contribute a brief "last word" about how the memories of America's war in Vietnam are affecting them today.

what's going on is a title taken from a classic 1971 tune by Marvin Gaye, composed after his brother Frankie had returned from Vietnam "changed." If there is a failing in Michael Hayes' book, it is that he does not mention the tune, or why he titled his book after it. It's a perfect title, but I doubt that many high school social studies students will recognize its significance.

Mother, mother,

There's too many of you crying

Brother, brother,

There's too many of you dying



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

...is not quite a history book, and it's not quite an oral history...

what's going on begins with a very concise history of the war, thirty pages including the *Prologue* and *An Introduction*, presented as *LZ Alpha*. The next chapter, actually the first, *Making War*, is *LZ Bravo*. The second actual chapter, *LZ Charlie*, is entitled *Rearranging Their World*, devotes twenty-four pages to a study of personalities from the era, and a brief discussion of how the war rearranged their lives. A sub-titled section called *Awake and Rise* looks at the women's movement, and students are introduced to folks like Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and college students Hillary Rodham and Bill Clinton. *Unwelcome Patriots* looks at homosexuality, and offers examples Dr. Tom Dooley and Sergeant First Class Perry Watkins. *The Cruel Irony* examines the role of Blacks, and *...Pay Any Price, Bear Any Burden...* compares the experiences of John McCain and John Kerry. *Out Now!* touches upon the anti-war movement via the requisite Jane Fonda, then Daniel Berrigan, and SDS spokesperson Paul Booth. *The*

and William Sims, a "gung ho" Bill Lane, Jose Flores, Michael Smar, Pat O'Leary, Jim Schmidt, and yours truly. Intermixed are profiles of anti-war activist Heather Booth, Black Panther Billy X. Jennings, and student activist and Weatherman Mark Rudd, a cop who leaned to the Right, Canadian-born Judy Gumbo who had been raised by Communist parents and leaned far to the Left, Susan Schnall who protested in her Navy uniform, Dean Kahler, who was shot at Kent State and spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair, gay veteran Denny Meyer, Vietnam vet and Woodstock attendee Jim Connelly, pacifist and activist E.J. Dionne, Jr., Vietnam vet and nurse Kathleen Gunson, and a very moving story by Vietnam vet Michael Hayes, the author of this book. These first-person accounts are very skillfully combined to leave the reader with a troubling, confusing picture of the Vietnam era, and it must be said, the clash of those passionate views combine to give a condensed but very accurate impression of what actually

Dateline Saigon: 1961 to 1965

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

The Journalist: Life and Loss in America's Secret War

by Jerry A. Rose and Lucy Rose Fischer

(Spark Press, 2020)

Minnesota author, artist and social scientist Lucy Rose Fischer has published a collection of her brother's writings and photographs in a new book titled *The Journalist: Life and Loss in America's Secret War*. Her brother's record has heretofore remained as a minor light within the vast body of published works regarding the US involvement in formerly South Vietnam. His name was Jerry Allan Rose and he died at the point where Lyndon Johnson and the American Minhress began their invasion of southeast Asia with ground combat forces. Rose first arrived in Nam in September 1959 having been retained by The Asia Foundation to teach english and literature at the University of Hue. Prior to his arrival the only reliable reporting on conditions in Saigon had been frenchman Francois Sully's dispatches for *Newsweek* magazine. *Newsweek* would be bought by the *Washington Post* in 1961. Ben Bradlee, the *Post's* managing editor, also an intimate friend of John Kennedy, would henceforth find himself sitting on a very hot commode.

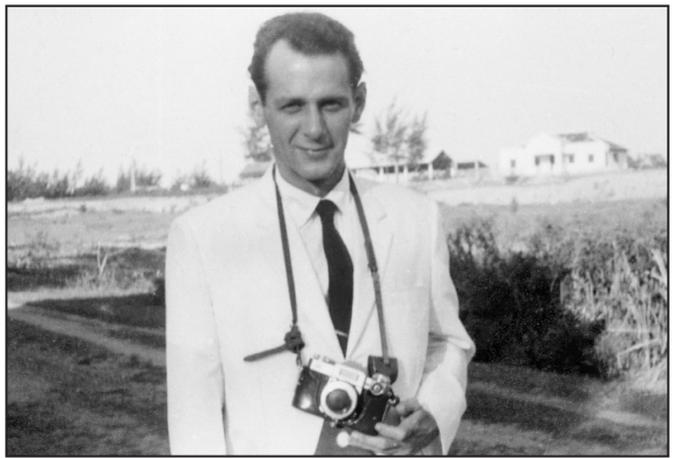
Fluent in speaking French, Rose had earlier dropped out of MIT to proceed to study literature for a year at the Sorbonne in Paris. He rapidly fit in with the intelligentsia on the right bank of the Perfume River. The university had only been established two years earlier. On his first day there, Rose was introduced to Bui Tuong Huan of the political science department and their personalities fused. Huan had returned home from Paris in 1952 to join Vietnamese nationalists' in a three-way conflict against the French as well as the Viet Minh. Rose and Huan reminisced about their days spent on the left bank of the Seine. Existing conditions under the Diem regime would soon be succinctly illuminated for the new arrival. He makes friends with Americans in both the US consulate in Hue as well as the US embassy in Saigon. In the final week prior to the fall of the nation of South Vietnam, Huan would serve as both the country's vice premiere and the minister of defense, would spend four years in prison and die of malnutrition shortly after release.

In October of 1960, Rose and his friends would visit Saigon and witness an attempted coup against Diem. They attend the nerve center of the effort and are introduced to the leader. Corpses litter the streets surrounding the national palace. Diem having survived, Rose returns to Hue to write an article (to/for himself) describing the rebellion as well as the rampant

corruption amongst the nation's governing class. The thought of a career in journalism dawns for him. With the end of his two year teaching contract in June of the following year, he visits Saigon, meets *Time Life's* stringer for lunch and the stringer suggests that he be his replacement. He accepts the offer, flies to Hong Kong and meets journalist Stanley Karnow to formalize his working relationship with the company owned and managed by Henry Luce, America's foremost proponent of waging war in southeast Asia. The disconnect did not dawn on him despite all that he had known and witnessed. This would become his very own "bright shining lie." For nearly two years he had been made fully aware of the foul ways of the Diem brothers and the incompetence and ethical miasma within the American embassy. Meanwhile he had been having an affair with the wife of an employee of the US legation, one which ended in sorrow.

At the meeting in the British colony, Rose cited the incompetence and corruption of South Vietnamese officials in Saigon. Karnow shrugged and responded "It's not an American problem." Eventually, Stanley would not be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his opus on Vietnam circa 1983 [Frances Fitzgerald had already won the prize a decade before for her greater work on the culture of the Vietnamese and America's plunge into quicksand]. Eventually, reading Karnow's history of Vietnam, Rose's sister would recognize sentences originally crafted by her brother. In reviewing her brother's reports she found that Karnow had plagiarized whole chapters written two decades earlier. The reports had been channeled to *Time Life* via Karnow. As a stringer, Rose could submit work to other publishers. Ironic that Karnow had also once lived in Paris and attended the Sorbonne. Both men would eventually switch to reporting for the *Saturday Evening Post* and Karnow would sabotage Rose by assuming the political aspect of the Saigon story. Enmity arose and Karnow began to hover in Rose's nightmares. The first American combat battalion would come ashore in March of 1965. The US embassy was bombed at the end of that month and three days later, Rose accepted a position as an adviser to the country's newly appointed premiere. The job led him to step aboard the doomed plane at Quang Ngai less than six months later. One is now led to wonder whether or not Karnow ever visited the field or accompanied combat troops on patrol. In the preface to his noted work on Nam, he would frankly question the objectivity of such first hand reporting.

Early in 1963 in a cover story for *The Saturday Evening Post*, Rose had validated Sully's work. In the



field he accompanies a patrol guided by Green Berets and they get caught in a firefight and then investigate a village. A woman suspected of being a Viet Minh partisan is interrogated and tortured. Rose's report from the field is canned by *Time Life* in New York. Big Daddy Luce does not approve. Thereafter he filed a dispatch regarding a nighttime battle between Viet Minh and South Vietnamese forces at a US special forces camp at Plei Mrong, American Green Berets were theoretically not involved in ground combat. As reported in the *Post*, Lt. Paul Leary joked grimly to Rose, "All I want is the Combat Infantryman's Badge." Rose noted, "Americans in Vietnam are ineligible because they are theoretically not fighting." That incident occurred over two and a half years previous to what became the first sustained engagement between North Vietnamese and American ground forces at the now famous Battle of Ia Drang. And two months prior to that battle, Rose would die at the age of thirty two in the crash of a C-47 Dakota brought down by the Viet Minh eleven clicks northeast of Quang Ngai. Likewise, the NVA would destroy a Huey carrying the equally astute Sully, five and a half years hence in An Giang province. Sully had been a storied Resistance fighter of the French underground of WWII who'd thereafter spent over two decades of a debonaire career reporting from southeast Asia.

Jerry Rose was not a trained journalist yet he was the authority, observed conditions on the ground, half away around the world from his gatekeepers—before Bigart, prior to the arrivals of Sheehan, Arnett, Halberstam, Mohr, Browne, Laurence and so many others—those reporters who became far more famous than he and he insisted on taking his own photos to boot. The size of his collection of papers now kept in the Hoover Institution nearly equals that of the legendary Sully housed by the University of Massachusetts. Sully had become famous for his reporting for the news outlet that had become the bete noire primary source of irritation for the Diem regime in 1962. The magazine did not edit Sully's reports and dragon lady of the era—Madame Nhu—the sister in law of premiere

Diem done got her panties all in a twist as a result. Those panties would snap once buddhist priests began to burn in the streets of Saigon come the summer of 1963.

No amount of suffering and bloodshed would serve as a difference within such a fraudulent setup, a setup of ideological blindness on the eastern seaboard in America (religious and political), profits to be had and endemic corruption within the faraway country to which the United States was committing so much wealth and personnel. Now, Rose's work—as ghosted by his sister, particularly his early reports, have a magisterial ring which one finds in works by Michael Herr, Daniel Ellsberg and John Laurence. His contribution to the record of our involvement ought to be elevated by a major publishing house, perhaps in large format, one which would include his dispatches, photographs and journal entries. Knowing of Rose's ultimate fate, one feels a disconnect in reading his sister's consistent, finely honed sentences. The work is structured in episodic, easy to read installments varying from two to five pages each. Images of his friends, his forays into the bush as well as the woman he eventually married are interspersed. This is not meant to knock Lucy Rose Fischer's effort. In reading her book, rather, there is the ring of one amongst the finest of all symphonic works—Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. And if one is familiar with that eternal piece of music they can well imagine the value of Lucy's work illuminating the sacrifice her brother suffered in this country's grand delusion in southeast Asia.



SINCE RETIRING FROM THE FIELD OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, JOHN CRANDELL HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN PROPAGATION AND GROWING EXOTIC SUCCULENTS FROM THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE ON THE CRAZIEST, MOST WHACKED OUT ONCE UPON A TIME SHEEP RANCH OUTSIDE OF SACRAMENTO. HE WORKED AS A POSTAL CLERK IN '69 FOR THE 4TH INFANTRY SOUTH OF PLEIKU. THANKS TO HAVING TO LISTEN TO AFVN DURING THE HOLIDAYS THAT YEAR, HE STILL DOESN'T WANT TO HAVE TO LISTEN TO A CHRISTMAS CAROL EVER AGAIN.

Seeking Quan Am: A Dual Memoir of War and Vietnam

STEVE KRUG (REVIEWER)

Seeking Quan Am: A Dual Memoir of War and Vietnam
by Susan Dixon and Mark Smith
(Ariadne's Thread, Inc., 2020)

The book presents two perspectives on the war, one from a soldier, one from an anti-war activist.

The book starts out at high school graduation and follows the authors' lives as they go their separate ways, one to war, one to travel/college and the anti-war movement. While high school graduation is used as the point of departure of their narratives, there is some info that their paths diverged long before that.

Mark enlisted and volunteered for Vietnam. His journals tell, in detail, his remembrances of his missions and reasons for volunteering for a second

tour:

"The war was all mine now. From surviving it, I began to thrive in it. I was, to put it bluntly, good at it—I was a pro." His second tour, again told in great detail, is a combination of combat angst and group pride, a building awareness of the terrible things of war and his participation in it, the mind numbing, soul crushing, yet exhilarating life of being a "Pro." Upon his return to the States he went to U-NC and joined VVAW.

Susan went on to travel and college, but seems, like some, to have had social justice issues and the war overshadow the courses she took: "I thought Americans cared. I thought Americans saw something wrong and tried to correct it. In Vietnam things were going wrong, we were making it

worse, and I wanted it stopped." She marched and helped organize lobbying trips to Washington, but later, as she put it "I wanted to know how not to oppose, but how to heal." In 2011, her trip to Vietnam seems to cement this idea and shortly after the trip she sees Mark in a documentary and she seeks him out.

The last part of the book is what the first two parts promise, a meeting of the two, their shared trip to Vietnam and the seeking of Quan Am (from the book: "...the Bodhisattva of compassion, the best known of enlightened beings who give of themselves to help humanity. In Vietnam this being is understood to be female and is called Quan Am"). While their two paths led them to a similar conclusion about the war,

the paths themselves were so very different, and greatly influenced the end of this story. There are no Hollywood endings here following the perfect arc. There is the earnest seeking of some kind of closure and understanding.

What separates this book from the many written about the war is the personal nature of it. While large geo-political forces caused the war, and the two authors lived through that war, the book concerns itself with the duality of the experience from these two people. Well worth the read.



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

Patriots, Body Counts, And Suckers

RG CANTALUPO

I feel like I am reliving a nightmare from a previous life.

"Vietnam. Vietnam. Vietnam."

I disengage, disassociate, self-medicate, push down my fears.

My old PTSD comes back with a vengeance.

I can't sleep. When I sleep, I have nightmares. I am on a hair-trigger, my old rage rising like a tidal wave inside my chest.

Each day another dead body to count; each day more bodies loaded into refrigerated trucks.

I go out, get essential supplies, buy groceries.

There's a man walking around the store without a mask. He shoulders an AR-15 like he's at war. He acts entitled, as if it is his right to do as he pleases regardless of who he might harm.

"Vietnam. Vietnam. Vietnam."

Rage rises in my chest.

When I ask him about not wearing a mask, he quotes Trump, and tells me he's a patriot.

I've been hearing that word a lot lately: "Patriot" and a new one, "sucker".

I try to understand what he means.

A Patriot NOT to wear masks.

A Patriot to hate African-Americans.

A Patriot to fear progressives, or liberals, or Democrats, or anyone who is not white and "entitled".

And "sucker." Trump calls me and my fellow compatriots in the "American" War "suckers" for having gone.

I try to understand how I became that: a "sucker" for being drafted; a "sucker" for not going to jail, or Canada, or finding a doctor who would lie for me; a "sucker" for being wounded three times; a "sucker" for honoring my friends whose names are engraved on The Wall.

I want to handcuff Trump and dispose of him and his phony bone-spurs in Yemen, or Syria, or El Salvador.

I want to kill this Patriot walking along the aisles of the grocery store where I shop carrying an AR-15. I want to unload an M-16 magazine in his ignorant body.

But I squelch it down. I walk down another aisle. I go off in another direction till the "patriot" is gone.

I'm still angry as I drive home.

No, more than angry, outraged.

I am the "disposable old". The only difference between me and the disposable "old" in nursing homes is that I am still well enough to be productive. I don't have cancer, or Alzheimer's. I'm functional. I still have—if my health permits and Covid doesn't get me—another ten years or more of quality, "golden" years.

When I get home, I chant "young people will not replace me!" to myself.

"Trump and Charlottesville be damned. I will not go quietly into this, or any, "good" night. I will not let myself be another body thrown into a refrigerated truck!!! I will not let Trump and his rich friends steal my social security, VA benefits, and medicare benefits by killing me off in

the pandemic.

When I walk my dogs later that afternoon, I see a "Freedom" sign waving in front of one of the houses on my street. Next to it is another: "No Tyranny!"

My first impulse is to tear it down. I start walking up his driveway, but my dogs pull me in the opposite direction.

I guess they know better and want to keep me out of trouble.

Freedom. Patriot.

I need to redefine what that means.

I was awarded three purple hearts and a Bronze Star for Valor fighting for America's "freedom".

But this is not that.

This is the "freedom" to infect and harm other people.

This is the "freedom" to drink and dance and party and live as if one million dead people in the pandemic is a hoax.

This is the "freedom" to be stupid, selfish, self-centered and carry the banner of death through the streets.

But that's not "freedom" that's the definition of insanity. The freedom to harm others or yourself is cause for getting locked up in a psychiatric ward for three days.

And yet, that's the mantra of millions of Trump-based advocates.

After walking my dogs, I sit down on the couch and wonder how we got here.

1969. We took to the streets to fight for "freedom"—the freedom to STOP an unjust and criminal war.

We fought with police. We threw

our "Vietnam War" medals back at the government in the name of "freedom".

How did we get from there to here? And what does it mean? What will it mean if Trump wins again and emboldens more of these "patriots" with AR-15s on their shoulders?

I am afraid for our country.

I am afraid we've passed the point of no return and there will be a civil war, or we will no longer be a democracy.

I am afraid my VA benefits will be taken away and I will be disposed of because I am "old".

I am afraid I will have to fight for my "freedom".

We are living through a terrifying time, one I never imagined I'd see. Outside my window the sky is red from fires. Red and gray like the aftermath of a napalm strike.

"Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning."

Yes, I take this as a warning.

I just don't know what is to come.



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

The Eaves of Heaven, A Life in Three Wars

ALAN BATTEN (REVIEWER)

The Eaves of Heaven, A Life in Three Wars
by Andrew X. Pham
(Harmony Books, 2008)

This is the third of Andrew X. Pham's excellent books dealing with various aspects of Vietnam and how the Vietnam war (the American War) has affected the people in both countries. Pham is a highly perceptive author who never fails to reveal key insights to the subjects he tackles. He left Vietnam as a 9-year old when his family became "boat people," escaping from Vietnam in 1976 a year after the fall of Saigon. His first book, *Catfish and Mandala* (published in 1999), describes the terrors of that escape and his family's subsequent lives as refugees in Indonesia and eventually the United States. As a young man he returns to Vietnam and travels the length of the country by bicycle, visiting aunts, uncles and cousins along the way. In his discerning and sensitive way he reveals many insights to the Vietnamese and American characters, and how the war has left a continuing legacy for both of us.

Pham is also the translator of Dang Thuy Tram's diary *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*. Dang was a doctor from Ha Noi assigned to a Viet Cong Unit near Quang Ngai. She unfortunately ran into a US patrol and was killed by a bullet through her forehead. Her diary (or half of it at least), in tiny meticulous handwriting filling the pages of a tiny notebook, survived through a series of unlikely

coincidences. One young American lieutenant whose hands it passed through promptly fell in love with her. You will too. As a young university student she fretted that she may have been too bourgeois, reminding me of conversations I also had in college. Sometimes I think the medical people on both sides, patching their soldiers up only to have them come back with even more grievous wounds a few weeks later, hated their respective enemies even more than the soldiers themselves did. Dang's diary should be read back to back with Lynda Van Devanter's haunting memoir *Home Before Morning*.

The Eaves of Heaven is a series of vignettes from the life of Andrew Pham's father (Pham Van Thong) in Vietnam from the late 1930's through the immediate aftermath of the fall of Saigon in 1975. In a preface Andrew Pham explains that his book is neither memoir or biography of his father; he has merely lent his (Andrew's) words to his father's life stories. The senior Pham grew up as part of a wealthy extended family living on an estate a few miles outside of Hanoi. In the semi-feudal society of pre-WWII Vietnam even the rich worked hard and had few luxuries, but everyone, rich and poor, had shelter and enough to eat. The wealthy took a certain amount of responsibility for the poor, and society was held together by the centuries-old flow-chart of authority and responsibility developed by Confucius 2500 years earlier. Thong had an idyllic childhood, but that was

soon shattered when the Japanese took over at the beginning of World War II. Among other forms of cruelty the Japanese requisitioned huge amounts of rice to feed their armies resulting in mass starvation and the breakdown of society among the Vietnamese.

After the Japanese were defeated, Nationalists, Communists and other political groups vied for power, committing atrocities on each other in the process. One of Thong's cousins, a handsome articulate young man active with the Nationalists, was assassinated by the Communists early on in the struggle. Other members of his extended family were killed by Communists in seemingly random acts of violence. The American decision to help the French regain their colony in Indochina added another layer of cruelty. In particular, a sadistic Algerian in the French army committed outrageous atrocities. Thong's highly educated father was kidnapped by the French and forced to serve for years as interpreter, porter and whatever other demeaning task came to mind without his family having any idea of what had happened to him. While Thong's father was thus captive, Thong's mother died giving birth to his youngest brother. Thong himself tried to avoid affiliation with all the political groups vying for power and concentrated on his education. I was surprised to learn that at one point in his youth he and his friends were hanging out in Hanoi cafes listening to Johnny Mathis.

After the French are finally

defeated the family becomes refugees in Saigon. Thong eventually becomes a high school teacher, falls in love, gets married and has children. Then he gets drafted into the ARVN. He comments on the corruption and incompetence of the South Vietnamese government and upper levels of the military command, but also comments on the courage and integrity of many NCO's and low-level officers in the field. He narrowly escapes getting killed in an ambush. After the fall of Saigon he is put in a "reeducation camp" in which he almost dies of malnutrition and disease. Prison becomes a powerful confirmation that "absolute power corrupts absolutely, regardless of race or political ideology." He is eventually released due to the subtle influence of one of his wife's relatives who holds a high position in the Communist Party. We are left to conclude that this man decided that Thong was worth saving because of a quote from Voltaire taped to Thong's desk at home: "The comfort of the rich rests upon an abundance of the poor." The book ends here, more or less where *Catfish and Mandala* starts. Mixed in with all the violence and tragedy are moments of joy, kindness and compassion—people helping one another in times of extreme duress.

This is a valuable book for anyone wanting to better understand life in Vietnam from World War II through the French and American occupations. It provides insight into the delicate choreography of trying to make a living without running afoul of the disparate forces active in the countryside, and the joys and sorrows, small and large, along the way. Pham Van Thong's life demonstrates the outstanding courage and perseverance required to navigate the pitfalls characterizing life in Vietnam during the three wars of the late 20th Century.



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



Anybody's Son Will Do

STEVE GEIGER (REVIEWER)

Anybody's Son Will Do
directed by Paul Cowan
written by Gwynne Dyer

(National Film Board of Canada,
1983)

Anybody's Son Will Do was written by Gwynne Dyer. Thank you Professor Dyer for your body of work analyzing how we have incorporated war and its production into our social fabric.

My story is not new. It is much like Ron Kovic's or any number of the thousands and millions worldwide who felt the need to serve their country. I grew up in the 50s; the Selective Service and the draft were always looking down on us. But even though I was shunted into a Military Science class at Ohio State in the fall of 1964 as an elective, I really was fulfilling the mores that caused me to stand at attention in our knotty pine paneled TV room whenever the National Anthem was on TV. My mother would introduce me to that concept of respect for the flag in the mid-50s and later tearfully she and my father bid me off to Mather AFB for nav training in January of '69. We took vacations in the 50s, which were usually not more than 500 miles, but in '57 we traveled as far west as Salt Lake City, in our '54 Olds before turning back.

In the fall of '64, I enrolled in a state school (Ohio State) mostly because it was close and tuition was cheap. Orientation at OSU involved a decision whether to take Military Science or another math requirement. Land Grant colleges set up under Lincoln had to provide training for military service. I don't remember if that requirement meant officer training, but not being a math whiz, I chose ROTC. Frankly they did not have to try very hard to attract me as all the advertising money spent on

the Thunder Birds appearing at Port Columbus worked on me; I collected some baseball cards, but the ones that really stuck in my psyche were the pictures of fighter aircraft: The Hellcat and the F86 and some I can't recall after all these years. Those cards amounted to another seduction of my psyche. I can still picture them as I rode the bus to school in the early 50s. I also was an avid viewer of *Navy Log*; I can still see the opening credits with the external camera mounted on the belly of the plane and the take-off roll with the gear coming up. It seemed dramatic at the time. Big effing deal. And like an old love letter, I still have a Steve Canyon comic book preserved in a box somewhere. I burned my defunct draft card on stage in a college production of *Hair* after exiting the Air Force, but I still have that comic book. Maybe the Steve Canyon is collectible? But burning that card was divine.

So there I was on the drill field in 1964-5, and in the dorm learning the finer points of polishing shoes by setting the polish on fire and melting a gob to speed the transfer of polish to shoe. Not really what I thought higher education would hold for me. But I was "anyman's son" and there was a war that needed me to become part of it.

There were demonstrations against the appearance of Herbert Aptheker (a Commie) on campus and sit-ins opposing the war at Denny Hall, but I went the other way. I had doubts about the war, but the fear of social rejection at home was too great. My parents were not happy that I wanted to sign up, they feared for my safety, but they also feared what it would mean to avoid the service and how did anyone do that anyway? Go to Canada? Not this farm boy. The path of least resistance was to avoid the

Army and hope for the best, a path taken by many if they had that option. Also in the mix was the desire to see more of the world than central Ohio had to offer. Did those "Join the Navy and See the World" ads spill over into my choosing AF ROTC? "YES." Did I consider the big picture and how evident it was that I'd be dropping bombs on Vietnamese citizens? Yes, but it didn't seem real; and I have regretted it every day since.

Senior year I read what I could and took a history of Vietnam course which left me to conclude that this was a civil war. Still the social forces at work were too strong. January 3, 1969 I set out for California and drove right into a snowstorm the next day. It just got worse. On the 2nd day in Oklahoma heading to Tinker AFB on I-70, in a driving snow squall, I passed a lumbering semi, and I watched the wind force that semi to jackknife into the center median. He was upright, I drove on. I made it to Mather AFB late on the 4th day; I was in the pipeline to Vietnam; I spent the next four years, eight months and 7 days participating in the lies and carrying out the mission.

How I wish there had been a role model, an authority figure to guide me. There were many dissenters at OSU, but I just wasn't ready to receive the information.

Gwynne Dyer had not completed his documentary, *Anybody's Son Will Do*, on how our governments conscript our youth to play their war games until 1983. I saw it first in the 90s on PBS. It exists now as a 6-part, nearly 6 hour work relegated to YouTube. The message is too volatile for network TV, at least I haven't seen it there since. He includes other country's military conscription and mores in his analysis, but the message is much the same in other countries: "The Beat Goes On";

War is a fact of life and always will be.

Every person interested in how this process plays out should watch it. With \$750 billion budgeted each year to our "Defense" everyone should be interested. Every social studies teacher should spend at least a week on the topic of war, which Dyer covers in other docs, not the battles, but the "Why". But the world we live in has not deemed this a worthy topic. I doubt less than 1% of high school seniors considering military service have given any thought to the subject. The power structure has the flashy toys and the money to pay for slick advertising to seduce the youth. And then there is the patriotism card. And the job market. It is too academic for the average high school kid, so that is how they get you. I've gone with other VVAW speakers to a school in Manhattan that has a sympathetic teacher and given our POV to six classes once a year; some of the kids sleep through, others have already signed a commitment with a recruiter, but I take heart in the five or ten that get it when we try to teach a little truth. I speak once a year at the SUNY Maritime College. I get nods of approval from ex-military there. There are many more opportunities to reach out, but all told we touch less than a handful of the thousands of seniors each year in the NYC area. The task is daunting, but we must do more.



A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER, STEVE GEIGER FLEW NAV ON 225 MISSIONS IN A B-52D, FROM ANDERSEN AFB, GUAM AND U-TAPAO ROYAL THAI NAVY BASE, THAILAND. HE IS NOW RETIRED AND LIVES ON LONG ISLAND.

Eternal War Requiem

BILL DOUGHERTY (REVIEWER)

Poetry Despite/Music Despite
(*Eternal War Requiem*)
conceived & organized by Aaron
Hughes

(2019, available at justseeds.org)

Eternal War Requiem is an ambitious undertaking consisting of cello music, contemporary poetry, and poetry from WWI. The work is a two-record set, woodcuts depicting war scenes, transcripts of contemporary poetry with English translations of poetry performed in Arabic.

The Requiem might have begun anytime, anywhere. It might have started in Greece after Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia to appease the gods to obtain favorable winds. It might have started when the Trojan women were carried off to slavery. It might have started when Agamemnon was killed by his

wife, Clytemnestra upon his return to Greece in revenge for his killing their daughter. It might have started when Aeneas fled Troy to found the Roman empire. It might have started during the American Civil war. It might have started when Wilfred Owen, 22, enlisted in the British army in 1915. It might have started when he was killed on November 4, 1918 seven days before the signing of the Armistice. It might have started any time anywhere in history.

It is a work in six acts. It consists of improvised cello music by Karim Wasfi, hip-hop poetry by the Serian Kings, contemporary poetry by Aaron Hughes, Carlos Sirah, Dunya Kikhail and Kevin Basan, WWI poetry by Wilfred Owens, and wood block prints by Aaron Hughes. The work was conceived by Aaron Hughes. The overarching theme is the futility

and tragedy of war. The first material presented is from WWI to the current endless war, it is a Requiem for all casualties of all wars.

It was produced on two long playing records. If you wanted to listen, you needed a record player. It is also available digitally on the internet.

I came to review this with no training in music or poetry. I did bring my participation in the Vietnam War as a young marine and a working record player.

I listened to *War Requiem* on both vinyl and digitally. There are advantages and disadvantages of each medium. The poetry readings were clearer and more easily accessed digitally. The music had a greater depth and seemed more poignant on vinyl.

The work is internally consistent, and the material is troubling as it is meant to be. Music and poetry have always been a part of my life. I have a copy of Wilfred Owen's poem *Dulce Et Decorum Est* on my wall. Poetry and music can both elicit strong emotions. Describing these feelings and translating them to paper is difficult. The sum of the parts rarely adds evenly to the whole. Each listener would apply different weights to each part.

I have found cello music to be soothing and accessible. This did not hold true when listening to Karim Wasfi's improvised performances. He elicited uncomfortable feelings in response to the images and poetry. The images of the wood cuts seemed to come to life when viewed with the music. The wood cuts amplified the images and feelings associated with the poetry. When I read poetry, it must be quiet, or the noise distracts and disturbs. I listened to the performances but went to the printed form to better understand the poem and feel its

impact. The digital medium allows easier access to the performances in isolation and to listen to the poems more clearly, but the written poems offered a more traditional way to understand the poem's meaning.

Listening to the authors read their work was moving. The Syrian King's work was remarkable. I understand no Arabic. Hip-hop and rap music have their roots in gospel music and the Blues, traditional African American forms. The adaptation in Arabic proved to be smooth. For me it worked better for the verses in Arabic than the ones translated into English even though I could not understand the former but felt the rhythm. I enjoyed the work of Dunya Mikhail. The simultaneous translation of *Plastic Death* was riveting. All the poetry was exceptional—easy to read and thought provoking.

I would have liked more of Owens' work to be read without accompaniment. His poetry uses classical forms and is meant to be read aloud. The feelings elicited and their meaning is clear. His death a week before the armistice was signed is particularly tragic. The war was over. The Germans were defeated. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month was chosen for its symbolism and not because the outcome was yet to be determined. Owen and thousands of others were killed or wounded for symbolism. War robbed us of his future and of the future of all its victims.



BILL DOUGHERTY GREW UP IN NYC AND ENLISTED IN THE USMC IN 1964. HE SERVED ONE YEAR IN VIETNAM. HE WENT TO COLLEGE AFTER THE SERVICE AND TRAINED AS A PSYCHOLOGIST.



Experiences in Teaching the Vietnam War

ED WHITE

In many ways, I wanted to teach a course on the Vietnam War to find out, as a combat Marine veteran, why it happened, what were the facts, and how to put it all together as a context of my own life. In the beginning I mused over some of these questions: Who teaches a course on the War? Do you need to be a veteran? Or is it a hindrance? Do you have biases that creep into the interpretations you give?

A 1984 *New York Times* article stated that the subject of the Vietnam War was largely "shunned" for nearly a decade. Then interest in the war increased in part due to new scholarship and research. Then, of course, the movies started to come out. Also, in 1983 the PBS mini-series—*Vietnam: A Television History*—spotlighted the war. The series was based on Stanley Karnow's book: *Vietnam: A History*. The initial "shunning" was probably due to the idea that the Vietnam War was the first war the United States had "lost". Hey, but wait, didn't we have a peace treaty? Didn't we leave with honor? Or did we lose because the North Vietnamese invaded the South and took it over? Do I have that right?

In preparation to teach the course on Vietnam, I decided to do extensive research through the normal process of researching primary and secondary sources. But, I also added attending conferences to the mix. The LBJ Library in Austin, Texas, sponsored a Vietnam Summit in 2016 with days of luminaries sharing their views of

the war. It was at the Summit that I met Marilyn Young, one of the foremost historians of the period. As luck would have it, I sat next to Frank Snepp, author of *Decent Interval*, who investigated the Kissinger idea: we know we cannot win, but wait a period of time so that we (read Nixon) are not blamed.

There were three stellar conferences in 2018 sponsored by: the National Archives—The Vietnam War Revisited; Notre Dame University—Voices of Conscience; and a SHAFR conference which featured the Vietnam War. In addition to these conferences, I took in museum exhibits: the New York Historical Museum held an excellent exhibit on Vietnam, and the National Archives finally curated a Vietnam exhibit with a little nudge from the Archivist, a Vietnam veteran.

After all this, I wanted the course to bring out a sense of the times by having veterans give personal accounts. My class heard presentations from a diverse twosome: a peace activist, and a Vietnamese air force pilot. I invited veterans who had been giving presentations to high school classes in the area, and were from my VVA chapter. Students learned that the peace activist actually went to jail for one and half years rather than report for the draft. The Chicago area has an extensive Vietnamese neighborhood, so finding a Vietnamese volunteer was not difficult. The pilot was in a re-education camp for ten years in

Vietnam after the war. I also managed to get a former general who, after the war, started a non-profit organization to help vets. I also read correspondence to the class from a "Donut Dolly" who helped an activist avoid a CID capture in Germany. My greatest regret was not having stories of nurses who had served in Vietnam. It was good to read a current issue of the VFP Newsletter outlining an article by Fred Milano who addressed this topic. There is always grist for the next class!

And for the fun part, I added music and movies to the mix. Truth be told, these additions probably drew more students than the history lessons. And so it goes... We even had a capitalistic discussion on the revenue from these films, or the budget versus the box office dollars. Clearly, all of us have been in the wrong business. For the movies, I started with the *Quiet American*, and then moved on to some of the usual: *Green Berets*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *We Were Soldiers*, *Casualties of War*, *Coming Home*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, and ended with *Good Morning Vietnam*. I like the late Robin Williams. I relished the lessons with explanations on how these films came about, how the actors got the parts, described various mishaps, etc. All of this, I thought added a cultural context for the War back at home.

The music was something else. This was the most interesting type of research. I depended a great deal on *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* by

Doug Bradley and Craig Werner which was reviewed in this publication. The influence of the Hispanic beat made me sit up and snap fingers. The class got: *What a Wonderful World*; *The Green Berets*; *An Okie From Muskogee*; *Eve of Destruction*; *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* (my favorite); *Soul Sacrifice*; *What Are We Fighting For*; *Give Peace A Chance*; *Born In The USA*; and *What's Going On*. I played the entire songs, offering commentary, only to have the professor in the adjacent class ask if we would lower the volume.

I met Brian Lamb of *CSPAN* at the National Archives when I was doing research. After a lengthy discussion, he said he would pass my name on to his producer of American History TV on the weekend. They came to Triton College with a boatload of equipment. They filmed the last session, *Lessons Learned from Vietnam*, which you can actually view. That was amazing!

If truth be told, I really designed the course for me. I was both teacher and student. As I started preparing for the course, I thought over the questions raised at the beginning of this review. There is always more to learn, to teach. Bottom line: I wanted to know.



ED WHITE IS A MARINE VIETNAM COMBAT VET WITH MEMBERSHIPS IN VVAW, VFP, AND VVA. HE HAS TAUGHT COURSES ON THE VIETNAM WAR AT TRITON COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS.

Tet 2019

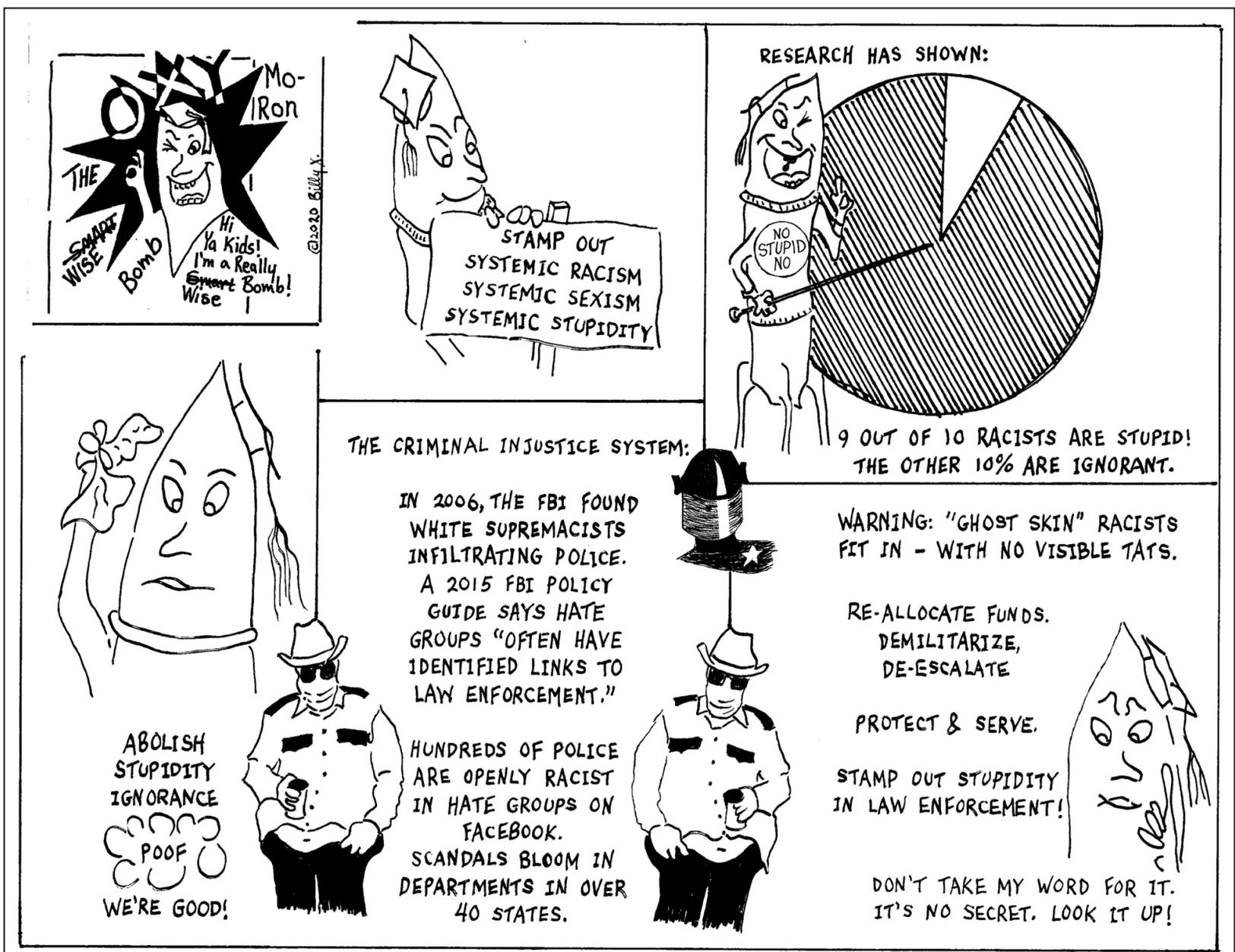
in this year of the Empire 2019 February 5th Tết Nguyên Đán, which is Sino-Vietnamese Feast of the First Morning of the First Day may last from seven to nine days

I remember Tet 1968, when (despite Walter Cronkite) Westmoreland was claiming the war nearly won after a firefight I was patrolling on foot in the Central Highlands and found a Vietnamese man who must have had 15 bullet holes in his body struggling to crawl away

being an American god I felt that he had no chance to live so I put him out of his misery with several rounds through the head

Cronkite said the only rational way out would be for us to negotiate not as victims but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy who did the best they could

—Larry Kerschner



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



THE VETERAN

SECTION D

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The Roots of VVAW - Part 2

JAN BARRY AND SHELDON RAMSDELL AS TOLD TO RICHARD STACEWICZ

Excerpt from Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War by Richard Stacewicz, pages 197-203.

The VVAW in New York received financial support from various organizations and individuals who saw the group as pivotal in the antiwar movement. For example, George Ball—a former adviser to President Johnson—was one of the first contributors, donating \$100.

How did you get along with the peace movement?

Jan Barry (JB): In the peace movement, you ran into attitudes that ranged from not knowing what to do with us to people who wanted to manipulate us in various ways. One of the first times I walked into the Peace Parade Committee, some woman who looked very much like my mother said, "And how many babies did you kill?"

The socialist groups were always trying to manipulate us, [to] get you to join their organization. Certain things would happen, but we were so unsophisticated or inexperienced that you didn't even realize that a number had just been run on you. You just knew that something was funny.

You go to a coalition meeting; somebody from some really radical black group says, "Fuck the Vietcong—I don't care about those Vietnamese. They never did nothing for me." Jerry Rubin is doing crazy things that have absolutely nothing to do with Vietnam but addressing his ego. Over in the other corner is somebody else who is babbling that the whole problem is sexism. That isn't keeping those people from dying every day to say that? This is a peace movement coalition, right?

The whole point was to focus on what this crazy coalition was going to do for its next spring or fall offensive. That's what we do in the peace movement because it used the students. It took six months to organize these monsters. They thought, well, if we could get 100,000 people in Washington, that will end the war. If we get 200,000 people ... if we get 500,000 people ... then the moratoriums would get 1 million people to surround the White House, it will end the war.

I was much more interested in: Where can I go and talk to two, or three or four conservatives, and change their minds? In the middle of all of this, you had a group of veterans, who psychologically and politically were bouncing all over the place.

One of the reasons I felt so strongly about forming VVAW was to provide a forum for people to come to and utilize a platform. Other people came for all kinds of other reasons. What I found most remarkable is: Even with all these various places that people were coming from, it still grew to be fairly basic VVAW philosophy that we're going to do this nonviolently, which is remarkable. You're talking about people who had all been trained to kill people. Many of them did, repeatedly.

We were going to level with the American people and tell them things, even if they didn't want to hear about them, like war crimes. We discovered early on, when going around speaking, that you couldn't even touch on the subject [war crimes]. People didn't want to hear that. "There's no way that American boys would ever do something like that!" Everybody—

liberals, conservatives—just cut it right off. You felt stunned. This is what had been the reality over there. You're simply reporting the reality, and people say, "No, it couldn't have happened."

We constantly talked about how you turn things around imagewise. We didn't use the word "jujitsu," but it was the same kind of principle: to turn around a lot of these things so people would turn around and say, "Wait a minute. What? What did you just say?" Get them to think about it.

Sheldon—Shelly-Ramsdell grew up in Algonquin, Maine. He joined the Navy in 1954; served on an aircraft carrier patrolling the waters around the Philippines, Indonesia, and southeast Asia; and was discharged in 1958. He was interviewed in a coffee shop in San Francisco.

Sheldon Ramsdell (SR): One day—a Sunday, I think—there was a draft-card burning in Union Square [in] 1967, and I went down out of curiosity. I'm wearing a suit and tie; red, white, blue; I think I even had an American flag pin on. There was Carl Rogers and Jan [Barry] Crumb and David Braum standing there, and they had signs that said VVAW.

I got very angry and upset and went over there and talked to Carl and said "You guys for real? I mean what the fuck is this? What's going on here? I don't believe this. Why would they be burning draft cards anyway? They'd already served!"

He says, "I was a chaplain's assistant in Vietnam, and what about you?"

I say, "I've been in the Navy, but I got out in 1958, for crying out loud."

He says, "Well, you're a Vietnam vet."

I say, "I'd been overseas on a carrier and we'd been doing border reconnaissance bombing and I was processing gun camera film." I didn't ask what we were blowing up or who we were bombing. Apparently it was Laos. *The Pentagon Papers* explained it to me, finally, but I was never convinced that I was actually a Vietnam vet until Carl had insisted.

So I said, "Jesus, I've been looking for you. I've been pissed off at Johnson and all this bullshit—the lying, the deception. This war should have been won long ago."

He says, "Exactly."

Then I met Jan (Barry) and we got together and had little meetings up on the West Side. There were three or four, maybe six of us at the most. I said "We've got to do media. I've been trained in it in the military and at Union Carbide." I studied it at Carnegie Endowment. I had a job in public relations and I had studied photography. I had all of that behind me, and so I said, "Let's put it to work against this war policy."

JB: When we first started out, there were a small number of people in VVAW, so it made sense that we go on television and talk programs and talk anyplace we could find an audience. Our goals were to educate the public to the reality of what was going on in Vietnam so a better decision could be made. We were calling for—I think the tag line of the thing was—"Save our buddies now; withdraw them now." No one else should die in a war that the American public didn't vote for. This wasn't really clear to people. There had been no vote on this war.

In that first several months, well into the beginning of 1968, our whole goal was to utilize those people



Steve Greene of VVAW.

we could get motivated, to do their research and speak. The average GI doesn't know all these facts. You can't simply say, "I was out there, but I don't really know anything about the Geneva Convention; I don't really know about Ho Chi Minh; I don't really know about how we got into Vietnam." We insisted ... that you get educated.

If the people knew the reality of Vietnam, what would they do?

JB: They would be talking to other people, and ultimately there would be a change in policy. None of us had a degree in political science. We had the same general sense as most people. You change the public attitude in this country, things change. It wasn't any grander than that.

To give you a sense of strategy ... When we first started, we wore suits and ties. [It was] a conscious decision that we're going to show people that we're serious. At that time in American society, if you were a serious person, you wore a suit and tie to do serious business.

We had a big debate about whether or not to wear our uniform, because it was against the law to wear a uniform after you were no longer on active duty. I think the first demonstration that we all decided that yes indeed, if you wanted to do it, you could do it, was in April of 1968 in New York. Some people showed up in dress uniforms. We're not talking about the grungy jungle shit. Full-dress uniforms. There's a couple of pictures around with guys standing with VVAW banners and flags in full-dress uniforms. You can imagine the effect this had upon cops and lots of other people. Holy shit! These people are for real—a whole bunch of medals.

We researched the Geneva accords. We went out and debated people from the State Department and said, "You made an agreement with everybody that in 1956 there would be these elections. What happened to these elections?"

The amazing thing was, in 1967, the White House was so conscious of this, they would send someone out from the State Department to debate people in teaching kinds of situations. On one occasion, it was a

Democratic Party gathering in Long Island. I can remember Paul O'Dwyer, who later became the City Council president, was at this meeting on the dais. A congressman representing LBJ shows up drunk. When I had finished speaking, he ran off—literally jabbering, howling, and screaming—off the stage. He didn't know what the hell he was talking about. He hadn't been to Vietnam. He had none of the facts.

On another occasion I was asked to speak at the New York State Maritime Academy in a teach-in to the cadets. The other speaker was a major in the Marine Corps from the Pentagon. Same thing happened. He hadn't been in Vietnam. He didn't have his facts straight. I stood there correcting him about what the Marines did on which dates in Vietnam.

We would go anywhere that we can get an invitation. I did radio and television programs in New York, Philadelphia, [and] upstate New York. I did speaking engagements as far north as Boston and later on in Wisconsin. As far as most of us were concerned, every audience at whatever age was an important audience.

We went on radio programs, which were just like today: most of them were right-wing radio programs. We'd show up and start debating these people. They would bait us. As an example, someone would say, "We're going to get you. We've got files on you people," which scared a couple of people. I didn't see anything in my life that I was worried about. There were some people who were closet gays who did get a little worried. So the people who did have something to be concerned about got a little shaky when somebody said, "We've got files on you."

On another occasion, it was a television program, David Frost. At the commercial break, the guy next to me turns and says, "Why don't you go back to Russia where you came from?" I said, "I don't come from Russia ... My mother's one of your greatest admirers." This was some religious nut. You never knew who you were

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Marc Levy: Chronicler of Combat and Postwar Chills

JAN BARRY (REVIEWER)

The Best of Medic in the Green Time: Writings from the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath by Marc Levy (Winter Street Press, 2020)

Marc Levy's startling essays and poems have long graced VVAW's *The Veteran* and many other publications. He's now collected these and many other memorable war and peace stories, by his hand and those of other vets, in *The Best of Medic in the Green Time: Writings from the Vietnam War and its Aftermath*. Marc has curated the website medicinthegreentime.com since 2007.

"Most civilians live with stunted understanding of what war even is, and of the complex needs of veterans after war," Janet McIntosh, professor of anthropology at Brandeis University, notes in the book's introduction. "This is why we need writers like Marc Levy, who take us so far beyond rituals of flags and salutes and 'thank you for your service,' far beyond any 'baby killer' confessional, to the everyday sounds and smells of that war, starting with 'the dim rustling of one hundred packs, helmets, weapons reluctantly lifted, slung, shifted to place...'"

Among veterans' needs, she adds, is to share deeply buried stories. "In *The POWS*, Marc recounts a day with a man from the same platoon, when their conversation turns awkward, the complex sadness too much to bear.

Marc is reminded both are still captives of that war, even if they were never literally imprisoned."

Much of the book is focused on recollections by veterans of Vietnam and more recent wars who responded to Marc's requests to join him in writing about tough topics such as war jokes, drug use, nightmares, being overrun in combat, and being thanked for "your service." He's interacted with and encouraged other vet writers at the William Joiner Institute, Warrior Writers Boston, Salem Writers Group and the Walnut Street Café open mic.

Among the most bizarre, unexpected stories is Roger Byer's account of going home to Grenada after surviving a tour in Vietnam as a medic and becoming a pilot. In October 1983, the US military invaded the tiny Caribbean island and suddenly Byer was treated as an enemy in his own nation by US troops.

"Standing in my bedroom in front of an open closet was a private first class. He was gingerly holding up my US Army dress greens jacket with its four and a half rows of assorted medals ... The platoon sergeant's eyes blazed and his nostrils flared, his head swiveled around threateningly. He barked ... 'Just who the fuck does this jacket belong to?'" Byer was saved by his combat medals from being mistreated by hard-core troops like those he served with in Vietnam.

Other stories recount all sorts of

haunting memories, surprising turns of survival.

...Now I'm crying and I'm screaming "Medic," but I have to keep shooting.

At this point, I always wake, and big, black Jerome and little, white William, my brothers, are not dying beside me even though I can still smell their blood, even though I can still see them lying there. You see, these two, they've been taking turns dying on me, again and again and again for all these long years, and still people tell me, "Forget Nam."
—Dave Connolly, "Why I Can't"

Years after the war, trying to escape such nightmares, Marc Levy backpacked through much of Southeast Asia, including old battle zones in Vietnam. One morning, a local guide stopped his motorbike on a deserted road. "My heart dropped when Thanh said, 'We are here. This Quan Loi.' In fact, the huge American base is gone now, flat as a field ... Thanh said at war's end scavengers and resettled peasants stripped the base clean ...

"Still, he said, beneath the soil Vietnam is littered with old mortar and artillery shells, rotting 40 mm grenades, high explosive five-hundred-pound bombs. Much land is permeated with Agent Orange. To this day all take their toll on the Vietnamese people."

"I continued travelling in Asia, Indonesia, Europe, then at last flew home," he added. "It took decades to understand that Vietnam was more than a memory of firefights, ambushes, the joy of living one more day, the dread of enemy contact. Though nothing could recapture my youth, or the unrepeatable friendships made in combat, it took years to understand that the VC and NVA, the Vietnamese civilians, were human beings no different than us. That was the heart of it. The sorrows and losses both sides felt, the hope to make it meaningful. And maybe, one day, to let it all go."



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.

"Reading this collection of Vietnam-related stories and recollections is excruciatingly painful — which is precisely why it demands to be widely read."
Andrew Bacevich, professor emeritus, Boston University



"This book is simply astounding. I don't think I've ever learned as much from any text about the Vietnam War... Levy is a terrific writer."

Seth Jacobs, History Department, Boston College

"Want to know about the realities and consequences of our indefensible wars, Vietnam and others since? Then heed the conscientious accounts of those who were there! If you seriously wish to unearth some essential truths read the finely honed, forthright passages in this essential compendium, many written by Levy himself, and others who survived their distinctive perditions. I can think of no other to surpass it."

Paul Atwood, American Studies Department, University of Massachusetts, Boston

available on amazon and Medic in the Green Time.com

The Roots of VVAW - Part 2

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going to be put into a debate situation with. It was great. I could care less who I was debating.

SR: In the beginning, we were a media group, doing a thing on morality. Carl, David, and Jan did the David Susskind show. Susskind was very, very good at this. We did it twice, in fact. I was selling oranges all of a sudden. It was a product. I went and listened and said, "Great, great, but who's going to believe it? Who even believes that these guys are veterans that have been in the war at all?" You

can talk your head off and nobody would listen.

We went to Long Island, to Hofstra University, for example. We had rocks thrown at us, chased out of town, police escorts. We were communists and all this shit. I'm outraged. They'd never even heard that these guys were in Vietnam, or even that I served, for Christ's sake. It devalued us, and I really felt like we really didn't have a message for anybody here.

The earliest members of the

organization, like Sheldon Ramsdell, felt frustrated by the disregard and disrespect they seemed to be getting. They had tried to engage the public through established channels but found their way blocked by many Americans' inability to hear what they were saying. The cold war consensus was so strong in some quarters that, rather than listening to those who had served, various segments of the public attacked VVAW members as communists or malcontents. Nonetheless, VVAW persevered. In

1967 VVAW slowly grew, attracting the attention of other veterans, and civilians as well.



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

Full Circle: Operation Urgent Fury

ROGER BYER

An excerpt from The Best of Medic in the Green Time by Marc Levy.

At 0500 hours on the morning of October 25, 1983 the United States' armed forces invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada. An attack upon my homeland, the country of my birth was underway. This was home, the place I had returned to, to live again, after spending three years as a soldier in this very same invading force's army.

Six days earlier, on October 19th Grenada's popular Marxist Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, was overthrown in a bloody coup. He was mercilessly executed along with some of his loyal cabinet ministers after being deposed by hardcore left-wing elements in his own political party who had earlier taken control of the island's armed forces.

American President Ronald Reagan, a long-time opponent of the Bishop administration because of its close ties to Cuba, seized this opportunity to divert a flotilla of ships and manpower already at sea. They had been steaming towards Lebanon in the wake of a suicide bombing of a US marine barracks there that had claimed the lives of two hundred forty-two US marines. This task force was redirected to Grenada to urgently "rescue" approximately 1,000 mainly American students attending an American offshore medical school, The St. George's University School of Medicine.

Since the Grenada revolution of March 13th 1979, Cuba and Fidel Castro in particular had been a big supporter of the new government, providing both material and requisite manpower for the ambitious dream of the construction of an international airport on the island.

I had left Grenada fifteen years before to join the US Army to fight in the distant reaches of Vietnam and Cambodia. It was some twelve years after I had hung up my army dress greens uniform in my bedroom closet. Naturally, I experienced a potpourri of conflicting emotions concerning the invasion of my country. I was now a commercial pilot. I took the opportunity to go to flying school on the GI Bill and had obtained a commercial pilot's license with a multi-engine and an instrument rating at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. After the Grenada revolution of 1973 Prime Minister Maurice Bishop had offered me a job to fly his private turboprop executive aircraft, a gift from his friend Fidel. At the time I was flying for LIAT and based in Barbados where I had been recently transferred from LIAT's Antigua base.

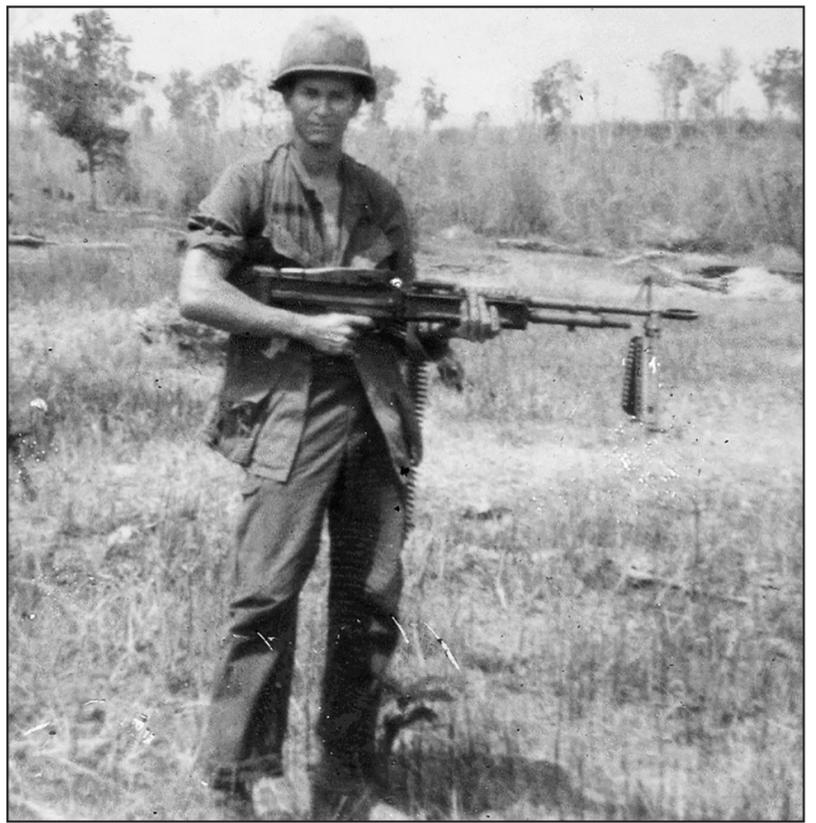
A couple days after the sad events of October 19th which culminated in our Prime Minister's brutal death, I had been relaxing, having a beer with the guys in Batson's shop, a popular watering hole in my neighborhood. It was a few days after the US forces had generally secured the island. Three US military personnel entered Batson's shop to drink. They struck up a relaxed and easy conversation with the people in the establishment. I was speaking to the officer in charge,

a major, when his radio squawked. His RTO took the message, then passed the handset to the major. Something was discussed heatedly. The major seemed eventually to concede some point to the caller. He then turned towards me and said, "Are you the same Roger Byer who was Prime Minister Bishop's personal pilot?" "Yes, I am." I replied. The major shrugged. He was a soldier, and he apparently had orders. Orders that involved me. "Roger Byer, I have to take you in for questioning," he then said to me. "Your name is on a special list, as you were the Prime Minister's personal pilot. I tried to tell headquarters that I'd spoken to you and that I was convinced that you were not involved in any resistance activities, but they wouldn't budge. I'm sorry."

We drove down to the Point Saline's airport construction site, where the friendly major formally handed me over to the military intelligence unit for interrogation. They had built in a not surprisingly fast time a penal-type camp that was heavily strung with barbed wire, severely enclosed and impressively re-enforced. I was directed to a bench to sit and wait for my interrogator to arrive. But I was not unduly uncomfortable at this stage, because I had not committed any offense and had nothing to hide. An uptight military intelligence major, very unlike the one from earlier, arrived to question me. No rough stuff, but after wasting my time by asking for and listening patiently to my entire story, the intelligence officer started quizzing me with a series of probing questions, like what part of Libya did I train in—throwing out sprats to catch whales, as we would say locally.

When your only story was the truth, it was easy to stick to it. I held to the simple uncomplicated reality that I was the government's pilot, and that when I was not flying the government's plane I also worked at the local civil aviation office on the Carenage, where I spent my days seeking opportunities for young Grenadians to train abroad as air traffic controllers and meteorological officers to man the new (yet to be completed) Point Salines airport. About eight hours later, after plenty of phone calls (and, I was sure, positive reassurances), the clarification of questions asked and answers given, the major said gruffly, "OK, Mr. Byer, you check out all right. Everything is fine. You may go now." I replied, "If it's alright with you, sir, I would rather just sit here quietly, and wait until daylight to depart."

The reason for my strange refusal to accept the offer of immediate freedom was based on experience. I was a veteran, so I understood where I was. We were in the middle of a war-zone, at two o'clock on a dark and seemingly unfriendly dawn. The whole area had been dug up with trenches and fox holes for the defensively emplaced and hunkered down soldiers. There were no landmarks or road signs anywhere. The troops out here would be young, jumpy and scared. I definitely knew that. There was still sporadic small-arms firing around the area, likely triggered by the same young sentries. No other vehicles were moving in the



entire area at that hour, and he wanted me to go out there all alone, driving a civilian vehicle, exposing myself like a drone target? I refused to leave. That was until the major unclipped his .45 pistol from its holster, and indicated to me through gritted teeth that he'd had a very long day. He further declared: "I told you to leave this facility, and I mean fucking now! Get your ass out of here Mr. Byer," he yelled. "Right now!" Put that way, I carefully reconsidered my options. "Ok, I'm off your compound, sir," I limply replied. I'd been there before. My past seemed to be in dog step with me. I'd take my chances again.

Illumination flares lit up the area as I exited the compound scrunched low in my car seat. Disoriented, I drove around in ever widening circles. There was no discernible roadway or guiding signs to direct me. I was promptly halted by a series of nervous, belligerent, sleep-deprived soldiers stationed far from home. One after another they yelled and hectoring me. "What the fuck are you doing out here? Get out of the fucking car. Get down on the ground." "Are you crazy or suicidal?" "Man, what the fuck are you doing at this time of night?" I would reply, "You don't understand. I've just been released..." I was stopped eight times. I reached my mother-in-law's home later that morning, emotionally drained and physically spent.

Two days later, Eddie, my niece Andrea's boyfriend and future husband, agreed to take the chance to accompany me to check on our house at Morne Jaloux. We'd been all—my whole extended family—hunkered down at my mother's house in Belmont, which was located two miles from our own property, about a ten-minute drive away. It took Eddie and I two hours to get to the house. We were stopped twelve times by patrolling US forces, sometimes made to lie face down on the hot asphalt by the surly troopers because they thought we were Cubans. As we neared our destination, I saw a squad of US Army soldiers performing routine house-

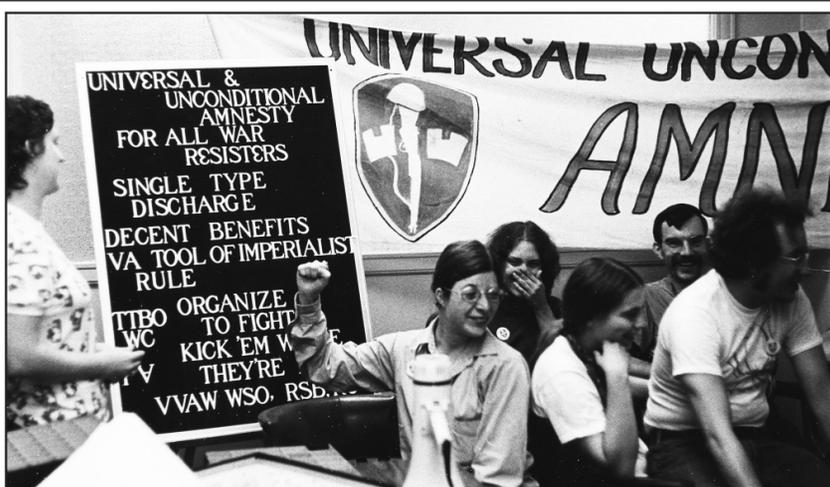
to-house searches. Things were a bit tenser than usual up there because the Cuban embassy, still occupied, was located just around the corner from my house.

I let the soldiers in with my keys to forestall them opening my front door with their boots. As they made their rounds, I began to examine the damage done to my verandah's screened glass sliding door. "Hey Sarge!" An excited shout came from inside of the house, jerking me out of my reverie. "Jesus, Sergeant, come and see this!" What now, I thought, as we scurried inside in the direction of the alarmed voice. Standing in my bedroom in front of an open closet, was a private first class. He was gingerly holding up my US Army full dress greens uniform jacket with its four and a half rows of assorted medals and decorations, overseas bars and unit citations ostentatiously displayed on it. The insignias worn on the uniforms of the soldiers milling around my bedroom were identical to the ones that stood out boldly on my uniform jacket's sleeves. The platoon sergeant's eyes blazed and his nostrils flared, his head swiveled around threateningly. He barked to the room's occupants at large, "Just who the fuck does this jacket belong to?" I paused before answering, sensing that the tide was about to turn in my favor. I looked over at the sergeant and calmly replied, "It's mine."

When we were ready to leave, the sergeant, who was in a far more cooperative mood now, suggested, "Take that jacket with you. It will save you some hassles on the way back." This turned out to be good advice. At each of the same twelve checkpoints we passed, I drove while Eddie held my uniform jacket out the car window. We did not have to stop, not once.



ROGER BYER WAS BORN, RAISED AND RESIDES IN GRENADA. IN 1970 HE SERVED AS A MEDIC WITH CHARLIE I/5 FIRST CAV IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. HIS MEMOIR IS TATTOOED MEMORIES, AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. THIS STORY FIRST APPEARED IN COUNTERPUNCH.



Monsanto, Bayer and Two Wars

NADYA WILLIAMS

Recent incendiary exposés of Monsanto products—scientifically proven in court to cause cancers in workers and homeowners who have used them—have caused stocks to plunge, and new owner, German pharmaceutical corporation Bayer, to no longer want to use the brand name. As of June, 2020 Bayer, has agreed to pay nearly \$11 Billion to settle 100,000 pending lawsuits filed against Monsanto for illnesses allegedly caused by the weed killer RoundUp. As with Monsanto, Bayer has admitted to no wrong-doing, and their products will continue to have no warning labels. However, three suits in California alone, which ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, resulted in multi-million-dollar settlements in 2018 and 2019, which Bayer has challenged and will continue to challenge.

All this is quite a corporate burden for Bayer to acquire, along with the \$62.5 billion price tag paid in June of 2018 to merge the two chemical giants. However, both these giants have major war crimes, from World War II to Vietnam, hidden in their pasts.

Sacrificing Vietnam for Monsanto Profits

Agrochemical Monsanto's vastly profitable role in the wars on South East Asia of 50 years ago is why Veterans For Peace held an "Expose Monsanto Vigil" in downtown San Francisco on August 10th, 2019—the annual International Agent Orange Day.

America's war on Indochina was one of the largest chemical poisonings of entire countries in the history of the world—the use of the defoliant Agent Orange on the jungles and food crops of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. And the damage to humans and the ecosystem continues today.

The herbicide called Agent Orange was sprayed for 10 years (1961-1971) to the tune of at least 20 million gallons. It contained Dioxin, the most toxic substance known to science. But Dioxin was not a necessary ingredient in Agent Orange, manufactured by Monsanto, Dow and 36 other companies. Higher temperatures, which were used to shorten the reaction time, produced the Dioxin; a longer processing time at a lower temperature, would have kept it out. However, that would have cost a small amount of the profits, so the contaminant was left in and Dioxin's gene-warping destruction went on to create havoc in humans and animals.

Tens of thousands of American veterans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese have died from Agent Orange poisoning in the decades since, according to the International Red Cross. In 1984, a class action suit by 20,000 American veterans was settled against the US chemical corporations,

with an award of \$180 million, on the condition that: no wrong-doing was admitted and no future legal action would be allowed. However, since Dioxin is an Epigenetic substance, severe birth defects, cancers and many other illnesses are now passing to the fourth generation since the war's end, with an estimated four million Vietnamese affected today, including newborn babies. The Vietnamese victims have never been acknowledged nor compensated.

Bayer's Bargain for Human Lives

Yet another damning piece of history—this one from World War II of 75 years ago—exposes yet another mass chemical poisoning. It concerns the German-owned Bayer, Monsanto's new merger partner, and its collaboration with Nazi death camps, as documented and verified in the Nuremberg, Germany, War Crimes Tribunals.

The following is taken word for word from documented testimony at a Nuremberg Tribunal: "During the war, Bayer wrote the commander of Auschwitz concentration camp to inquire about 'purchasing' 150 women for experiments with sleep-inducing drugs."

After compromising on the price, the actual letter from Bayer said: "We received your reply. Select 150 women in the best possible state of health, and as soon as you inform us that you are ready, we will fetch them ... " And later: "Despite their emaciated condition they were acceptable ... We will keep you informed on the progress of the experiments." And again later: "The experiments were concluded. All persons died. We will soon get in touch with you regarding a new shipment." *

Monsanto Back Home

In the summer of 2018, the first of three lawsuits against Monsanto by separate individuals was mounted by Dewayne "Lee" Johnson, a sickened school grounds keeper in California, who routinely used RoundUp weed killer on his job. RoundUp contains not Dioxin but Glyphosate. However, the voir dire phase (pre-screening of potential jurors in the jury pool) of that first case is extremely instructive, and makes the link to Agent Orange/Dioxin.

Juror #4, Robert Howard of San Francisco, who served during the entire 6-week trial of 2018, tells of a prospective juror being asked by a bank of Monsanto lawyers, "What, if anything, have you heard previously about Monsanto?" Answer: "Didn't Monsanto make Agent Orange in the Vietnam War?" "Strike, your honor!" cried the three Monsanto lawyers in unison as they literally leapt as one out of their seats. That comment



was promptly struck from the court record, and the possible juror removed from the jury list.

However, despite all Monsanto's efforts, the 12 chosen members of the jury, including Howard, found Monsanto guilty. Coincidentally, the grounds keeper received a verdict awarding him the huge sum of \$289 million in compensatory and punitive damages on August 10th 2018—the annual International Agent Orange Day. Bayer appealed and three months later Johnson's award was reduced to \$78 million. A second corporate appeal by Bayer this July reduced damages to \$20.5 million.

It is important to acknowledge that the findings of the jury members of corporate malfeasance and responsibility are not to make a dying man rich. They are intended to make a run-away behemoth pay attention and change its product and labeling so as not to continue to wreak havoc on the environment and yet more humans. While these cases continue to be appealed in a truly David versus Goliath situation, the plaintiff victims have yet to receive a penny.

Plaintiff Lee Johnson, the school grounds keeper, is a 46-year-old African American married father of three with terminal cancer. The weed killer glyphosate, combined with other ingredients, was scientifically proven in court in all three California cases to be a carcinogen. There are no warning labels on RoundUp. As of this writing Johnson is still alive despite suffering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a blood cancer. His courage to challenge a corporate giant, along with a progressive law firm, is truly groundbreaking. Lee has made a 4-minute music video which can be found at: ANTLER-Not Your Time. It is a poignant eye opener, showing the damage to his body, but not his spirit.

Bayer, like Monsanto before, has continued to assert that glyphosate is safe, exactly like Agent Orange/Dioxin was "safe" to use in South East Asia on our military and their civilians. Former juror Robert Howard is now writing a book on his life-changing experience as a juror.

But that is not all. According to

The Guardian of London, August 8, 2019, Monsanto created an "intelligence fusion center." This term is used by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies for operations focused on "surveillance and terrorism." As was presented in court, attorneys for the plaintiffs called attention to Monsanto's alleged efforts to suppress science that suggested the carcinogenic properties of glyphosate by ghostwriting articles and supplying environmental regulators with "bad science."

In addition, a multi-pronged strategy to exert pressure on journalists, scientists and non-profit citizen protection groups was carried out—the Berkeley-based US Right To Know (www.usrtk.org) being one such targeted watch dog. Lengthy reports were even compiled on singer Neil Young due to his 2015 album *The Monsanto Years*. The multinational agribusiness conglomerate, which is known for being one of the first to embrace the production of food from genetically modified organisms (GMOs), actually considered taking legal action against Young.

In a recent added twist, because Bayer was not able to quash Johnson's case, its bank of corporate lawyers tried to tack on a condition to the settlement—namely that all future class action suits would not be heard in trial court before a jury, but by a select "Scientific Panel" which would take four years to create—essentially buying Bayer time to develop tactics to ultimately avoid future culpability. This bolsters Bayer's position that only they understand "the science" (that their chemicals "are not harmful to the public") and only scientists can determine that—certainly not the public who sit on juries. However, federal Judge Chhabria, who oversaw the latest appeal, said in a preliminary opinion that the five-scientist panel will not be an acceptable replacement for a jury trial. So the legal wrangling continues.

All in all, the hidden histories of both of these corporate giants in at least two wars of the last century, and their criminal actions today, should alert the world as to their roles and products now.

* Source: Central Commission of Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland, Konzentrationslager Oswiecim-Brzezinka-Auschwitz-Berkeineau, Nuremberg Documents NJ. 7184, Warsaw: Jan Sehn, 1957, 89. From the book, *A Socialist Defector: From Harvard to Karl-Marx-Allee* by Victor Grossman, Monthly Review Press, 2019, Page 304.



NADYA WILLIAMS IS A FREE-LANCE JOURNALIST; ACTIVE ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE SINCE 2003; ON THE BOARD OF THE VIETNAM CHAPTER 160 OF VFP AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER 69.

On His Way to Wisconsin, Mr. Trump Stops for Some Supplies



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Mayday 1971

JACK MALLORY (REVIEWER)

Mayday 1971: A White House at War, a Revolt in the Streets, and the Untold History of America's Biggest Mass Arrest

by Lawrence Roberts

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020)

"The peace movement has many martyrs but few heroes, and the veterans, who held the Mall for four nights against a stony-hearted government, had given it a victory that already has become a legend."

I saw a very small part of the Vietnam War, restricted to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment area of operations in Binh Long and Tay Ninh provinces in 1969 and 70. My perspective was even more restricted by my particular job as a captain running MEDCAPs and doing leaflet and loudspeaker missions directed at North Vietnamese Army troops.

From the point of view of any individual, where we were and what we did were almost incomprehensible parts of the whole. We didn't know much about what we were doing and why, especially in any larger sense. Who decided why we were where, why we were doing whatever we were doing? Who the hell knew? Maybe I knew what 1st Squadron was doing, but what about 2nd? We were attached to the First Air Cav—what the hell were they doing, and why? How did any of it fit into winning the war? At the time, ignoring all questions of whether the war needed to be won.

Similarly, none of us, at least at my level, had a clue what the NVA or the VC were thinking and planning, how/why they were motivated.

When I got back to the world and started working with Vietnam Veterans Against the War in DC the same kind of questions arose. I could see a bit more: I was higher in the planning hierarchy as an anti-warrior than as a warrior. I knew what VVAW was doing in DC because I helped plan it; ditto some of the VVAW decisions on the national level. Presuming that any of us knew what we were doing!, which was often questionable.

Having been in the Army for four years and outside the US for three of those years I had no idea of the history of the anti-war movement, its factions, politics, and leadership over the preceding five years. What was The May Day Coalition, the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice? Who were the Trots? Yippies? Dave Dellinger? Rennie Davis? Judy Gumbo? What was "the plan?"

And what was Jerry Wilson, Chief of the DC Police Department, thinking? How was the Nixon White House reacting to our plans and actions, and Tricky Dick himself? We had no idea.

May Day 1971 by Lawrence Roberts, is to the Spring anti-war offensive of 1971 and for those of us who were part of those actions what battle histories of the Vietnam War are to our experiences there. Like a history of the war focusing on my particular unit and time in-country, the book fascinates me because it's about what I know directly. But in setting the Spring Offensive in the context of years of anti-war organizing by many organizations and individuals it helps me understand how we got to April and May of 1971. It's not a history of the anti-war/anti-imperialist movement, but provides information on the organizations involved—Yippies, the Mobe and the New Mobe, SDS and the Weather Underground, the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, the National Peace Action Committee, the May Day Coalition, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and the groups and factions they evolved from.

Similarly, the book introduces us to the multitude of anti-warriors that led the movement for years, names already familiar to many at the time but new to me and others who had been outside American culture and politics for a couple of years or more: Dave Dellinger (just an old lefty to many of us young farts, but who Roberts tells us had driven an ambulance in the Spanish Civil War!), Rennie Davis, Yippies like Judy Gumbo and Stew Albert, as well as more recent arrivals on the anti-war scene like John Kerry. And, of course, lesser knowns who really did all the work like my DC co-coordinator Mike Phelan, Tim Butz, and John O'Connor, who did FAR more work than any of us realized!

On the other side were those whose words and work were invisible to us at the time: DC Police Chief Jerry Wilson, who comes across as a decent, capable officer caught between the rock of keeping the peace and the hard place of honoring the First Amendment, along with his own desires to someday be head of the FBI; the White House cabal of Nixon and his aides like Kleindienst, Rehnquist, and Haldeman; and the loathsome (I didn't promise an objective review) J. Edgar Hoover

Speaking of Nixon and his crew: *Mayday* reminds me that it's been 50 years, and there's a lot I've forgotten. The politics of the last three or four years to some degree removed Nixon from the spotlight as the most dishonest, dangerous and despicable president we've ever had, surrounded by his equally dishonest, dangerous, and despicable aides. Robert's book restores them to their rightful place next to Trump, Barr, et al.

Quotes from the Nixon administration are eerily reminiscent of Trump's referring to protestors. Nixon is described as saying disdainfully, "Goddamit these people are thugs, vandals, terrorists . . . dope addicts . . ." And Roberts describes Haldeman's comments on VVAW: "Haldeman complained that there were 'about six paraplegics' in the crowd and the press was writing 'nauseating stories' about them. 'God, everything you read would make you think all those guys out there had no legs!'"

The book's introductory epigraph sets a tone of past-present similarities which Roberts doesn't overstress but which may be in the back of the reader's mind throughout the book. Judge Harold Greene, who oversaw the resolution of many of the approximately 12,000 unjustified arrests during the Offensive, is quoted, "Whenever American institutions have provided a hysterical response to an emergency situation, we have come later to regret it."

I queried Roberts about the incredibly apropos nature of the quote, incorporated into the book well before this spring's protests and police/military over-response. He responded, "Wrote it long before the current mess, but I was confident America would be in an emergency again at some point . . ." He was certainly prescient, as recent events around the country have shown us.

Another recurring past-present parallel is the Chief Executives' use of law enforcement for political ends, in decisions about how to enforce the law and in images of that enforcement in campaign media. Roberts writes, "In one Nixon campaign ad, the candidate's voiceover said, 'I pledge to you we will have order in the United States,' while scenes flashed by showing bloodied demonstrators, a burning building, and menacingly lit protesters holding up two fingers in a 'V,' the peace sign." I'm writing

this prior to the November election—we'll see what the Trump campaign produces.

Fortunately for VVAW, DC Police Chief Jerry Wilson was willing to ignore White House pressure to get tough with the vets. After Chief Justice's Berger's decision that we could be forced to leave our campground on the Mall, "the police chief, Jerry Wilson, took a call from the Justice Department on his hot line. The chief had turned red in the face and told his caller that none of his cops were moving in on crippled veterans, whether they were camping illegally or not. The chief . . . nearly broke the phone when he slammed it down."

"Jerry had already sent one of his most trusted deputies, Maurice Cullinane, down to the Mall to ensure there was no trouble, that no renegade city or park police would do something stupid. 'Cully,' the chief had said, 'make sure nobody locks them up' . . . Standing there in the dark, on the edge of the encampment, Cullinane could see these guys weren't the bums that Nixon had described, but rather people who'd suffered, some grievously, for their country, in a war they believed was wrong. As far as he was concerned, they could camp anywhere they wanted. If they camped right inside his own office, that would have been fine with Cully."

The micro-level detailing of the Mayday events provides other facts and anecdotes that will be familiar to many readers, and brand new snatches of life from the time period for others. Just a few that struck me:

—Phil Hirschkop, another one of the "old guys" who was a regular anti-war movement lawyer in DC was well respected but none of us really knew anything about him. Turns out to have been an Army paratrooper!

—The review of anti-war movement history includes the imaginary threat to put LSD in the Chicago water supply during the demonstrations around the 1968 Democratic Convention. And not to forget Pigasus the pig, nominated by the Yippies as their presidential candidate!

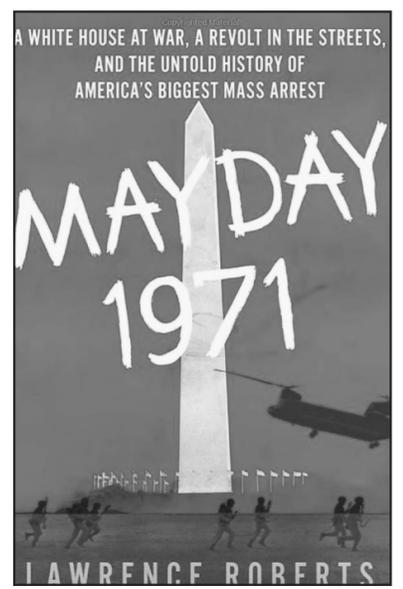
—Beat poet Allen Ginsberg's suggestion to Henry Kissinger that they meet with Nixon, Rennie Davis and others to discuss ending the war. When Kissinger appeared to be taking the idea seriously, Ginsberg added, "It would be even more useful if we do it naked on television." Needless to say . . .

—Norman Mailer's description of the 1967 Pentagon Marchers as looking "like the legions of Sgt. Pepper's Band . . . assembled from all the intersections between history and the comic books, between legend and television, the Biblical archetypes and the movies."

—And for any readers who remember attending grotesquely long, tedious political meetings, "At one such session, the steering committee for a New York march wrangled bitterly for hours over whether to stick the word 'Now' at the end of its official slogan, 'Stop the War in Vietnam.'" Been there, done that.

Mayday pays often omitted attention to ways that sexism affected the workings of the anti-war movement and its social dynamics, especially in the entirely male VVAW:

"This (sexism) also played out in the group house where John lived with leaders of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Their female roommates frequently called all-hands meetings to complain they were sick of doing all the cooking and cleaning. He and the other guys would dread these sessions, where invariably the woman



leading the talk would sit in the one overstuffed living room chair, with her lieutenants perched on the arms. The men were appropriately shamed, and the housework situation would get better afterwards. But usually just for a few days." Shudder—I remember those meetings: combat-hardened veterans fidgeting nervously in the face of irate female house-mates.

Jerry Wilson was also dealing with gender discrimination issues inside the police department, where he had to fight plans for different shields and pastel uniforms for female officers!

The gender politics of the day were at play as well in the DC Public Defender's Office, headed by Barbara Bowman. She was one of the 4% of lawyers of the era who were women, and supervised the 100 male public defenders. Their work, and the legal and Constitutional issues created by the 12,000 mass arrests, are an important focus of the book.

I'll end my review with some of the conclusions *Mayday 1971* draws on the importance of the Spring Offensive and its after-effects.

—"A poll commissioned by the White House found that an astonishing 77 percent of the country had heard or read about the week's events . . . the vets were garnering a far more positive rating than the typical demonstrators . . . the president's credibility rating dropped by three percentage points overnight, while the bump in approval for his Vietnam policy, which he celebrated after his Laos speech, had vanished. 'The only conclusion can be that the veterans' deal, and the coverage of it, is the cause,' Haldeman recorded in his diary."

—"The protests certainly contributed to the decision made that season by Kissinger and Nixon to soften at last their secret negotiating position in Paris."

—"The lessons (of the arrests and failed prosecutions) of May Day restored the rights of dissent to the streets of Washington."

—Quoting John Froines, "When Mayday was over that was, in a sense, the end of the anti-war movement."

—And finally, quoting Washington Star columnist Mary McGrory, "The peace movement has many martyrs but few heroes, and the veterans, who held the Mall for four nights against a stony-hearted government, had given it a victory that already has become a legend."



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?

Invisible Wounds - Part 2

JOSEPH GIANNINI

*East Hampton, New York
September 12, 2012*

We were at war again. Afghanistan in 2001. Iraq in 2003. The stories and images of these wars cause vivid flashbacks and even more nightmares.

In counseling, Susan Mandel, LCSW, diagnosed me with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I was in denial. I did not accept her diagnosis. I just could not believe it. It went against my image of being a strong person, both physically and mentally. Were it not for the insistence of my family, particularly my wife Nikki and my younger son Vic, I doubt very much if I would have sought help. Not for my severe hearing loss or for the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Although for many years I tried to leave Nam behind, my efforts proved to be futile. Vietnam is spreading through my life and thoughts, taking me away from the here and now. I watch everyone and everything as if through a sheet of gauze. I look at my two boys and wish that they could have known me better. Vietnam claimed my youth but it also shaped my life and destiny.

Theirs too. I want them to know I am not lost to them, just on a long journey back.

At present I am under the care of Dr. Stephen Friedes, a psychiatrist. At first I resisted his suggestion that medication could help me with some of the symptoms of my post-traumatic stress. I have never been a big believer in that kind of thing. Taking drugs to help you cope with your life. Cope with what? I mean it is not as if we are living in a combat zone. I continued to see Dr. Friedes. My symptoms were getting worse. I came to see that I had been living with a lot of unresolved issues about my time in Vietnam. That the nightmares, sudden inexplicable outbursts of rage and my general avoidance of social contact really date back to my return from Nam.

They took a toll. On my wives, on my sons, and others. About ten months ago Dr. Friedes finally convinced me that my snowballing symptoms were not going to go away on their own. I agreed to give medication a try. I am now taking Zoloff daily, for anxiety and depression. I am not sure if it is helping me or not. My concentration and memory problems are still getting worse. But I notice that on some mornings when I wake up I do not have that awful feeling of dread.

I sleep only with the help of a strong sleep aid. Every night without fail I take Tylenol PM, three or four 500 mg tablets. (The maximum recommended dosage of this medication is 1,500 mg per day.) A study came out showing that prolonged use of this medication can be damaging to the liver. Fortunately I have never been a drinker. On special occasions I may have a bottle of beer or a glass of wine just to be sociable. I continue to work out daily and surf as often as possible. I deem both of these activities to be self-therapy. They help keep the daytime demons at bay and tire me out so I can sleep. Even if doing so opens the door for the night demons and their terrors.

I wish now that I had been able to share some of what I did and saw in Vietnam with my two sons. It might have made all of our lives more bearable. The cost is not so high.

In 2003, a surfing buddy of mine put me in touch with a young Marine who had had a run-in with the law. He was just back from Iraq. He had been in heavy combat. His battalion fought in the Battle of Nasaria. I agreed to defend him. In court, I made a motion to dismiss the charges against him in the interest of justice, citing the young Marine's exemplary and brave service in the Corps and War. The motion was granted.

This Marine is presently on his second tour in Afghanistan. He sends me a steady stream of emails describing "the truth on the ground." Recently he wrote about the deaths of two of his buddies. One by an IED and the other by small arms. He titled the messages "Moments of Remembrance." Most of the e-mails end with the words "Don't Forget Us." I cannot.

In a recent dream, I'm alone. On my stomach in a dirt field. Attempting to disarm an IED by moving a little metallic silver ball down a narrow metal groove. Calmly facing death. If the ball turns red, it means I've failed. The IED will arm and explode. Using my left index finger, slowly I move the ball along. Left to right. It flashes red. I'm dead.

Double-Time Duffy and *Soft Targets*, are two of the many non-fiction pieces I wrote in the writing class my wife insisted I take. I submitted *Double-Time Duffy* to *The East Hampton Star* at my instructor's suggestion. I was amazed to see it published. They wanted to see other stories I had written so I continued to

submit. *The Star* has so far published about 10 of them, some including photographs I loaned them. When my writing instructor and a few close friends saw how much my confidence was boosted by seeing my writing in print they became very interested in seeing my work appear as much as possible.

Knowing that I had carried those memories inside for 34 years without putting them into words, spoken or written. With their encouragement my stories were also published in an international magazine and in a special veteran's issue of a literary journal. The only time I got paid for my writing was from the magazine. It would have been nice to earn money as a writer. I am not earning money like I used to as an attorney. This is hurting me and my family. They have rightful expectations of me that I can no longer meet. The pain and stress of this have hit me hard. It keeps getting harder. Harder to get work. Harder to do my job well when I am retained. The combination of all the trauma, the hearing impairment, the memory loss, the anxiety in public, make even the most minor court appearances difficult. Several times a day I am overcome by exhaustion. Brought on by I don't know what. The things I used to be able to do.

Collateral Damage JFK Airport, NYC June 24, 1967

"Babe I'll be back in a little while." Kissed her one last time. Turned and walked away. I was 23 years old. Turned 25 in Vietnam. Thirteen months later I was home. That young man she knew never came back. Physically I was here. Much of my psych was there. I realize now, she kept it secret, our marriage died in Country. Back in the states I tried not to think about my buddies still there. Didn't speak about Nam. Wouldn't read or watch anything about the war. Sure I was relieved to be back in The World. The twitch was gone. I took up tennis. Worked out. Surfing as much as possible. I knew I wouldn't go back. Got out of the Corps just before they gave me orders to return. I still have dreams I was sent back. I'm there. Annette suffered while I was gone. I should never have asked her to marry me. We were together two weeks before I left. How naïve. It wasn't good between us when I got her pregnant. She agreed to abort. Her parents changed her mind. Ron

knows I didn't want him. I left them before he was born. She moved on. Re-married. Me too.

When he was an infant I tried to take him every weekend. He hated going with me. Would run away from me. I chased him down. He would punch and kick me. Scream, "I hate you" again and again. I never left without him. Ron had a little security blanket. He would put it over his head as we drove off.

I was driving to my place downtown. Going over the Gowanus Canal. Ron is three years old. Sitting in the passenger seat. Head under his blanket. He must have screamed "I hate you" twenty times since we left Annette's.

I lost it. Yelled, "Fuck you."

Finally silence.

Slowly he pulled the blanket off his head. Looked over and said, "I don't really hate you. I love you."

My dad always said I had the patience of a saint. I was too busy and self absorbed to see the change in Ron. Nikki did. She recognized the symptoms. Counseling hasn't worked. He's not an easy person to be around. Always complaining. Trying to annoy me. He does. Knows it. Wants my attention. So different from Vic, his half brother. There are many good things I remember about Ron. Especially his feistiness as a young child. Took him everywhere with me. Beach, gym, boxing matches, court. He didn't take to surfing or working out. I thought he was being independent. Now at thirty-one he's working out. Just got a tattoo on his right shoulder. A gargoyle with wings sitting on a skull. Says it means he's fleeing from evil. Maybe he means life.

Next, Invisible Wounds, Part 3, about Joe being diagnosed, in 2013 as having Chronic Ischemic Coronary Heart Disease. On the list of "presumptive diseases" caused by Agent Orange since 2010!



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.

Letter to the Editor

Dear sirs,

I am a Vietnamese reader.

I read your VVAW from VNEXPRESS today. I respect what you have done for Vietnam.

First of all, I'd like to send you a very famous poem translated from a Vietnamese copy which was notched in Thach Han river bank, in Quang Tri province.

The poem reminds some memories on this day.

The Whispers on Thach Han Riverside

Up Thach Han - please gently row your boats
To hold my friends' breaths while sleeping in the river bed
Their twenties disperse into the waves yet
That console the river shores forever.

—Le Ba Duong
(Translated by Nguyen Ngoc Long)

Thank you for your time and wish you all the best.
Nguyen Ngoc Long
Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh city - Vietnam

Allison

"Flowers are better than bullets,"

Allison said
before they shot her dead
before she lay
all in red.

Peace and love were her words
as she vased the yellow daisy
in the barrel of his rifle
Commie die!

Run Allison! Run!
Watch out!

They're turning at the top of the hill.
The force of the bullet
breaking through the shell
explodes.

Petals and pollen, ovary and eggs Shattered pieces
fall
fall
fall

to the ground
She lay

all in red

"Flowers are better than bullets,"
Allison said.

—Nicole Walter -in remembrance of Kent State

Where We Came From, Who We Are, Who Can Join

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still-raging war in Indochina, and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States, including active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups

to deal with traumatic aftereffects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at vet centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert

actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice—facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and

respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle. JOIN US!



Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War



We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of US aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia also put forward lies. The US military was not protecting (the sword) the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China (the China Gates), but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself.

Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families.

Our insignia is over 46 years old. The insignia, VVAW® and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.

Beware of VVAW-AI

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individuals calling themselves the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist" (VVAW-AI). VVAW-AI is actually the creation of an obscure ultraleft sect, designed to confuse people in order to associate themselves with VVAW's many years of activism and struggle. They are not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW, Inc. and are not affiliated with us in any way. We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit.

SUPPORT VVAW!

DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.
 VVAW Membership
 P.O. Box 355
 Champaign, IL 61824-0355

Membership Application

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email address _____
 Branch _____
 Dates of Service (if applicable) _____
 Unit _____
 Military Occupation _____
 Rank _____
 Overseas Duty _____
 Dates _____

- Yes, add me to the VVAW email list.
- I do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW.
- Sign me up for a lifetime membership in VVAW. \$250 is enclosed.

Membership in VVAW is open to ALL people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice and support the work of VVAW and its historic legacy. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The annual membership fee is \$25.00 (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

Signature _____
 Date _____
 Total Amount Enclosed _____

Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax-deductible.



RECOLLECTIONS

My Foot Still Taps To That Throbbing Pain In My Soul

DENNIS KROLL

Reprinted from *The Veteran*, Summer 1981.

On June 2, 1970, Charlie Co., 1st of the 501st, 101st Airborne Division went on a company-size combat assault. The grunts were unhappy about the plan and all of us squad leaders had complained to 3-3 about the logistics of the operation. For an LZ, command had picked an old firebase, a hilltop devoid of cover. We were hit by mortar fire as soon as the first wave went in. Recon aircraft reported over 80 incoming rounds. And this was precisely what the grunts were concerned about. My squad had 50% casualties.

The next morning I woke up in 85th Evac Hospital in Phu Bai. The Top and a chaplain were pinning a Purple Heart to my pillow. Other wounded brothers were cursing them and some threw their medals at them.

A couple of days later I was sent to Camp Drake, Japan. The ward I was on had around 100 beds. All the wounded on the ward were enlisted men except for one 1st Lieutenant who refused to be on the officer's ward.

Two to four times daily (depending on your condition) the corpsman would change dressings and clean wounds. The military used wire stitches a lot—they were stronger, lasted longer and were cheaper. The twisted ends of the wire would always snag the dressings as it was removed. This was only warm-up pain for the procedure. I was at the end of the first row, so after the first week I only had to hear a quarter of the ward get changed, then I'd escape. Everyone tried really hard not to scream a lot; it got real nerve wracking to listen to your brothers begging the corpsman to be more careful.

The only thing they gave me for pain was Davron. I spent most of my first two weeks flat on my back, hands tied to the bars above me, tapping my foot to the ever-throbbing pain. I had been out in the boonies for 2 weeks without washing; it was 2 weeks in Japan before I could get someone to wash my hair. I finally got a Red

Cross volunteer to do it—she couldn't believe how dirty I was or the requests from others who wanted the same thing. If I hadn't been able to chew through my restraints and escape I'd have gone hungry and shit in my bed more than once.

I had heard about "Sparks" for a week. "Sparks" was an E-6 corpsman. He got his nickname from carrying around a small battery when he changed dressings. If you screamed too loud while he changed your dressings and cleaned your wounds he would put the battery between two wire stitches. He didn't do it all that often, but he loved to torment the brothers by taking it out of his pocket and threatening them. I think his rationale was that he didn't put the stitches in, so he didn't want to hear about it.

About two weeks after I was there my "doctor" operated and took skin from my thigh to graft on to my hand and wrist. A couple of days later I was running a temperature; the dressings were removed from my hands and the grafts were very infected. The "doctor" said the grafts would have to be removed and tried again. I thought I would go in for another operation,

but five minutes later he returned with a corpsman. The corpsman asked me if I wanted a pillow. I didn't know what to expect but I knew pillows were used to suppress screams that might cause stress for other patients. The corpsman held the pillow over my mouth and pinned my shoulders down. I looked up and saw the "doctor" take an unsterile pair of scissors from his pocket; then he just scraped the skin grafts off. I remember biting a hole in the pillow, screaming for him to stop, and then nothing more. A period of time passed and the "doctor" came back. I was lying on sweat-soaked sheets trying to rationalize what had just happened, and he said, "I didn't think that type of graft would work—now we know. We'll try again in a couple of days."

I tried to kick him in the crotch but missed. The next day on rounds the Colonel said I could get an Article 15 for striking a superior (superior?). The Lieutenant next to me defended me by saying I was irrational at the time. I told the Colonel that if he'd get the "doctor" closer to me I'd show how I wanted to do it the first time. The incident was dropped "for my own good," and no one would listen to me about filing

charges against the "doctor." Half of the second graft took and I was sent home after a month's time.

I was sent to Great Lakes Naval Hospital. It was pretty weird there also. After one operation to straighten a mangled finger, I was sent to a convalescent ward which was nothing more than a barracks. An ensign put me on a detail shoveling gravel in front of the hospital. When I complained about my cast breaking up, the ensign told me to shut up and if I wanted a weekend pass. That weekend 2 of the pins came out of my finger. After 6 months I was discharged with no disability. When I asked the Doctor about disability he told me I was just as good as when I went into the service, and I could always get a job pushing a broom.

It's been 11 years since my Vietnam experience. I've had more botched operations by the VA (some of them good), same-same type of attitude toward my brothers and myself, and my foot still taps to that throbbing pain inside my soul.



DENNIS KROLL WAS A LEADER IN THE MADISON VVAW CHAPTER.



Annie Bailey and Dennis Kroll leading march at Dewey Canyon IV.

The Commander in Chief

SO LONG, SUCKERS...



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