



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Afghanistan: Another Rich Man's War Ends

BILL BRANSON AND JOE MILLER

From the VVAW National Office

Who was the last person to die in the Afghanistan war? It was heart-rending to witness the useless deaths of thirteen GIs at the Kabul airport. The terror was further expanded into almost infinite grief when President Biden authorized what turned out to be the murder of an Afghan family, to "Teach them a lesson." The last casualties from this war will still be suffering a century from now. In war, there may be a presumed beginning, but never an end to the suffering.

"We do not believe that militarism and war will provide justice or security and oppose major US military intervention in Afghanistan or other countries. As long as US foreign policy continues to be based on corporate exploitation and military domination, we will continue to make more enemies in the poor, underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We can achieve enduring security and lasting peace only through domestic and foreign policies based on social and economic justice. That will come about only when the American people demand it.—VVAW Statement on September 11 Attacks, September 27, 2001

"Our military response to the attacks has caused more civilian deaths in Afghanistan than the hijackers caused in our country. This would suggest that the United States is also engaging in terrorism. Our leaders want to carry this into other countries. The broadening of this undeclared war to include a so-called "Axis of Evil"

includes loosening the standards for the use of nuclear weapons against Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, North Korea, China and Russia. We strongly oppose any open-ended carte blanche theory of war and this use of US military power without proper cause or caution."—VVAW National Office - March 2002

VVAW opposed the war in Afghanistan BEFORE it started and we continued to oppose it over the next 20 years. The Bush/Cheney regime started the war in a frenzy of blood lust and hopes to raise their poll numbers. Eventually, the war became about money (for the capitalists) and power (for the generals) and all of this fed the Military Industrial Complex's need for endless war.

We are glad that President Biden has withdrawn the troops. Any blame for this war should start with the Bush/Cheney regime, which started not one, but TWO calamitous wars. President Obama did not keep his campaign promise to withdraw troops and instead listened to the duplicitous generals who encouraged him to "surge" to new levels of troop involvement. Trump promised to withdraw, but waited until the end of his first—and only—term to spite the generals by making a deal with the Taliban and excluding the installed government of Afghanistan in total disregard for the lives of our troops, the Afghan GIs, and both Afghan and US civilians.

"The people of Indochina have been victorious on the battlefield. Liberation is the order of the day.

With the regularity of a machine gun, blow after blow is falling on US imperialists who now must plot and scheme to find other ways to keep their power intact. With the great majority of the people of the world, we join to celebrate the victories and salute the fighters for freedom and independence in Cambodia and Vietnam. The most joyous celebrations have been in Cambodia and in Vietnam, as in city after city the people have turned out to greet the liberation forces."—VVAW - Winter Soldier, April/May 1975

Many people and journalists are trying to compare the evacuation from Afghanistan to the withdrawal from Vietnam, then drawing inaccurate lessons from both. They see helicopters leaving and try to make this facile comparison. When the tanks rolled into Saigon, progressive forces around the world celebrated the victory of the Vietnamese people. When the US withdrew from Afghanistan, it was not due to the result of a victory by or for the Afghan people. There is no simple reason why the US lost the war in Afghanistan.

The arrogance of imperial power played a major role in the United States' intervention in Vietnam. The US thought it could do a better job of colonizing than the French and Japanese in Vietnam. Years later, they thought they could also do a better job than the British and Russians in Afghanistan. In both cases, this was the hubris of fools.

Given twenty years of entrenchment and the fact that administration after administration drank the Kool-aid of the generals and the Military

Industrial Complex's view of the US "winning" the war, any end to the war was bound to be chaotic from our viewpoint and downright ruinous for the people of Afghanistan.

This war could've been ended at ANY time in the last 20 years. We do not think President Biden should be held responsible for 20 years of deception and mismanagement. The blathering of Military Industrial Complex lackeys in the GOP notwithstanding, there was not a single justification to stay longer or send more troops. Once it became apparent that Afghanistan was collapsing, the Biden administration set out to rescue those still there, not heeding the generals who wanted to keep the war going. From the profiteers' point of view, there would always be a new reason to feed the war.

The failure of nation-building became evident, as soon as the US withdrew its airpower from holding the Taliban at bay. The US conquered and held Afghanistan by force. The results of 20 years of this failed policy are now evident.

VVAW supported the victory of the Vietnamese people in 1975, as shown in the quote from our newspaper at the time. The same forces that wish to perpetuate the myth of the spit upon vet, and the US troops fighting with "one hand tied behind their backs" are the same forces who perpetuate the myth of Saigon "falling" and a subsequent bloodbath. The vast majority of the Vietnamese people welcomed the reunification of

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VVAW Library Project Begins Construction

CHUCK THEUSCH

Construction on the VVAW/Pho Vinh Middle School Library in Duc Pho, Quang Ngai is finally taking off. After delays due to a site change and the pandemic, we are happy to see the progress of this long-awaited project, and hope the monsoon interruptions will remain minimal.

The free-standing, two-story library being built is next to the current middle school and will serve its needs. VVAW's funding also includes money for some books, a computer, and a printer. After completion, the Ministry of Culture will donate more to the library on an annual basis. VVAW has also expressed interest in funding a full computer lab here, as they did at the high school at My Lai in 2018.

The site is 30 minutes south of My Lai/Son My. During wartime, this was near the Demilitarized Zone (17th Parallel/Ben Hai River) separating old North and South—Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Da Nang, Quang



Groundbreaking for Library - July 22, 2021.

Nam, Quang Ngai, and Binh Dinh Provinces. These central locations are heavy with war legacy effects. They are also at the very heart of the

monsoon targets coming off the South China Sea (known in Vietnam as the East Sea).

Because of the legacy of the war waged on the people of Vietnam, site clearance for unexploded bombs, small arms ammunition, shells, and Agent Orange contamination is a standard part of the preparation procedure throughout what was South Vietnam, even in 2021. This was done at the current site when the school was built. The ground had to be checked and cleared again before the commencement of the work for the VVAW Library.

Rural labor in Vietnam hearkens back to the USA of the 1930s. The progress, rooted in sweat and commitment to a brighter future, is embodied in these photos. Thanks to VVAW for this project. Monsoons, hard labor, War Legacy Site Clearance,

recent Covid-19 restrictions—all present challenges unique to old South Vietnam's quest for a brighter future in the rural areas.

Thanks to Mr. Long, Director of the Quang Ngai Fund For Children and Project Manager. We will keep you posted as the VVAW Library goes forward.



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

More photos on page 8.



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

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

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

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to John Crandell, Elise Lemire, Nadya Williams, Phil Hostetter, Joe Hirsch, and others for contributing photos.

Veteran Staff

- Jeff Machota
- Bill Branson
- Joe Miller

PTSD

What is the sound of a scream
 From deep inside your head
 And how can you dream
 When all your dreams have been bled
 How do you escape from the dead
 How do you avoid
 The impending dread

And from here where do I go
 Is there a fountain I can drink from
 That will heal my tattered soul
 And in the night
 When I am alone
 May I come home now
 Would it be possible for me
 To ever come home
 Again

—Lawrence Christie

VVAW Merchandise

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(773) 569-3520
vvaw@vvaw.org

Below is a list of VVAW coordinators and national staff. If you need a speaker or someone to interview, please contact the National Office via email at vvaw@vvaw.org or leave a message at (773) 569-3520 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

Afghanistan: Another Rich Man's War Ends

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Vietnam and greeted the soldiers from the North as liberators.

"Vietnam has long been wielded as a catch-all term for US foreign-policy failures, yet the glib comparisons in this instance not only distort the past but also distract from the present suffering of Afghan civilians and the imminent danger they face. It also risks alienating the Vietnamese government. There is no morale equivalence between North Vietnamese forces and the Taliban."

"If we are making comparisons between 1975 and today, one might ask what it actually means for a superpower to lose a war—and who pays the price. The United States lost more than 2,400 lives in Afghanistan and around 58,000 lives in Vietnam. Alongside that were nearly a quarter of a million dead Afghans and somewhere between 1.5 and 3.5 million Vietnamese. The United States left both wars still the richest and most powerful country in the world; the Vietnamese inherited a shattered state and even today earn a fraction of US incomes."—Chris Humphrey, ForeignPolicy.com, September 1, 2021

Since 1967, VVAW has been engaged in the struggle. We have learned many lessons in that time. We have spent time observing how the Military Industrial Complex and the military operate. Vietnam was a wake-up call

for us and most of us have stayed awake.

When we came back from the war, we were embraced and challenged by a vibrant anti-war movement and culture. This led us to action. The draft increased the politicization of those conscripted and led to a revolt in the military by active-duty GIs. They helped sabotage the war-making machinery and helped to bring the folly to an end.

By 2004, vets coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan formed Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). Unfortunately, there was no widespread, significant peace movement, before, during or, after the invasion of Afghanistan. Very few were there to explain to the returning GIs who the real enemy was/is. There was no rebellion in the military. There was no draft. There was largely indifference. To modern warmakers, indifference is as good as fervent support.

Where do we go from here? This withdrawal should be a start, not an end. Congress just awarded the disgraced US Military over \$20 billion in additional funding! There are no conceivable reasons for having over 700, largely clandestine bases around the world. Are the enormous Navy fleets actually required to defend US shores? Of what use to the US taxpayers are the defective F-35, the ancient B-52 bombers, etc.? The trillions of dollars going to fatten the pockets of the 1% do not benefit

the students attending dilapidated schools, they don't repair the ancient and decaying infrastructure on our highways, nor do they protect the citizens from the massive hurricanes, floods, and fires.

The \$64 million pittance offered to Afghanistan for the Forever War is an example of the bestial indifference the rich war-makers have for their victims. Where are the reparations for Agent Orange, the mining, slaughter, and mass destruction in Vietnam? In the pockets of the 1%, that's where.

Instead of enriching CEOs and trillion dollar corporations, we need our tax money to mitigate Global Warming and fight the COVID-19 plague around the planet. We are sold a bullshit story about doing good in the world, while our real legacy is destruction, death, poverty, disease, and chaos.

We must expose the true costs of war and make the rich responsible for the injured in those wars. We've been saying this for decades. We also need to abolish bad discharges. The VA must be made available to all veterans injured while in the service, whether the wounds are physical or mental.

We must demand accountability from those who benefit from the wars the most—the war-mongering "professional" generals and their bosses in the Military Industrial Complex. The press must have free access to cover future wars and not rely on the loser generals as commentators.

We must remove the "emer-

gency" war powers of the president and the ability to deploy the National Guard in imperial wars. The decision to wage war must be restored to Congress. The public must be educated as to the real impact (and cost) of war. Removing "embedded" reporters and military censorship of the press might actually restore some public attention to these ongoing fiascos.

We know there is a lot to digest, but we have learned that real organizing is the only way to answer these questions and achieve these goals. We have been there and done that and pledged not to be fooled again. Our mission remains relevant and we hope our experiences can help stop future misguided wars.

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 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 another generation 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.



BILL BRANSON AND JOE MILLER ARE BOARD MEMBERS OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

WINTER ★ SOLDIER



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VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4



APRIL - MAY 1975

INDOCHINESE MARCH ON TO VICTORY !!



Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Some thoughts about the Afghanistan War and the Taliban takeover.

Concerning the 2,500 dead American military personnel. Concerning the very seriously wounded. Concerning those who weren't wounded until they came home where they were introduced to the ghosts of PTSD. These things are what some commentators use to put across their viewpoint that the troops signed up for a noble cause, for which they should be honored. And that honor should be in the form of kicking ass in the War on Terrorism. They say this makes it honorable to take vengeance against the perpetrators of 9/11 and the new generation of such people. Therefore we are not to look at the invasion of Afghanistan as anything other than noble. Anything else is disrespectful to the troops.

The problem is that there is a disconnect. Just because many thought the war was a good thing doesn't mean it had to be carried on indefinitely. Just because troops signed up for a noble cause doesn't mean it had to be continued. Just because civilians thought that the troops must be supported didn't mean that ending the war was wrong. Fighting meant something to the troops. That was sincere. However, policymakers used the sincerity and sacrifice of the troops to justify an endless war. The troops were honorable. The politicians who sent them were not.

There was another disconnect twenty years ago which enabled the Bush government to get us into this mess. That's when al Qaeda was in Afghanistan after 9/11. Bush sent some troops after them, but it wasn't

enough. Soon the enemy was gone as Bush turned his attention to Iraq while al Qaeda dispersed into Pakistan and other parts of the Middle East and Europe. The narrative in Afghanistan had changed to fighting the Taliban who were mainly interested in conducting terror at home, not exporting it. So you can't claim that the American military who sacrificed in Afghanistan (and Iraq) did so to bring down the perpetrators of 9/11. Those terrorists weren't there (or in Iraq).

And that is hard to take. The sacrifices deserve respect. Yes. Those who served there are worthy. You don't have to pretend that the cause was noble to justify respect. And worse. You don't need to put the troops in harm's way to justify a bad policy.

For many, it was a shock to watch the withdrawal from Afghanistan play out on television and social media. It reminded us of Vietnam. In one situation you had desperate Vietnamese clinging to the skids of departing choppers. Then you had desperate Afghans putting their bodies in front of a massive C-17 or hanging on the wings of the departing aircraft. The Afghan withdrawal took a turn for the worse when the suicide bomber killed our marines and many Afghan civilians. This made it seem worse than Vietnam. And there are the civilians who should have got out and didn't.

In the beginning, there was sympathy for the idea that we were responsible for the Afghans who had worked with us in various capacities. Over time this has been the situation in most wars. Our army leaves and abandons our friends. It happens in colonial wars and imperial wars. It

happens when a powerful force is in town to fight a war against terrorism or whatever you want to call it that day. If that army stays long enough there will be friends and allies in the population that get left behind, presumably to face something dire. In the Afghan debacle, the Taliban were thought to be perpetrators of the direst kind. Hence the outpouring of sentiment.

So we leave behind civilians. We have fought several unjust wars in other countries. Whether the wars we fight be just or unjust our civilian friends were abandoned, sometimes to imprisonment or execution. Of course no tears for the likes of Thieu or Ky or Karnak or Ghani. This kind always seems to get away.

Civilian victims have stories that are heart-wrenching. But that always happens. War is hell. That's a cliché that can be misused to avoid responsibility or evoke empathy or simplify a complex issue. I don't know exactly what hell is, but maybe this is what we need to say to describe the many images of war. War is hell, and part of that hell is what happens to civilians who chose the wrong side or who lived in the wrong place.

One aspect of war is that they are much easier to get into than to get out of. Afghanistan was slightly different in that it was bait and switch. We started by warring against those who pulled off the 9/11 attack. Easy. Then they left the country and left us with a face-off against the Taliban. Then getting out twenty years later indicated how hard it was to get out. If and when there is a break between wars it seems easier to make war because it

is an easy solution. There is a need for more vigilance and more skepticism. Anything less is disrespectful to our men and women who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Refresh my memory. The Vietnam Syndrome? Back when they talked about the Vietnam Syndrome it always confused me. From what I can gather (Wikipedia) it was a term referring to the fighting of American wars after there was so much domestic opposition to involvement in Vietnam. It also raised the question of whether we were able to win any wars. The first president who was confronted by the Vietnam Syndrome was Ronald Reagan. To prove himself, he invaded and won a war with Grenada. We had about eleven hundred and eighty-seven times the firepower of Grenada (not counting nukes), but at least we won that war. Showed them. Then George H.W. Bush took on Iraq in the first Gulf War. A little tougher than Grenada, but doable. And Bush was able to brag about laying the ghosts of Vietnam to rest, pointing the way for future wars. And Junior listened to dad. But something happened along the way. There was the Iraq War which hasn't totally been sorted out yet. And twenty years in Afghanistan? So the Vietnam Syndrome? Maybe some of those ghosts returned. It's not so simple. The getting in part was simple. The getting out part, not so much.



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

Afghanistan: Who's Responsible?

W.D. EHRHART

This article first appeared in The New Hampshire Gazette, September 10, 2021.

Surprise, surprise! *Fox News* and the Republican Party are blaming President Joe Biden for the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the horrific scenes of terror and confusion at Kabul Airport in the final days. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy—born in 1965—calls the evacuation "the biggest US failure in my lifetime" (Saigon fell in 1975. Well, I'm just sayin'.) Senators Josh Hawley and Marsha Blackburn are demanding that Uncle Joe resign. Endlessly mindlessly Talking Head Tucker Carlson called Biden "the supposed president of the United States."

Nevermind that Donald Trump brokered a treaty with the Taliban promising the withdrawal of US troops by last May. (Check out the great photo of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meeting with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Taliban's de facto political leader, in Doha, Qatar, in September 2020.)

Nevermind that George W. Bush invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 to destroy al Qaeda, but decided to take out the Taliban government while he was at it and create a US-inspired democracy. (I think that's called Mission Creep. Or perhaps Creepy Mission?)

Nevermind that 18 months later, "W" and his pals Dick "Dick" Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld decided to invade Iraq, which had nothing whatever to do with the attacks on 9/11 (the attackers were 15 Saudis, an Egyptian, a Lebanese, and two men from the United Arab Emirates), thus turning Afghanistan into a neglected sideshow. (But of course, Iraqis would benefit by ending up living in another

US-inspired democracy.)

Nevermind that beginning way back in 1979, a succession of US administrations, Democratic and Republican, actively supported, funded, and supplied fundamentalist Muslims—including Osama bin Laden, and many of those who became the Taliban—in their successful effort to overthrow a secular modernist Afghan government in a country whereby the late 1980s, 50% of university students, 40% of doctors, 70% of teachers, and 30% of civil servants were women. Read that again. Women! In Afghanistan. And the US helped to overthrow that government.

Then consider that, according to former *Baltimore Sun* reporter Arnold Isaacs's calculations, US direct aid to the Kabul government's security forces over the last 20 years comes to \$270,000 for each and every one of the 307,000 Afghan defense and security personnel supposedly on duty as of January 2021 to defend the country against the Taliban in the wake of a US withdrawal. That's over a quarter of a million bucks for every single soldier and policeman in Afghanistan. (We American taxpayers don't seem to have gotten much back on that investment.)

Isaacs further points out, based on figures provided by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, that the US—and that means you and me as taxpayers (at least those of us who actually do pay taxes, no need to name names here)—has spent \$20,925 on each and every man, woman, and child alive in Afghanistan today.

As Isaacs points out, "That's way more than the entire income of the vast majority of Afghans during that period, especially if you leave out those who got rich from corruptly siphoning a lot of that money into their



U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meeting with Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Doha, Qatar, September 12, 2020.

own pockets. Hard not to think we could have achieved a better result by just folding up some of those dollars in envelopes and handing them out to the population, including those subject to recruitment by the Taliban, to bribe them onto our side. That strategy apparently worked quite well for the Taliban this year."

I'm not surprised that the shameless Republicans who twice refused to convict a lawless grifter of impeachable offenses, who have described the January 6th insurrectionists as "peaceful protesters," "normal tourists," and "true patriots," who have obstructed and stymied every attempt to investigate the instigator of that attack or the administration he headed, who have engineered the most right-wing Supreme Court since Roger Taney ruled on *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857, would blame President Biden for what has unfolded in Afghanistan in the past month.

But what about the responsibility of those who engineered the overthrow of Afghanistan's moderate secular government? What about the responsibility of those who armed and

trained the fighters who would one day become al Qaeda and the Taliban? What about the responsibility of those who threw unimaginable amounts of money into a government they knew to be corrupt and ineffective? What about the responsibility of those who told the American people year after year that our efforts were making progress and bearing fruit?

I hate to get personal here, but does anybody with a functioning brain in his or her head really think this is all Uncle Joe's fault? I feel pretty confident in arguing that Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan is the first smart decision this country has made about Afghanistan in the past forty-two years.



W.D. EHRHART RECEIVED THE PURPLE HEART MEDAL, NAVY COMBAT ACTION RIBBON, AND A DIVISION COMMANDER'S COMMENDATION FOR HIS SERVICE AS A MARINE IN VIETNAM. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF *THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE: COLLECTED POEMS*.

Reflections on the Afghanistan Debacle

JOHN KETWIG

On Sunday, August 15th of this year, the Taliban took over Kabul and won the war in Afghanistan. The war with the United States and a few allied countries, that is. Years earlier, calling themselves the Mujahadeen, and funded by the US, they had won the war with Russia. As the Afghan government caved in, our TV news media showed helicopters coming and going from the American embassy like bees swarming around their nest, clouds of smoke rising from burning documents, and American personnel rushing to get onto a plane and fly home before the airport was overrun. Two suicide bombers killed 13 American GIs and about 168 Afghans and wounded hundreds more. Videos from that airport showed swarms of Afghan citizens hoping to escape to a place where their assistance to the American forces might not be a death sentence. A bevy of grim State Department spokesmen have insisted this was not another Saigon evacuation, but the resemblance was unmistakable. Finally, on August 30th, the headline on the front page of our newspaper announced "Longest US War Ends." Supposedly, we have evacuated 122,000 Americans and Afghans in the final surrender.

About a year ago, the *Washington Post* revealed a trove of documents indicating that our military and intelligence leaders had systematically misled four Presidents, congress, and the American people about the war in Afghanistan. Approximately 2,461 American soldiers died, along with an estimated 3,846 "contracted civilians." Can you say mercenaries? It is estimated that the Pentagon employs more than 600,000 contractor companies. Eighteen generals were sent to command the war, and none of them was successful... at winning the war. Most of them, however, were successful at gaining promotions, plush Pentagon offices, or seats on the board of directors of one or more defense contractors.

By coincidence, the UPS man just delivered my pre-ordered copy of a new book. *The Afghanistan Papers* by Craig Whitlock is basically the same inexcusable reporting as that *Washington Post* report of a year ago. The inner flap of the dust jacket reads: "The groundbreaking investigative story of how three presidents and their military commanders deceived the public year after year about the longest war in American history." I can't wait to read it, and if it contains

what I expect, I'll do a book review for the next issue of *The Veteran*.

It is a terribly sad commentary on the state of our country, and especially our military and seventeen intelligence agencies, that we Vietnam veterans have expected that our forces would lose this war from the very first. Over the past twenty years, we have seen the same empty bravado, shameful deceit, and blatant corruption that we witnessed in Vietnam. We can only conclude, sadly, that our country and its leaders have learned nothing from the tragedy of our war in Southeast Asia.

From books like Tim Bakken's *The Cost of Loyalty* and Danny Sjrursen's *Patriotic Dissent*, it is obvious that the bull-headed blundering and lack of humanity are still running rampant throughout America's military officers. Far too many of them are appearing on the network and cable news programs, resplendent in their uniforms with all the many multi-colored ribbons from waist to clavicle. Does anyone really believe there have been that many wars in one man's lifetime? Even America, the most warlike nation on today's globe, has not gotten involved in that many conflicts! It seems the Pentagon issues ribbons to generals for polishing their boots or brushing their teeth! And, to make matters worse, not a single one of the generals is apologetic! With 2,461 Americans killed, tens of thousands wounded or traumatized, and Afghan casualties in the hundreds of thousands, these greedy monsters dare to suggest that Biden has pulled us out too soon. Without batting an eye, they say it might have taken twenty more years before Democracy would flower in the arid deserts of Afghanistan. Really, General? And how much more personal wealth might you accrue in another twenty years?

Back on September 10, 2001, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney told a press conference that "according to some estimates we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions" by the Department of Defense. America's adversary, Rumsfeld warned, was not China or Russia. "It's closer to home: It's the Pentagon bureaucracy." Those statements might have attracted more attention in the press had not the next day's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon happened.

The Pentagon has never been audited, but cursory investigations have found that more than \$21 trillion

(approximately equal to our pre-Covid national debt!) are inexplicably missing, mostly due to "unsupported adjustments." The first-ever Pentagon audit failed in 2017, according to the auditors, because the records were "riddled with so many bookkeeping deficiencies, irregularities, and errors that a reliable audit was simply impossible." A *Forbes* magazine investigation found "stonewalling and concealment" and unsupported and unexplained adjustments totaling 54 times the level of spending authorized by Congress. In 2015 the army was allocated \$122 billion, but the Treasury Department made a cash deposit of \$794.8 billion to the army's account, an amount greater than the Pentagon's entire military appropriation for the year. At the same time, army records showed accounts payable, or bills due, amounting to \$929.3 billion. A July 2016 report by the Department of Defense's own inspector general found that the Pentagon's Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) based in Indianapolis could not account for \$6.5 trillion in 2015. Perhaps it was a mistake to undertake a "War on Terror" when what was really needed was a "war on error" in the halls of the Pentagon and the Capital.

A few years ago, West Point announced it was discontinuing its ethics classes. I can't help but wonder what they are teaching now. Tim Bakken, in his recent book *The Cost of Loyalty*, characterizes the environment at West Point as rife with fabricated admissions data (favoring sports stars), rampant cheating, epidemics of sexual assault, archaic curriculums, and shoddy teaching. The "good ol' boy" network of West Point grads is a very exclusive elite pervaded by chronic deceit, Bakken writes, and its insular culture elevates blind loyalty above all other values. Throughout the military, and especially among graduates of our three military academies, profiteers and crooks are never held accountable. In their self-congratulatory work environment, they feel they are due, and they rob the American people to the tune of trillions of dollars.

Recent surveys have indicated that our military is the most admired entity in America today. That's curious in a society that heaps so much value on winning the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Stanley Cup, or an Olympic medal. Our military has not won a meaningful conflict since World War II. As a Vietnam veteran, I appreciate the lower-ranked personnel, but not

the generals and admirals, or the heads of those contracted companies, all of whom are riding a gravy train that is carrying our country toward financial and moral bankruptcy.

Today, America has about 750 military bases scattered all over the planet. We spend more than a trillion dollars a year on militarism and war, more than the next eleven biggest-spending nations combined. The problem is, those dollars are buying immense quantities of death and destruction, blood and suffering. The world sees the US as the greatest threat to world peace.

In 2016, federal courts ruled that the all-male military draft was unconstitutional, so recently the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service requested input from the public, and 90 percent of the comments received opposed expansion of the draft. Regardless, the commission recommended that Congress adjust the Selective Service system to include females. We have seen increasing numbers of draft-age young people taking to the streets to demonstrate for Black Lives Matter, attention to the climate change crisis, defense of Indigenous land and water, an end to Israel's genocide in Palestine, and in favor of universal health care. As Vietnam veterans, we are aging, but we are encouraged by youthful awareness and activism in numbers we haven't seen since the early 70s.

American capitalism and militarism have become too corrupt and cruel to continue in a land that claims to be about freedoms and justice. The debacle in Afghanistan is just one more symptom of the decline and fall of the American empire. Progressive activism is the only humane answer to today's American atrocities. Hopefully, today's young people will be able to overhaul our government and take back authority, and trillions of dollars, from the Pentagon and all the merchants of death. It's obvious that our country can't afford to continue on the path it has followed since the end of World War II.



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

War Fever

Where's the vaccine
For war fever—
Addiction to bombing people
And places is so ingrained,
So many Americans can't abide
The end of war—
Don't leave Afghanistan!
It's the perfect forever war—
"This war will last 100 years!"
A Marine general roared
Two decades ago—
That didn't impress tribesmen
Who've been warring
With all comers
For hundreds of years

—Jan Barry

Being With You

Being with you meant living your nightmares
Wiping the sweat from your forehead as you lay sleeping
Taking the side of the bed between you and the door
Living with guilt
Living with after war silences
Faces of the ones who never came home
Living fast, moving fast, running fast
Trying to make up for no parades
Being with you meant knowing
You never stayed in one place too long
Loving you anyway
And that was the hardest part
Of being with you.

—Diane Ford (1971)



Dewey Canyon III, April 1971.

The Latest on SOVA – Save Our VA From Privatization

JOHN KETWIG

Guided by three members of his Mar-a-Lago social club, and with abundant funding from conservative billionaires, the Koch brothers (one of whom died last year), ex-President Trump and his band of merry anarchists tried valiantly to strip budget money from the VA (Veterans Administration) and redirect it to the for-profit medical industry. Ultimately, although they never stated it as such, their goal was to abolish the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) as it is a glaring example of the benefits to be derived from a system of universal healthcare. Nothing about these initiatives to undermine the VA is based upon providing better healthcare to veterans. In case you haven't noticed, the for-profit health industry, including the pharmaceutical industry, has been doing very well lately. Still capitalists to the end, they are driven by the "bottom line," or raw, unfeeling, all-American greed. Trump admires that and was determined to help them. During his administration, efforts included a massive effort to break up the unions that provide a significant portion of VA care.

Under Trump, a lobbying group backed by Koch funding, Concerned Veterans of America (CVA), roamed the halls of the House and Senate office buildings in Washington, spreading exaggerations and outright lies about the standards of care the VA provides. Based primarily upon the scheduling scandal at a VA Medical Center in Phoenix and a few other facilities back in 2014, CVA contends that veterans have to wait for too long to get appointments at VHA facilities. The Veterans Health Administration is the branch of the VA that provides healthcare for more than nine million veterans. The CVA solution to this problem is to give veterans "choice." The MISSION Act was a Congressional response to this campaign, allowing vets who

have to travel more than 30 minutes or wait more than 20 days for an appointment to seek healthcare outside of the VA system. In many cases, that's reasonable, but it was just a foot in the door for the profiteers who want to dissolve the entire VA system and direct more than \$240 billion a year to the for-profit, or private sector.

Yes, we're talking about real money here. The 2021 budget for the VA is \$241 billion, and the proposed 2022 budget is \$269.9 billion. The Department of Veterans Affairs is the second-largest federal agency by budget, second only to the Department of Defense, the Pentagon. The VHA provides healthcare to vets, but it is also one of America's premier research organizations. The VHA gave us the shingles vaccine, the nicotine patch, and the first implantable cardiac pacemaker. The VHA trains 70 percent of America's medical residents and 40 percent of all other health care professionals.

It is important to point out that all the medical professionals working for the VA are salaried. They do not have large office staff preparing insurance claims or attempting to get an insurance company's pre-approval for a needed medical procedure. While a for-profit general practitioner is expected to spend less than ten minutes with a customer, VA physicians are under no such restrictions. Independent researchers have found that the care provided by the VA is usually superior to that provided by the private sector. I suspect it is also far less expensive. Those office workers see the amount of money coursing through a for-profit medical facility, and they want their share.

Unfortunately, the situation regarding the privatization of the VA has recently become more complex, and more political. Keep in mind, any decisions will be made in Washington, a place where good decisions have been

in short supply in recent years. Our lawmakers rarely respond to common sense or proven performances. They respond to lobbyists, and especially the ones with large sums of money to contribute to upcoming election campaigns. A few years back, journalist Greg Palast wrote a book titled *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, and that about sums up the state of American government today. Well, a new lobbying organization has come to Washington, and it is flush with conservative cash. The Veterans 4 America First Institute (V4AF) is actively lobbying for passage of the Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act (GHAPS ACT, Senate Bill 1863 and, House Bill 4624) which contains several provisions that would send more veterans to the private sector.

The chief spokesman for V4AF is Darin Selnick, a former member of the Trump administration and a zealot when it comes to the privatization of veterans' care. Selnick was previously a spokesman for CVA, but that organization wasn't strident or successful enough, so he has helped to launch V4AF. Selnick's tactics are questionable at best. Like his former boss, he has utter disregard for the truth. His blog claims that veterans can't get timely appointments in the private sector because the VA is dragging its feet making appointments through the network of providers working under the VCCP (Veterans Community Care Program) which has been set up and administered by private insurance companies TriWest and Optum. Selnick issues many misleading memos that tend to misstate both the letter and the meaning of a variety of laws. Propped up by a hefty budget and access to the halls of power in Washington, Mr. Selnick is working feverishly to advance the outsourcing of VA care to the for-profit medical community

regardless of the quality of care that sector is capable of delivering, or the threats to veterans' health and well-being that might result.

In a 2017 survey of thousands of VA patients, 72 percent either "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that they trusted the VA to fulfill America's commitment to veterans. Also in 2017, a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) survey showed, in the words of their National Commander, "The overwhelming majority of respondents said they want to fix, not dismantle, the VA health care system."

The primary lobbying and information-sharing organization working to fix, fund, and fully staff the VA is the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute (VHPI). You can visit VHPI's website at www.veteranspolicy.org/our-work. They also send out regular updates that you can sign up for at www.veteranspolicy.org/subscribe. If you are a veteran or know a veteran, this situation is extremely threatening to his or her future health care. Please become familiar with what's going on, and let your Congressperson or Senator know how you feel about it. Ask them to oppose the Guaranteeing Healthcare Access to Personnel Who Served Act (GHAPS ACT, Senate Bill 1863 and House Bill 4624). The VA is far from perfect, but it can and should be fixed. That will require full funding, full staffing, and less interference from organizations that seek to sabotage its operations.



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.



VVAW at Armed Forces Day in New York City, 1980.

These Old Bones

These old bones
Stuck in the mud
These old bones
Seen plenty of blood
These old bones
Hurtin' ev'ry day
These old bones
About to go away
These old bones
Been to war
These old bones
Don't believe no more

These old bones
Heard all the lies
These old bones
Don't believe these eyes
These old bones
Passed the test
These old bones
Gonna take a rest

—Nowlin Haltom

The Importance of the "VA Advantage"

SUZANNE GORDON AND RUSSELL LEMLE WITH INTRO BY JIM WOHLGEMUTH

I could write about the great care I get from the VA from eyes to ears, from appendix to dermatology, from tick bites to explosive cysts, from the Agent Orange Registry to the Million Vet program, from Nashville to Seattle, but that is just me so I know this is long but here is a reprint of an article by Suzanne Gordon and Russell Lemle, published last March in the American Prospect, about the advantage we get from getting our health care from the VA and why it is so important that we get in the way of continued and relentless efforts to privatize.

This article first appeared in the American Prospect, March 25, 2021.

More than a decade's worth of scientific studies have established that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) delivers care that is not only equal, but often superior, to that available in the private sector. Although studies have consistently documented that veterans with cancer, hypertension, diabetes, renal failure, and mental-health problems get better care from the VA than non-veterans with private insurance or Medicare, this data trail was missing one piece of evidence. There was no apples-to-apples study that compared the outcomes of veterans getting care from the VA with care veterans receive in the private sector.

Now, we have the crucial evidence that should settle the debate about VA privatization once and for all. This, along with many other studies, should also become part of the arsenal of Medicare for All boosters, who often rely on examples of international health care systems to argue for the public funding of our own.

The latest study on VHA care was done by three academic economists from Stanford, UC Berkeley, and Carnegie Mellon University, and affiliated with the National Bureau of Economic Research. The study categorically demonstrates that veterans who get their care at the VA live longer during and after a medical emergency than those receiving non-VA care. This trend holds not just for the VA system overall, but at every single one of the 170 VA hospitals. The economists were so impressed with

the VA's results that they coined the term "the VA advantage" to describe it.

To uncover this "VA advantage," the economists analyzed seven-day, 28-day, and one-year outcomes of 400,000 emergency ambulance rides of veterans aged 65 and older who were "dually eligible," able to receive care at either a VA or non-VA hospital. Ambulance drivers independently picked whether to transport to a VA or non-VA. This quasi-random assignment of patients allowed a direct comparison of the effects of VA versus non-VA care on health outcomes.

The results in the VA and private sector could not have been more different. Veterans who were treated inside the VA system for an emergency had a 46 percent reduction in 28-day mortality. Wondering whether these results might fade over time, the researchers tracked the death rates every week after the initial ambulance ride. They found that the survival advantage remained stable for the entire year. This "VA advantage" was, importantly, as large for Black and Hispanic veterans as for non-minority ones—a pivotal finding that should inform the debate about the pronounced and long-standing health care inequalities that are rampant in the private-sector system.

What was even more impressive was the fact that the VA spends less than private-sector providers in producing such markedly better outcomes. The VA reduces per-patient cumulative spending at 28 days by \$2,548, approximately 21 percent less than the private sector. In short, the VA is more productive and achieves better outcomes at lower costs.

What produces this VA advantage over private-sector care, the authors ask? The two main factors are elaborate systems of care coordination, and "more effective information retrieval." Patients at the VA are not subject to what the authors describe as "the high degree of fragmentation across providers in the US private health care sector." At the VA, health care information technology makes it far easier for VA providers to communicate through a common electronic medical record (EMR). While a ten-year EMR modernization effort at the VA is going through some early growing

pains upon its initial deployment in Spokane, Washington (in part, because of the way the contract was awarded), as a whole the VA's system is far more comprehensive, robust, and efficient than at private-sector providers.

This first VA advantage is amplified by the second one—elaborate models of care coordination that extend beyond notes in a chart. Dr. Rebecca Shunk, a primary-care provider at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and co-director of its Center of Excellence in Primary Care Education, explains just how care coordination works at the VA during a medical emergency. "When one of my patients is admitted to an emergency room, the patient-aligned care team (PACT) in the ER immediately contacts the PACT team in primary care. Primary-care providers, nurses, and medical assistants are immediately notified that the patient has had a medical emergency, and get a discharge summary for the patient."

Whether the patient is in the hospital or at home, a member of the team calls the patient 48 hours after their ER visit, makes sure they get needed follow-up care, sets up appointments with primary-care providers and specialists, determines any post-hospital home care needs, and may even arrange video visits via the VA's well-developed telehealth system.

"Because we work in a coordinated system," Shunk continues, "if a patient has a cardiac or other problem we can contact subspecialists. We can tag them on our notes. We can call them by phone. We can consult with them in person or via an e-consult. None of this can be done with private-sector providers. In fact, it's hard to even get a patient's record from a private-sector provider."

The ultimate message of this study, combined with more than a decade's worth of other scientific evidence, is crystal clear: Privatizing VHA care by outsourcing more services to the private sector is not only irresponsible policymaking, but actually may cost veterans their lives. As the economists argue, VA privatization would "lead to both higher spending and worse health outcomes."

This is a message that both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, as well as the Biden administration, should take to heart. Rather than being privatized, the VA should be strengthened and expanded, with benefits available to all veterans and their families.

In fact, studies like these shouldn't only inform political and ethical debates about veterans' health care but also broader policy discussions about much-needed reform to our fragmented, market-driven system. You don't have to look to Canada, or the UK, or Sweden for an example of a government-funded health care program that works. There's often a homegrown one just around the corner. This isn't just a political talking point; it's an ethical imperative. If "VA advantage" coordinated care saves lives, improves health outcomes, and saves money, the same type of care should be available to all of us.

Back to Jim: So the next time you are in a waiting room at a VA and to you it is taking too long, or maybe the nurse did not respond quick enough or the Dr. did not show up when you expected, instead of complaining about the VA, complain that your CONGRESS persons are not doing enough to fix, fund and staff the VA.



JIM WOHLGEMUTH IS A VIETNAM NAVY VET 1968-72, GRANDFATHER, RETIRED TEACHER, AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEE. HE'S ALSO A CO-HOST OF VETERANS FOR PEACE RADIO HOUR OUT OF NASHVILLE.

SUZANNE GORDON IS A SENIOR POLICY ANALYST AT THE VETERANS HEALTHCARE POLICY INSTITUTE. HER LATEST BOOK IS "WOUNDS OF WAR: HOW THE VA DELIVERS HEALTH, HEALING, AND HOPE TO THE NATION'S VETERANS."

RUSSELL LEMLE IS THE FORMER CHIEF PSYCHOLOGIST FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM AND A SENIOR POLICY ANALYST AT THE VETERANS HEALTHCARE POLICY INSTITUTE.

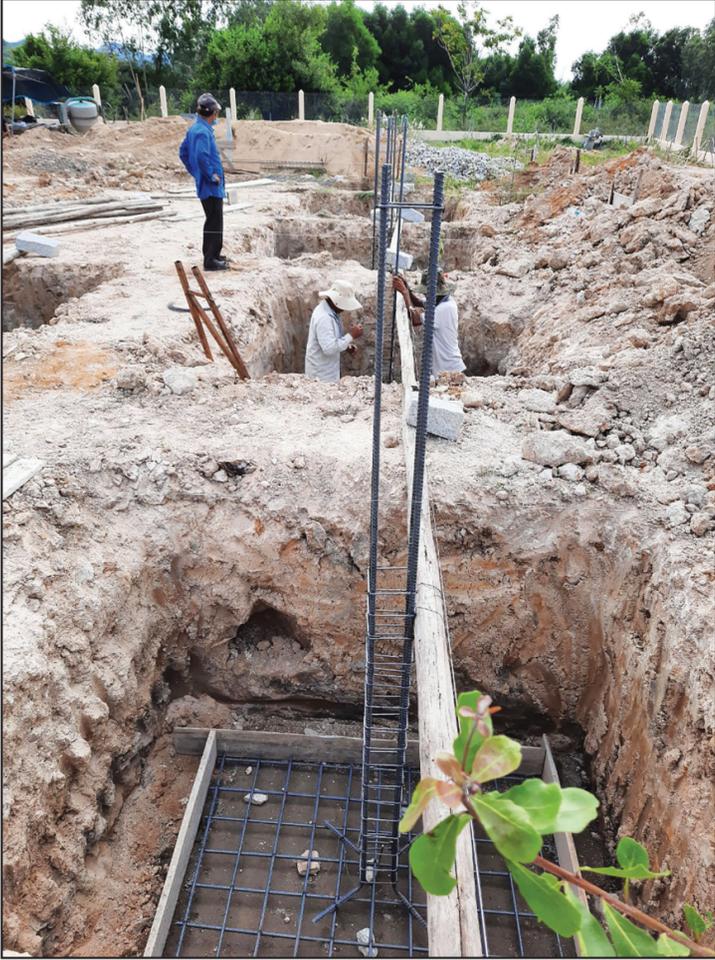
Taliban Inherits Tons of US Weaponry Left Behind



DANZIGER

Sep 2 2021 (9628)
The Rutland Herald Washington Post Writers Group

VVAW Library Project Begins Construction



Library foundation work - August 12, 2021.



August 25, 2021.



Panoramic view - September 1, 2021.



View from the south east corner as the roof is worked on - September 17, 2021.



THE VETERAN

SECTION B

Volume 51, Number 2

Fall 2021

Remembrance of Ann Bailey

JOHN LINDQUIST

*RIP Ann Lynne Bailey
December 7, 1948-April 30, 2021.*

Ann was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and grew up in Hinsdale, Illinois. In the early 1950s, her family moved to Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin. Her parents were Robert Bailey, a WWII Army Veteran who served in Europe, and Ruby Bailey, née King, who was active in theater and spent WWII in New York City. Both of them supported VVAW.

Annie joined VVAW in April 1971 at Operation Dewey Canyon III. From 1971 until her death, she worked hard in the Milwaukee chapter. The small group of women in VVAW grew and participated in all of VVAW's actions. In 1972 Ann was in Miami Beach. In 1973, she was in Gainesville, Florida for the Gainesville Eight trial.

At times she traveled and stayed with VVAW chapters to help with their work. The Karl Armstrong Trial is one example. She helped in the 1970s and 1980s with all the work around the Veterans Administration. She was involved in the non-violent takeovers, social events, and the opening of

Milwaukee's first Veterans Center. She brought the magic brownies.

The women of the veteran community were strong. They were involved in all of VVAW's activities. Ann was part of the women who put together the Agent Orange Dossier.

Annie was always at the campouts. In the kitchen, in the rolling tray, and she loved entertaining the kids with the pig's eyeballs.

Ann also worked at the city of Milwaukee's election commission and was a proud public employee from 1982 to 1999. Ann also said, "If you don't vote, don't complain."

We will always remember Ann L. Bailey. Her work to help end the war in Vietnam and her work on Decent Benefits for All Veterans was effective. Look at how great our VA system is today compared to 1970!

I would say "Annie you had a direct effect. Thank you. Rest in Peace."



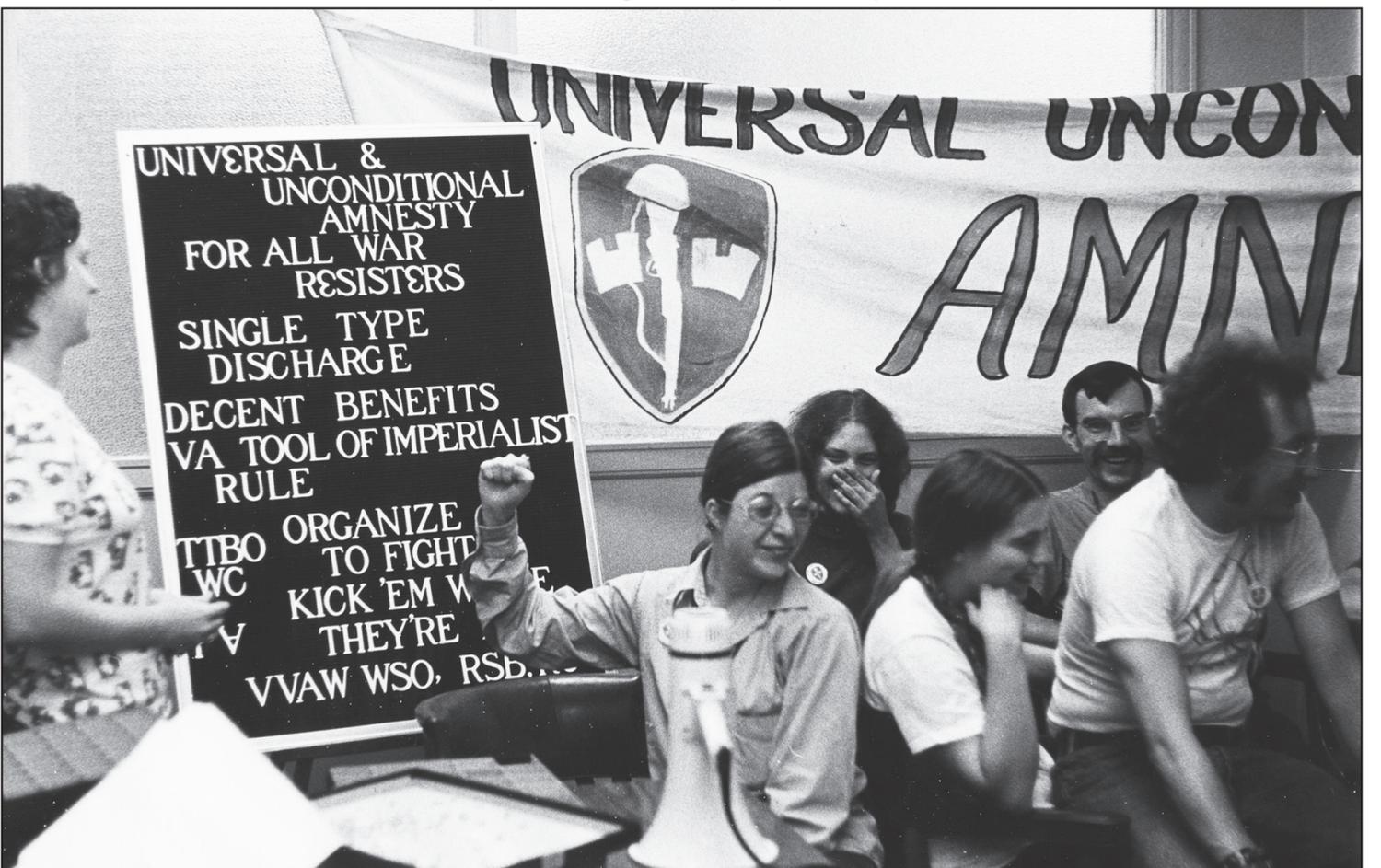
JOHN LINDQUIST IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER FROM MILWAUKEE, NOW LIVING IN ENGLAND.



Annie Bailey at Dewey Canyon IV - May 12, 1982.



Annie Bailey and John Lindquist at Dewey Canyon IV - May 12, 1982.



Annie Bailey at Chicago VA takeover; 1975.

Memories of Ann Bailey

JOHN ZUTZ

I met Bailey (and John Lindquist) for the first time in the spring of 1972. I was working as a nursing assistant at the Madison, Wisconsin VA Hospital (later named for William S. Middleton [he was still working there in '72]). There were many Vietnam vets working at the hospital, in many capacities as vets could get hired without any tests, etc.

I had participated in a number of anti-war protests after my Army discharge and somewhere I heard about a protest organized by veterans in Stevens Point, about a three-hour drive north of Madison. I had a car and I was interested in meeting other anti-war vets, so I recruited a co-worker and we traveled north.

The protest took place on the campus of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. There was a march, organized by Lindquist. Inside one of the buildings was Bailey, "manning" an education table with VVAW information available.

The table also included a 16mm film projector showing a film (I think

it was *Winter Soldier*). I had read about the hearings, but seeing the faces and hearing the voices was still a shock.

I signed up for the mailing list and went on my way.

I never got involved with VVAW because one of the first mailings was a newsletter. Splashed across the front page was the headline, "Don't Join VVAW." With the explanation that the organization had been infiltrated by the FBI and membership lists were compromised. I felt my federal job would be in jeopardy so I never formally joined and I never connected with the Madison Chapter.

The next time I saw Bailey was ten years later, in 1982.

I was recuperating after surgery at the Milwaukee VA which removed a large tumor and half of my colon. I had read a little about that "Agent Orange" stuff, and that it could cause cancer. So, I was looking for information. Could Agent Orange be the cause of my cancer? The doctors at the VA would tell me nothing. I looked here, and I asked there. Nothing. Finally, I



Annie at VVAW campout in 1985.

stopped at the Milwaukee Vet Center. One of the counselors referred me to VVAW. He gave me an address and I made contact.

And there was Bailey. Who could forget that face? And that voice?

She was working with Muriel Hogan on the information for the Agent Orange Dossier. Just what I was looking for. I pitched in and helped with the layout and carried the finished product to the printer, and back.

I met other members and became active in the chapter. I drove Bailey to Chicago and sat in on the meeting with the lawyer representing us (and ultimately selling us out) in the Agent Orange lawsuit. By that time the fights with the VA were down to a simmer. After a while, the biggest activity was the July 4 campout.

Which leads me into the story of what may be Bailey's most (in) famous act.

Today people would call the campout a retreat, and it was therapeutic. Veterans came from all over, the east coast, the west coast, the south, the north. The campground was a safe place (with a few exceptions), where guys could talk smart, act dumb, and still be supported by the community. There were instances of overindulgence, occasionally someone would fall into the fire, but usually, the effects were dissipated after a few hours of sleep.

Hidden down in the dell, the

communal kitchen was the women's domain. Bailey was the Sergeant Major. She made things work, and she was used to having her orders followed. As the years passed, the kids got older and less respectful. On this occasion, they were running around, acting wild. She tried to slow them down without them even noticing. She decided that she was going to get their attention.

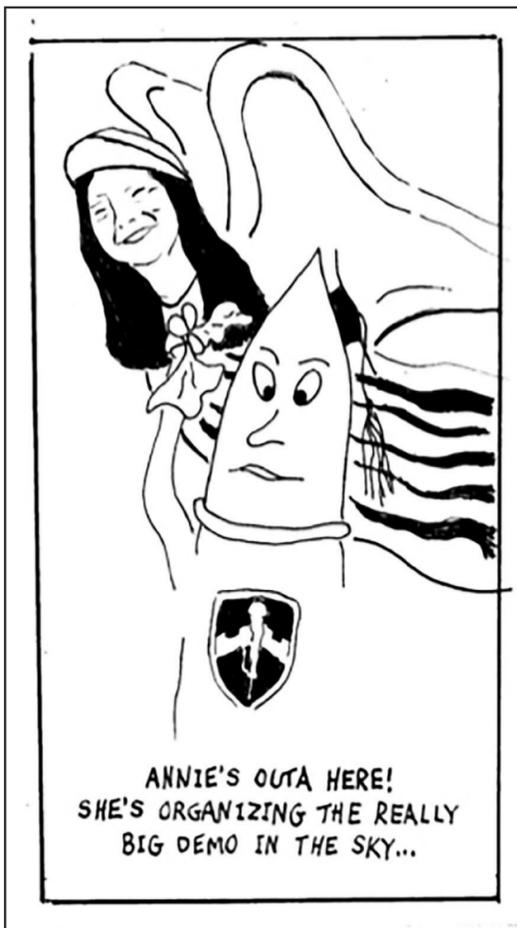
We were cooking a pig on a spit, so she gathered all the kids together and proclaimed that she was going to eat the eyeball. Of course, nobody believed her, but as the cooking progressed she kept a close watch.

As we were cutting the roasted pig she gathered the kids around once more. She demanded the eyeball and popped it into her mouth. As the kids gasped in disbelief, there were some of the older ones who suspected some sleight of hand. They wanted to see it. So, she stuck out her tongue, which was wearing the eyeball like a glove, with the iris to the front. It looked like the eye was peering out of her mouth.

I don't know if the kids behaved any better, but she had their attention. Years later I ran into one of those kids in a work situation. He still remembers that day clearly.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



Ring Around the Red Squad: Memories of Annie Bailey

JOE PETZEL

I was the VVAW coordinator for Northern Illinois and Iowa. I can't remember the year, I think it was 1972, but we were hosting the national meeting of VVAW. The large meeting was in the Wobbly Hall on Lincoln Avenue in Chicago. Yes, the Wobbly Hall, the same Wobblies who were so important in struggles long before VVAW was in existence.

John and Annie attended, as did many of the members and supporters from Milwaukee and Wisconsin. I always loved being around John and Annie. Annie in particular was down-to-earth, friendly, strong, and fearless.

Those national meetings were great but after a couple of days, everyone was tired.

I had left the hall to get something and upon arriving back I saw members of the Chicago Red Squad taking pictures of people entering and leaving the meeting. They also were writing down the license plate numbers of those who parked on Lincoln Avenue.

I recognized two of the Red Squad cops. They had arrested me at a demonstration when Spiro Agnew visited Chicago. After arresting me they worked me over in an elevator at the police headquarters in Chicago. I became a member of a lawsuit against the illegal practices of the Red Squad. We were victorious in the lawsuit and the Red Squad was officially disbanded. Notice I say officially. Whether the Red Squad was truly disbanded I



Annie Bailey in action.

do not know.

I was upset. Here we were, veterans who had served, and we were being surveilled as we exercised our constitutional rights of free assembly and free speech. I entered the hall and loudly said to Annie that the red squad was outside the hall.

She yelled, "Let's go play ring around the Red Squad!"

About 10 of us ran outside. The 4 cops were inside their unmarked car. We held hands and circled the car chanting, "Ring around the Red Squad." You could see the steam rising from the red faces of the 4 cops. Someone yelled, "They are parked in a no parking zone."

I can't remember his name, he was a former Marine, from a southern

state. He said let's write them a people's ticket. He scribbled something on a piece of paper and began to put it under the windshield. The cops jumped out of the car, one of them pulling out his revolver and putting it under the chin of the ex-marine telling him he would blow his brains out if he put the ticket under the windshield wiper.

One of the cops gently moved the hand of the cop with the revolver away from the VVAW member. No arrests were made.

We left and marched back into the hall. An argument ensued in which some VVAW members chastised us for this guerrilla theater. Both Annie and I argued back.

To me, that was Annie, dedicated, fearless, but usually, when I was

around her she was finding humor. There was a way she was absolutely serious and at the same time found the absurd in many situations. I laughed a lot around her, always feeling comfortable.

Ring around the Red Squad we chanted, a huge smile across her face. I would have followed her anywhere.



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

Annie Bailey: In Her Own Words

AS TOLD TO RICHARD STACEWICZ

Excerpts from Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War by Richard Stacewicz.

(pages 72-75)

Annie Bailey had already been active in the anti-war movement before joining VVAW in 1971.

I was born in Cincinnati and raised in Milwaukee. My dad was an industrial designer and my mother did trade show coordinating and other advertising stuff. They were well-educated working-class.

The thing that was most important, on a consistent basis, was that the family spend time together doing something fun and learning something at the same time. We went to museums. We went to the art center. We went driving out into the country. My father would take us out to these historic buildings just to look at. My father always said, "Keep your eyes wide open. Never focus on one thing; you'll miss something. Hold your head up. Always look around you. It only goes by once."

My mother lived by Doctor Spock. They had very good instincts. They knew what they didn't want.

What do you mean?

Well, sort of uptight, never question authority, never speak to your parents about money, never question their judgment, they're the adults, you're the kid....

They allowed that?

We'd get into it, but we had four rules. They never changed: You treat everybody like you want to be treated; don't touch anybody else's stuff without permission; do what you're told if you don't know any better; and always tell the truth. If you broke one of those rules, there were serious consequences. It wasn't beating, although occasionally we did get spanked. The punishments were more like a lecture. My father could go on and on and on forever. He would make you sit there and listen. To make sure you were listening, he'd make you repeat it back to him. He was intense.

We started out being religious. We went to North Shore Congregational. I was already into the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Our church was involved in going down to Selma and Montgomery for the civil rights stuff. Jim Groppi was here and he was a priest here who had a big parish in the inner city, and he was plugged into the civil rights movement and he started the open-housing marches back in 1963. Politics crept into our church, and a bunch of families left when they fired our minister for ragging on rich people about filling the plate on Sundays and then going to their defense-contract corporations. The whole family walked out. That was it for organized religion. That was the start of my politicization.

I also have an uncle who's a communist. He gave me my first subversive literature on Eugene Debs in junior high school. He was a college professor. He came to visit my folks and he found me moping. He says, "What's the matter?" "I have to do a book report and don't even have a fucking book." He throws me this little paperback, a biography of Eugene Debs. He came through. I got into reading about stuff.

At the time when I first started participating, it was just to get into circulation with people who were away from my community that I was in. Whitefish Bay was very closed and affluent. My parents spent a lot of time trying to keep up with the Joneses. At that time, they believed there was a middle class. They understand now that that was all an illusion. But they bought into it hook, line, and sinker. My mother used to tell me to go to

college and get a rich husband and you'll never have to work a day in your life. She regrets that now.

When I went to school they were saying: Just be glad because you're going to be a lawyer or a doctor. I'd say, "No way! I'm not going to college, I hate school." I loved to read. I loved to learn, but you had to go through so much bullshit to get to that point. That's what I didn't like. The rules and regulations, but also the flimflam teachers who didn't really give a shit, and the administrators who would screw things up, or the other students who were making what you were wearing and how big your tits were more important than what was in your head. If you didn't go with their line, then you were rejected. You were a misfit. You were an outcast. That happened to me, and I just wore it like a badge. The daydreams they were trying to sell me at Whitefish Bay high school were not real to me.

I moved away from my family and found something else to do. I started "straying" (sarcastically) when I was about fourteen. I was attracted to older kids. I lived in group houses, collectively. Everybody contributed whatever they could. I started hanging around the city-rock and roll, anti-war, open housing-and all that stuff was real to me.

What was real about it?

Well, because it was multi-cultural and there's a lot of guys [laughs], and girls love guys—especially older guys, college guys. Of course, I never stopped there, I went down to Northwestern train station on Friday nights looking for sailors from Great Lakes. During those times when I wasn't with my family, there were a lot of things that they had told me that proved to be true countless times. Those kinds of things helped me, when I was away from them, to make better judgments. Their growth tied into my growth. When I left the family fold and went out on my own, they opened themselves up to my ideas and my lifestyle. They didn't like it, but they really tried hard to learn what I was experiencing.

How did all of this tie into Vietnam?

I had a really good friend who was a black guy from Cleveland who was stationed at Great Lakes. He was my first official date. I didn't tell my parents he was black. I had him come to pick me up at my house. I just wanted to see what they would do. They were great. They were fine about it. But two days after he turned eighteen, they sent him to Vietnam. He was killed about three months later. I lost my first friend in Vietnam in 1963. It was the summer before I was going into high school.

I knew war sucked. I knew how unnecessary it was. My dad was anti-war from just having been in World War II. He was a master sergeant. I'd say, "What did you do in the war, Daddy?" And he'd say, "I don't want to talk about it." My father had already told me it never solved anything, and it brings out the worst in people. He saw Americans abusing German prisoners. He saw what happened in little Italian towns. You go in, you find the best house in town, kick everybody out. You take it over, trash it, and do whatever you want with it. When I lost my first friend in Vietnam, we started discussing the implications of the war.

The anti-war movement and the civil rights movement were so mixed up together. I hung on every word from Dr. King all the time, and he was anti-war. Then good old Muhammad Ali ... Cassius Clay changed his name and refused induction. I went to an anti-war demonstration at UWM (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee) and met Groppi and some other people.

All this kind of stuff was going on and influencing me. The fair-housing marches were going on in the mid-1960s, SDS was forming on our campus here, and it was all kind of mixed up together. I got into the social whirl of the community. I went to demonstrations, and once I was there I was into it, but I wasn't an active person on planning committees and things like that. But I was also active in other ways. We were smuggling draft resisters from Chicago to Detroit and through Windsor into Canada. Because I was younger, I couldn't be charged with a federal crime. When you were underage, you had to do a little more underground stuff. You had to take more risks.

My attraction to veterans was less political; it was more practical. I was tired of having my boyfriends ripped away from me, being drafted and killed, gone and never seen again.

(pages 273-276)

Annie Bailey and John Lindquist

Annie Bailey (AB): We were active in VVAW since May 1971. Right away, we picked up on the alienation between a lot of vets and their families—guys who were married, came back, and were having a lot of problems with their wives, or with their families. That's where we started, right from the very beginning. Within six months of forming VVAW, we had a family night.

John Lindquist (JL): I started being a veterans' counselor in 1972. I worked with vets on the street to make 20 hours a week as my part-time city job as a student under the Nixon Emergency Employment Act, the Veterans Aiding Veterans program. They give me 5- by 7-inch cards with names and return addresses of people. I called them, rang their doorbells, and explained their benefits to them; [I'd] see if they have any problems and refer them.

AB: He also wore his VVAW button everywhere.

JL: And recruited a bunch of people; but I didn't care, though, whether I recruited them or not. You could tell when you ran into some right-wing dudes. I just wouldn't talk politics with them.

AB: We discovered early on that Vietnam veterans were militantly anti-organization. The more organized you wanted to be, the less response you got.

JL: It's a flow-through organization. Vets come in, have a good time, do some demos, find it too political, and leave; or vets come in to do their thing and leave. Some come in and stay for a long time and become leadership. We don't care what you want to do. You put in what you feel comfortable with. That's our model, at least here.

You're seeing the flavor of Milwaukee. It's been like an extended family. The strength of this chapter for the longest time was its "extended familiness."

What else were you doing?

JL: We were doing every anti-war demo; guerrilla theater, there

was a speakers' bureau, a slide show, discharge upgrading, ... rap groups. ... VVAW had already started the first rap groups with Lifton. McCloskey suggested that we consolidate a national clearinghouse on PVS (post-Vietnam syndrome), so I compiled the PVS library. At the same time I was putting together the library, Jack was putting together rap groups in San Francisco ... and Jack played an instrumental role in the DSM III printing of this as a disability.

DSM III was the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition (1980), published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). It was in this edition that APA first officially recognized post-traumatic stress disorder as affecting combat veterans.

AB: We declared war on the VA. The war on the VA was our shining light.

JL: We took over the VA about every other month. ... We were in the newspaper and on television more often than the mayor.

Why take over the VA?

JL: Because the treatment was so bad. We didn't even have methadone for people who were strung out on heroin.

Nobody else was saying anything about these issues?

JL: Not locally. Not the traditional vets. There was no other Vietnam veterans' organization. There were all the traditional ones.

(pages 399-400)

Annie Bailey: The more political vets in the 1970s, who were more firmly against the war, would join VVAW, and through working with a chapter where they were, would meet other groups of people doing other things in the community. Once they got over their "veteranness" and started blending back into the community, got a job, got married, and started having a family, their priorities would change. They were still against the war, but they were active in their unions, they were into the food co-ops—you know—so in that way VVAW was a transitional organization. Thousands and thousands of guys came through the organization and readjusted in VVAW and went on to other organizations.

We just had a friend who hasn't been active for a long time. He's been on the Board of Directors of Jobs for Peace for years. He just got elected as county supervisor. He's a perfect example of someone who comes to meetings and does some big demos and starts to feel normal again and then gets out there and starts his own life.

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

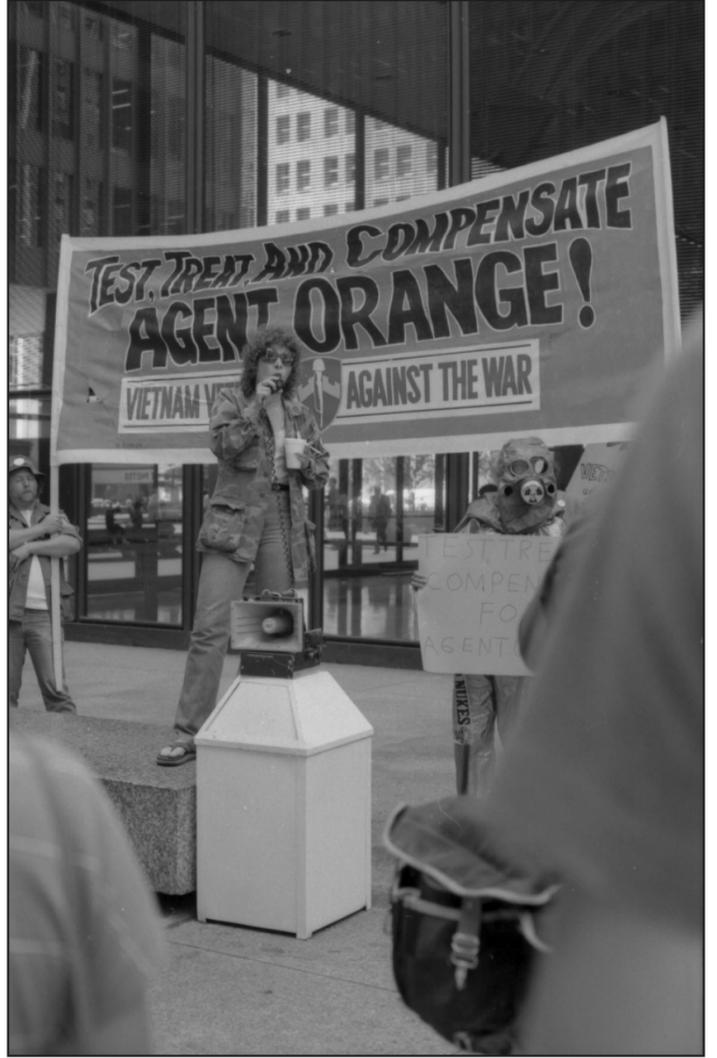


Annie Bailey at VVAW 25th Anniversary in New York, 1992.

Annie Bailey



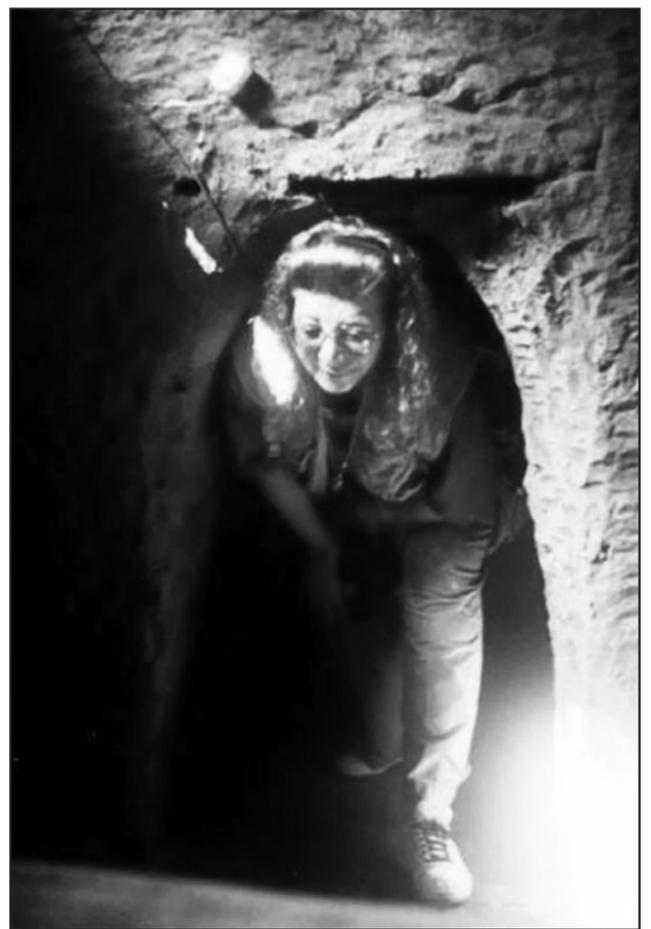
Annie Bailey at Gainesville 8 demo - August, 1973.



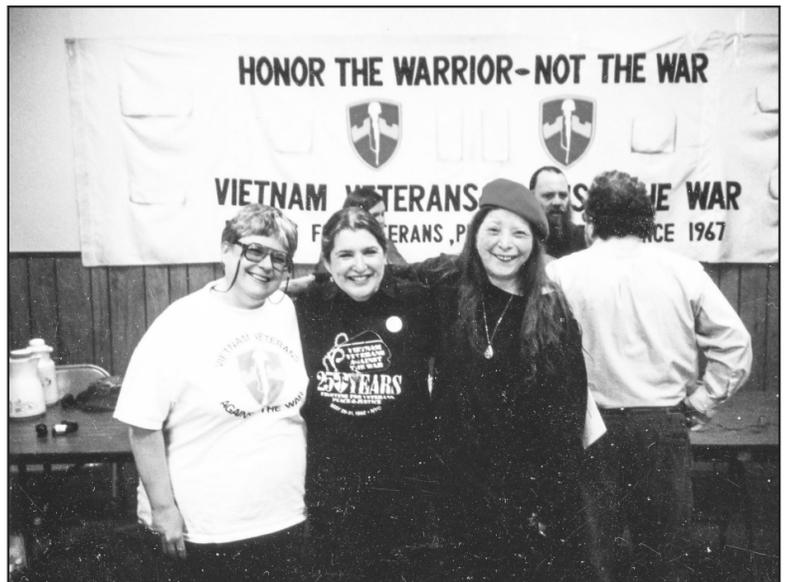
Annie Bailey at Agent Orange Settlement Hearing in Chicago - 1984.



Annie Bailey at Operation Dewey Canyon IV, Washington, DC, May 12, 1982.



Annie Bailey in the tunnels of Cu Chi - VVAW Couples Trip to Vietnam - 1991.



The 3 Annies at VVAW 30th Anniversary in Chicago (Luginbill, Hirschman, and Bailey) - 1997.



Marty Webster and Annie Bailey at VVAW 40th Anniversary in Chicago - 2007.



Annie Bailey at VVAW 40th Anniversary party in Chicago - 2007.

Uniforms, Rage, Medals and Citations

JOE PETZEL

This story is how I remember these events. It always surprises me when I tell a story and someone else who was part of the story disagrees with things. To my brother, Tommy, and long-time friend Jeff, I hope I did you right.

We came home from the war in various states of physical, emotional, and spiritual turmoil. Many never returned. When discharged they gave us a new dress uniform to fly home in. Some of the airlines gave a returning vet half off on a ticket, but wearing the uniform was required. I refused. I swore I'd never wear it again. No more wars for me. No more military madness. I was not proud of my service in Vietnam.

I enthusiastically wore parts of my uniform a few years later while serving my country as a Vietnam Veteran Against the War. This was really serving my country. It was a bright and shining lie that I served my country in that war.

I held a simmering rage, which would explode when I perceived someone trying to establish authority, control, or power over me. The Army lifers and officers had completely burned me out with their incompetence, self preening, and narcissism. I had many opportunities to project my rage toward others, particularly with police officers.

Many Chicago Police Officers also had their own projected rage. In 1969, I was a male with long hair, the recipient of that rage. There were quite a few meetings of my rage and theirs. I had no fear of the police; they had none toward me. Their power, authority, and disdain toward "hippies" were the perfect screen for me to project my rage. I bristled when called a hippie.

Remember the Democratic Convention in Chicago, 1968, and the riots that occurred? Otto Kerner, a former governor of Illinois, was appointed to head an investigation into the events of that tumultuous few days. The commission's findings were that a series of "police riots" occurred. The police had rioted and took out their rage on the protestors.

In Chicago, lines had been drawn. The police and many of the people of Chicago had a rage toward the hippies, peaceniks, radicals. If you were a male with long hair you often put your safety at risk while moving through the city. I have numerous stories of these confrontations.

I became active in protesting the war, economic injustice, racism, and other social ills. I was vocal and had numerous confrontations with police

officers who directed their disdain towards me or those around me. I didn't feel my fear in these confrontations. Notice I didn't write courage. Courage is action in the face of fear. At that time I had learned to distance myself from my fear. I just rarely felt it. Some of them began with me causing the confrontation.

This is a story of one confrontation. This story happened over 50 years ago. I hope I remember it the way it happened.

Bart Savage, Jeff Hillier, and I were close friends. We were brothers, active members of the Chicago Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Bart had a VW bus painted camouflage. On both sides of the van was the large VVAW logo. Bart was fearless, driving around Chicago advertising our opposition to the war, being stopped by the police often. In 1969 many Chicago police officers were overt in their hatred toward members of our organization. In a future story, I'll write about the time 4 officers, after arresting me, beat me up in an elevator at the police headquarters.

Jeff was driving the van in the southern suburbs, I think visiting his mother. He was pulled over, not for speeding or reckless driving, but for driving while against the war. His long hair was another reason for the stop. In many of the Chicagoland areas, I would be confronted about the length of my hair. A few times I had to defend myself physically. I never was quiet when confronted with statements like, "Is it a boy or a girl, I can't tell.", or "Hey sweetie, how about a kiss." The fools who said these things were often very surprised at my responses.

The police searched the van and Jeff, finding a small bottle with a few aspirins. The bottle was not marked and they arrested Jeff for possession of, I hope I remember this right, LSD.

He called me to get bailed out. I was with my younger brother Tommy. He was around 16 years old.

At the police station, attempting to bail Jeff out, I was met with the same tired comments about my hair. There was a visceral sense of their hatred toward me. I was wearing the uniform blouse I wore in Nam, a green top with the insignias of the unit I was with, the 3rd of the 5th Armored Infantry, the Black Knights on one arm, and the VVAW insignia on the other. They were clearly seething at seeing this. This was a common response. Many people could not believe a "real" vet would be against the war. Another

reason was they felt we were betraying the uniform we wore in combat. and the soldiers who were currently in Viet Nam.

A couple of years later a World War II vet disgustingly told me that, "We won our war, you lost yours."

After the police officers' comments, they ignored me and my brother. I had come to bail Jeff out and was being ignored.

"Someday the people will have the guns and the pigs won't. Things will change", I said loudly to my brother. I am in no way justifying what I said. My fearless rage was up. I wanted a confrontation. I did not consider what danger I was putting my younger brother in. I am embarrassed by this. Of course, the police officer's anger rose. He pulled out his revolver and pounded it down on the desk between us, yelling, "Go ahead, go for it!"

The other officers in the room froze, hands to their sides. I sarcastically replied, "If I grab that gun you all will kill me. "

A silence of 5 seconds, that lasted for an eternity ended as the other officers grabbed me from behind and threw me out of the station, locking the door behind them.

My younger brother, startled by this eruption, told the officer when he returned, "Now I know why they call you pigs." The officer grabbed him by the neck and pushed him into the cell with my friend. I own that I was creating as much chaos, fear, anger as the police were. We co-created that exchange.

A couple of years after my discharge I met a vet, Phil, who belonged to the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He and I were students at the University of Illinois in Chicago. I was active in anti-war activities on the campus. He asked me to join and I immediately knew I should.

After a few meetings, I volunteered to speak to a high school class. Thus began a two-year journey of speaking out against the war. I lectured at schools, churches, meetings, demonstrations, city corners, peoples' homes. I participated and later organized demonstrations, fundraisers, meetings, and recruitment of fellow vets. I became the Regional Coordinator for Northern Illinois and Iowa. I led the Chicago Chapter, a very active group of Vietnam Vets. I was arrested three times and beaten in a police station's elevator. Later I was the proud owner of 300 pages of FBI and Chicago Police undercover

files on my activities. I read them with pride, a feeling I do not have about my military service.

There was safety in participating with young men who carried the scent of war. We were all trying to make sense out of our lives that had lost the gravity that held most others in place. The gravity that held our lives in place before the war no longer was there. We were free-floating, holding onto each other, raging at the war machine and indifference. We created our own gravity that held us together. A new kind of gravity of shared, determined struggle to bring the truth of that war to others, a gravity of shared pain, guilt, despair, and hope.

I loved almost every minute of my participation in the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I knew many people admired us, hated us, and were indifferent to us. VVAW saved many of us; it saved me from a despair of the spirit. It was a huge growth step in my spiritual journey, even though I never considered it in those terms at the time.

At one demonstration in Washington DC, we returned the medals and citations we had earned in the war. No one would accept them so we threw them onto the steps of the Capital.

Twenty-five years later, I was visiting my family in Chicago. We were having a large dinner. My beloved grandmother, Mamaw, age 93 sat next to me.

Out of nowhere, she exclaimed, "I want to apologize to you. We should have listened to you back then, Joey, you were right."

I was confused and asked her what she meant. "About that war, we should have listened to you. You were there and you knew. We didn't listen and should have listened. I'm sorry. Thank you for speaking up."

I thanked her and began to cry. I cry as I write this. My sweet grandmother, whom I thought the world of was thanking me for my service in the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, an "army" I am proud to have served in.

I no longer have the citations I received in the army. I gave them back. I "wear" my grandmother's words ever since she spoke them. This is the citation I am proud to wear, will never forget, or want to return.



JOE PETZEL IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, WHO SERVED AS REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR NORTHERN IL AND IOWA VVAW, AFTER RETURNING FROM THE WAR.

Ellsberg Lesson

BILL JOHNSTON

Our latest failure of US military-foreign policy "nation building" in Afghanistan certainly reminds us of another—Vietnam! Two fiascoes in a row. Two countries and cultures the United States had no understanding of and two civil wars we had no business in.

Thousands of lives lost—billions of dollars wasted for nothing. Corporate America again pushing for profits for the military-industrial complex and new cheap labor markets. Guess we won't be seeing any hats or t-shirts "Made in Afghanistan"? Not to forget gaps in the lives of thousands of veterans like myself and the 58,000 (my 19-year-old brother Tim) who did not come home.

I recall an instructive eye-opening experience I had in 1979. I was a Political Science graduate student at Western Washington University. From time to time the department would invite a celebrated luminary to be "fed to the graduate students!" On this particular occasion, it was Daniel Ellsberg the author of *The Pentagon Papers*. In essence, the papers were a tell-all of the idiotic wrong Vietnam

policy from beginning to end.

I started my question with a statement. I told him I had bought a book off the rack at a Safeway Store titled *A Vietnam Reader*. The book claimed no point of view—it just laid out information and documents about the history and culture of Vietnam. Soon after I left for Air Force Basic Training in May 1966 and did not get back to the book until I was stationed at Amarillo Air Force Base in Texas some months later.

By the time I finished "the reader" based on what I had read I knew we could never win the war in Vietnam. I was against the war from that point on. "Why," I asked Ellsberg, "Couldn't President Johnson or someone close to him pick up a copy of that book (I know Safeway is in Washington, DC) while shopping for milk or a loaf of bread on their way home after a day at the White House.

It just doesn't work that way he answered and went on to explain how information gets to the president from first-hand experience. "This is how it works, every morning, he said, "the president gets three-ring briefing

binders. The binders and information are put together by the staff who have developed the policy in the first place.

If they were to present any information showing the path they were on in Vietnam was going wrong, they were the people held accountable. Since the motto of bureaucracy is "Kill the Messenger" to fault the policy was to write your own ticket out the door. It was the reason Ellsberg felt he had to steal top-secret documents and release them to the public and the press. Americans had been lied to for years.

He said the people who advise the president do not pick up books off the shelf at Safeway and read them; they go to professional think tanks. Often where they originally worked. These think tanks have an agenda and they feed the think tank point of view into the system. To disrupt this scam is to court your downfall.

No doubt the same bureaucratic information factory was at work with the Afghanistan disaster. All an issue needs is an "angel" to push it. A perfect example was the Iraq invasion. The oil company executive turned Vice President, Dick Cheney, saw the

oil in Iraq as a resource American corporations could control. So recruit some think tank (the Heritage Foundation) to invent "Weapons of mass destruction" and invade to solve a problem that didn't even exist! As usual – Vietnam – Iraq – Afghanistan—those who got us into these murderous messes will never answer for them. The ruling military-industrial complex elite wins again.

Today there is another book policymakers of both parties should pick up and read. It is not a new book but still one with a message for Americans: Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Ross Douhat cited it in his *New York Times* article recently. "Our hubris and our accelerating imperial decline ... our already yawning ideological divides, encourage the feeling of crackup and looming civil war."



BILL JOHNSTON WAS A SGT. IN THE USAF, 1966-70 AND IN THE OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE.

A Crucible Endured

JOHN CRANDELL

October 20th, 2020: Once again I've voted for that young Captain Willard—for president, done wrote in the actor's name, just as I did four years ago. It is now two weeks before the 2020 presidential election and as a resident of a state that'll vote heavily for Joe Biden, I can afford to vote for anyone I want, vote in honor of the actor who rendered one of cinema's greatest unrecognized performances, who was not nominated for an award for his contribution to *Apocalypse Now* and it remains thoroughly impossible to imagine that flick without his presence in it. Out of the question, period.

That film premiered in the US in mid-August 1979, both in New York and at the Cinerama Dome near Sunset and Vine in Hollywood. Colonel Kurtz had been pulling into the driveway next door where I lived in a narrow canyon a few blocks from Pacific Coast Highway north of Santa Monica. As he stepped out of his champagne Caddie to go in and visit his sister, he'd look up into the forest of Eucalyptus enhancing the north slope of Rustic Canyon, the same view that had been reminding me of Vietnam. His sister had been blacklisted during the red scare and was not immune to accosting me, an aspiring landscape architect living above Judge Pastor's back garage, for tossing an occasional rock into Rustic Creek while planting a meadow of crimson red Azaleas. Six months hence, a monsoon caused the canyon to flood. Pets, front yard landscapes, chaparral and a brand new Mercedes were swept towards the Pacific. I warned her before it hit and she wouldn't listen, said she'd lived there for decades and such was impossible. Then came the horror. One will never forget Jocelyn with her telephone standing there on her front deck picturing the dramatic scene for the colonel. Afterward, she left a bottle of Cabernet sitting on the steps up to my second floor abode. She adored her brother, said it hadn't been easy for him – being him.

Who will win the next presidency two weeks from now? These past five years have been a hideous time to witness. The pendulum has hit apogee, and is reversing direction. If not, human civilization is likely finished. What shall transpire between now and next May's edition of *The Veteran*? Last night via Netflix, I saw the new movie about the trial of the *Chicago 7*. The finish line found me stomping, cheering, clapping and laughing—with tears in my eyes. Then I remembered the spot on Malcolm Avenue where I said my last goodbye to tunnel rat and pointman Norb Scheppers a few steps away from where Jerry Rubin had been hit jaywalking across Wilshire Boulevard, along where I would walk one day in winter 2003 towards Westwood United Methodist Church

to sit up front and listen to Arriana Huffington, actor Mike Farrell, and others inveigh against the coming invasion of Iraq. There was Tom Hayden, sitting in profile, still as a choir boy, ready to pounce upon Cheney and Bush and their gambit. As someone once said a long time ago, the government forces us to take an active personal part in its proceedings, on pain of becoming ourselves, the victims of its violence.

November 26th, 2020: Near three weeks ago, Joe Biden was declared as president elect. Running outside with a tire iron, I rapped on an old trash can and yelled as loud as possible. Through the years here on The Farm I've imagined, pictured a scene in my mind, of a funeral for Darrel Finch. The scene in my mind has been something of a cortege out along the lane out front, of an old wooden flatbed wagon being pulled by one or two mules and a flag draped casket being born eastward to a waiting hearse parked at the highway. The family and attendees walk behind. It is dusk and suddenly the sky is rent by star bursts, as if it were the Fourth of July.

He died early yesterday evening of COVID-19, having asked not to be put on a ventilator. Payton, his grandson, is presently aboard the Navy's most secret submarine somewhere out in the Pacific. He now inherits everything on Darrel's two acres. Payton's father stayed by Darrel's bedside all day yesterday and held his hand as he lay dying. Darrel uttered that he was through and ready to exit this world. He'd been contending with diabetes for at least a decade, caused by contact with Agent Orange in his job with the Fourth Infantry Division in the Central Highland of southeast Asia. In 2003 I'd come here to visit old friends from college days and he saw and recognized the license plate on my '84 Skylark—2PLEIKU. He told Bonni and Bob that I could move in anytime and so I moved out of LA forever. Unmistakable messages from organized crime in my own profession thereat had given warning. Seventeen years now living here beneath double canopy have been a perfect, fiery combination of Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes A Great Notion*, a neo-Mad Max community in a dystopian century's infancy.

Simply by happenstance, this evening of a Thanksgiving Day, the sky towards the north was rent by starbursts; colorful explosions above a pentacostal church along the highway. They continued on and off for at least half an hour as I prepared a holiday meal. And I thought of Darrel at his uproarious best, in his arguments, out in his field digging and laying pipe and splitting wood come winter. His recent years had been a misery and he'd rather have been in his cups if

his health had allowed. He was an outsized character, said that his time in 'Nam was the best year of his life. That can only indicate that he had been the center of everyone's attention where he labored, overseeing the supply of munitions for the division's third brigade. He'd been medevac'd home from Camp Enari a month before I was assigned there.

January 7th, 2021: Neil Sheehan, one of the giants of American journalism who reported the early era of the US war in Vietnam died today. In 1980 he authored a Pulitzer Prize winning book about the war and later served as the secret conduit for and main writer of the *New York Times'* historic revelation—*The Pentagon Papers* (courtesy of Daniel Ellsberg)—which as we all know brought the wrath of felonious Dick Nixon. There are two things about Sheehan which various obituaries today make no mention of. One is to reference what David Halberstam once wrote—of the years of haunted agony that Neil endured between his time reporting from South Vietnam and the point of being able to finish producing his great book – *A Bright Shining Lie*. The other point is that it was Neil who dug deep enough to discover that in January of 1945, Franklin Roosevelt turned America's back on Ho Chi Minh, refused assistance to the Vietnamese nationalist in the latter's effort to evict French colonialists. Among historians, the popular conception had/has been that Roosevelt had decided that America would oppose France's resumption of control over Vietnam in the wake of World War II. Sheehan's persistence revealed the true fact.

A curiously anomalous work examining the early years of America's descent into the swamp of southeast Asia would be published in 1997. It is based primarily upon an impressive array of primary source materials, more specifically—government records. The book was authored by then-Army major H.R. McMaster, a 1984 graduate of West Point. The publication—*Dereliction of Duty*—drew many positive notices and has never been reviewed within *The Veteran*. It is a very remarkable, veritably astonishing achievement in that he, a field grade officer, conducted the research and writing alone. Ironic then, that a read of his impressive profile on Wikipedia, leads anyone with an ounce of common sense to wonder why he would be so naive as to sign on as the very first in a string of Donald Trump's national security advisors. Despite all of the accolades, his foremost assumption regarding Lyndon Johnson's intent in conducting war needs to be aired. As well, it remains unfortunate that the title of his book remains so apt in regards to our country's continued involvement in the Mideast.

January 8th, 2021: *NPR* today relates that the chief investigator who delved into (only German) war crimes in the wake of World War II says that there was no "greatest generation" of that era, that he believes that the true greatest generation was/were those who arose and protested the US government's prosecution of American violence in Vietnam. The Speaker of the House today is telling BoneSpur Trump to either resign his office or be impeached in the wake of an historic insurrection on Capitol Hill. Twelve days remain until Joe Biden becomes Commander in Chief—after four long years of absurdity, mendacity, stoking of hate and lunacy—five and a half years after Trump's unbound egomania had become starkly apparent. One remembers the final months of the Nixon administration, snapping a photo of Gerald Ford waving at me

as I leaned ten feet distant against the front fender of the vice presidential limousine a week before he replaced Tricky Dick. Reading, watching and listening, one feels that the present time is unprecedented and potently epic in American history, towers above Dick Nixon's demise. It is a Frank Capra cinematic dream come true to life and we are in no way near leaving the woods of this nightmare of lurid self deception.

Oh to be a fly on the wall of whatever room in the White House that Trump now inhabits. Ronald Reagan's speechwriter is saying that we should lower the boom on all those involved and responsible for the insurrection. JabbaSaurus' recent communications director now says that he has to go. The always insidious editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, generals John Kelly and James Mattis now, at long last cast blame upon POTUS for subjugating American democracy.

January 20, 2021: Ringed by barbed wire, a Capital inauguration. AF1 lands at a deserted Florida airport and no one is present to greet Donald Loser Trump. A woman assumes power, in a purple coat. Gaga sings, dressed in a red tent. Everyman Joe is sworn in, ten-plus minutes before he becomes commander in chief—a sober, unprecedented time in a Civil War renewed. We hear insipid sentences apparently scripted alone. Conventional ideas in a common, pendulous tone—contest to a daunting prospect. Nowhere near a Roosevelt, a Kennedy and surely not a Lincoln. Yet he speaks of truth, without inspiration. Minutes of silence for victims lost. Words without imagination at a moment leaving one to imagine what crucibles will yet be endured. The day and era beg exhilaration, as the sun breaks through. Kipling once wrote: "words are the most powerful drug."

February 1, 2020: Many a VVAW veteran may recall an astonishing photo taken long ago from Mutter's Ridge above Highway 9, west of Camp Carroll. Who took that photo? The Marine Corps conducted various deployments along the ridge during the mid to late Sixties. The most famous is known as the Battle of Mutter's Ridge. I once wrote to John Kerry at his senate office and asked if he knew who created the image. It being the photograph of a deserted mortar emplacement overlooking "The Rockpile" near the DMZ. It forms a two page spread in Kerry's/VVAW's 1971 publication of *The New Soldier*, the pictorial account of the organization's now storied event on The Mall and Capitol Steps in Washington. Interesting that the book's list of photo credits doesn't indicate who created that resonant image. Does any reader know who made that photograph? To say that that evocative photograph is haunting doesn't begin to do it justice. Please, someone tell us. A prominent enlargement ought to be permanently mounted in the National Gallery of Art.

Ave atque vale—Darrel Dean Finch and Cornelius Mahoney "Neil" Sheehan—at this discomposd point in the nation's life.



DUE TO STUBBORNESS, JOHN CRANDELL KEPT GETTING HIMSELF DETAILED TO FILL SANDBAGS, SPRAY HERBICIDE AS WELL AS BE DISPATCHED TO SELL MONEY ORDERS IN THE BOONIES FOR THE 4TH DIVISION POSTAL UNIT CIRCA 1969 AND 1970. ULTIMATELY, HE ORGANIZED AND WROTE A PROTEST AGAINST MALFEASANCE BY HIS UNIT'S CO AND NCOIC, GAINED EVERY ENLISTED MAN'S SIGNATURE AND SENT THE PROTEST DIRECTLY TO CREIGHTON ABRAMS AT MACV. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LETTER RETURNED VIA ARMY CHAIN OF COMMAND TWO MONTHS LATER.



Neil Sheehan with journos Halberstam and Browne, circa 1963 (Associated Press).

Put A Flag On It

AMBER ZORA

The first question people asked me as I was preparing to travel to Iowa City for Flag Day was, "What is Flag Day?"

Flag Day is a pretty obscure holiday to civilians and service members alike. Most have seen the holiday listed on a wall calendar but don't know much about it.

Flag Day is celebrated on June 14 to commemorate the day the US adopted the Stars and Stripes as the national flag on June 14, 1777. Flag Day is also an important day for decommissioning unserviceable flags through burning, burying, or recycling.

I received an email inviting me to Drew Cameron and Zen Cohen's backyard for their annual Flag Day event.

I met Drew at the Haystack School of Mountain Crafts during a veteran art weekend. After I moved to the Bay Area I frequently stopped by their place in The Mission for Full Moon Parties and various hangouts. They now live in Iowa City.

This year's Flag Day theme was "Make it Your Own."

What I knew about the weekend before I got there was that I could camp in their backyard, there would be a grill and food, and we would be making paper out of a retired flag

There is a lot to unpack about a group of veterans working with the local community to decommission an American Flag and turn it into pulp and then paper. It's especially complicated when many of the veterans are anti-war veterans.

Flags were developed for wartime, so someone could see from a distance whether a group of soldiers were friend or foe. Their meaning changed over time to be a symbol of unity for a country and flags are no longer necessarily associated with war in most people's minds.

For instance, we drape our athletes in the flag when they win on the world stage. America watched in awe as Buzz Aldrin planted a flag on the moon.

However, a number of veteran activists view the American Flag as a symbol of oppression to marginalized groups of people in the United States and abroad. The American Flag cannot represent this entire country because, for one, it erases the Indigenous sovereign nations that are here today. So why even bother with Old Glory?

I've found it difficult to find any singular opinion or mission that was supported by the entire group that gathered in Iowa City. That's in part because I don't think there was one.

I eventually realized that every participant or observer came with their own lens of what was taking place.

Some might view the project as respectful for decommissioning an unserviceable flag. Others might view the untraditional way we decommissioned it as disrespectful or an act of rebellion. A third group might find the backyard event—a grill, coolers of beer, a table decorated

full of American Flag memorabilia, kids running around—as a harmless, tongue-in-cheek scene.

Selling of the Flag

Once you start looking for the American Flag, you see it everywhere.

Like a word you just learned that everyone seems to be saying or a new menu item—the shishito pepper of 2018, the truffle fries of 2019—except the flag is always in style.

Section 8 of the US Flag Code states, "The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery." and "The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discarded."

But, businesses have commercialized the flag and made a profit from it's symbols for decades. So can it still be considered a patriotic symbol when it has been commodified to this extent?

The symbol of the American Flag is something the whole country is thinking about right now. A recent *New York Times* article explores how the political left is distancing itself from the symbol and the political right is encouraged to make it synonymous with the Trump flag.

American flags and adjacent Americana items start showing up in supermarkets in Spring around Memorial Day. They stick around through Flag Day and the 4th of July and before tapering off around Labor Day.

Everything from whiskey bottles to baby hats are adorned with the flag. During the 4th of July, beer companies know if they put a flag on their beer, they will see an uptick in beer sales.

Many Americans say they have a love for the sanctity of the American flag but have it printed on literally everything—regardless of this commodification being against Flag Code.

"It's a gesture of love for the country, but it's undisciplined nature is comical to me," Cameron said, "If it's intentionally sloppy I could get behind that."

It might actually be easier to list items that never have the American flag printed on them but I'm not sure I can think of one. There is even an American Flag painted onto a roof in my current town of Rapid City, South Dakota.

Love it or Leave it

During the insurrection on January 6, nationalism and hatred surrounded the American Flag. White supremacists, neo-nazis, and conspiracy theorists hijacked the flag, flying it alongside confederate, QAnon, and countless other hate group flags. One insurrectionist even used a flag pole with the American flag on it to beat a police officer who was

protecting the Capitol.

I've been told to "love it or leave it" regarding my criticism of the United States and its policies. The umbrella of nationalism around the flag and country does not allow for criticism of current wars or domestic tension, especially since September 11.

That leaves anti-war veterans or veterans with some serious "questions" outside of the narrative. But the flag has been used in social justice, anti-war, and freedom movements since it was adopted.

The Civil Rights movement — with many veterans in positions of leadership—used the flag in the fight for freedom. Vietnam Veterans Against the War used the flag and national myths to critique the war. Jasper Johns and Benny Andrews are notable veteran artists that used the American flag consistently in their work. Veterans today use the symbol of the flag to raise questions about wars and their military service.

The Event

If you're reading this you probably know that Drew Cameron founded Combat Paper a long time ago. He is a usual suspect in the current veteran art community.

However this event was not part of Combat Paper, it is a part of the Flag r/D formed with Robert Possehl, a longtime papermaker, Combat Paper whisperer, and conscientious objector. Flag r/D is an ongoing conversation about flags that Drew and Robert have been having for some time.

The project began through "flagging" each other—or sharing with each other random flag items and creating an informal archive.

"We've been 'flagging' at each other for years by text messaging each other American Flag images, articles," Drew said. "I'm more into the consumable side of things like flip flops and Robert is more into the articles and ideas around it."

I asked Drew what "Flag r/D" stood for.

"Research and Development" he replied. Or "Robert and Drew. And a few other things"

"I'm interested in where [the American flag] appears when it appears and who it appears on," said Drew, "Incorporating it into papermaking is a reverent, specific, and arduous process. Rag paper making continues to approach the flag as a living symbol."

Those camping in Drew and Zen's backyard were finishing up cups of coffee when Robert brought out a Post Flag—not your typical flag flying on a pole.

A Post Flag is traditionally used to identify a military post. It was large and ever-present but faded and in need of retirement. A group photo was taken before an attendee read a version of the American Legion Unserviceable Flag Ceremony.

We started with removing the blue field of stars and then separating

each stripe. Each stripe was then ripped into smaller strips and draped over a string of backyard lights. Participants were then asked to take scissors and cut those strips into one-inch pieces.

Throughout the day people arrived to chat, make paper, and eat food. It was the first event many had been to since the pandemic began. It looked like any normal backyard barbeque, except busy hands were clipping down the stars and stripes.

"Questions that people ask around pulping the flag is 'Are you allowed to do that?'" Cameron said. "And yeah, you are also allowed to burn the flag."

When a service member is deployed an American flag is donned on their uniform, right shoulder, and facing forward. When a service member dies in the line of duty their casket is draped with the flag during the ceremony. It is then folded and given to a family member before that service member gets buried. It literally becomes a replacement for a human body and that comes with its own weight.

"[The flag is a] symbol of power first and foremost, a national symbol and all things wrapped up into that. As a visual artist, I've always been attracted to the flag. One of my duties in school was to take the flag down. Our principal was a WWII vet and taught me how to do that." Robert continued, "When people meet me they don't know if I'm redneck or Antifa. I'm out here to talk and building relationships. I have particular ideas about the flag and how it is used. I'm not giving it up to the right."

The weight of the afternoon and evening of flag shredding and pulping and papering was very light. Children, parents, and grandparents all participated.

It was a day where people could come with their preconceived notions. Leaving it open to interpretation allowed for dialogue and community to take place in a casual and inviting setting.

The event itself provoked a series of questions.

What are we doing here? What is America? Where do we go from here?

Like the pulp itself, maybe it just takes time to dry before we can see the result.



AMBER ZORA IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST BASED IN RAPID CITY, SD. SHE ENLISTED IN THE US ARMY FOR 8 YEARS AND DEPLOYED TO QAYYARAH WEST, IRAQ AS AN AMMUNITION SPECIALIST FROM 2006-2007 WITH THE 592ND ORDNANCE COMPANY. ZORA LATER RECEIVED HER BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM AND A MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE IN PHOTOGRAPHY + INTEGRATED MEDIA FROM OHIO UNIVERSITY.

"Funny, biting, thoughtful, and wholly original... one of the best personal accounts to emerge from the Vietnam War."
—TIM O'BRIEN, author of *The Things They Carried*

LIEUTENANT DANGEROUS

A Vietnam War Memoir



JEFF DANZIGER

New Vietnam Memoir by Cartoonist Jeff Danziger

LIEUTENANT DANGEROUS

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"Funny, biting, thoughtful, and wholly original . . . one of the best personal accounts to emerge from the Vietnam War."

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STEER
FORTH
PRESS

Contested Identity: Schuyler vs Schuyler

ARTHUR H. DORLAND

I was musing one day about child prodigies. Every once in a while you hear a report about some incredible youngster who accomplishes incredible things, and then you hear no more. What happens to them? By coincidence I ran across a magazine article about just such a child. Philippa Duke Schuyler was a half black/half white piano prodigy with an IQ of 185 interviewed by *The New Yorker* in 1940 when she was eight years old. Why should readers of a US veterans' publication all these years later have any interest in this story? Philippa Duke Schuyler, half black/half white piano prodigy with an IQ of 185 died in a military helicopter crash at DaNang, Vietnam in 1967.

She was born in a wealthy area of Harlem two years into the depression. George Schuyler, the father, wrote for his living and wrote exceedingly well. A Northern born black journalist, he had been sent by his paper upon menacing undercover trips into the deep South to investigate American racism, as well as into East Africa and Liberia to reveal black on black slavery, something perhaps as little known then as it is now. Philippa's mother Jody was the "black sheep" of a rich white Texas cattle and cotton family that could have posed for a Faulkner novel. These two very different, distinct people met and married with the acknowledged grand design of producing a biracial child whose natural and evident superiority would proclaim the one way, as they saw it, to solve America's race problem. Miscegenation—mass miscegenation—was to be the answer. An invigorated miscegenated new generation would replace the failing segregated old one. If only.

And lo, they did produce just such a child. Philippa Schuyler was a project, a product you might say, of what the parents considered scientific breeding. When the girl reached thirteen they revealed to her for the first time volumes of diary entries documenting all this. In spite of the parents' obvious and prideful love for their daughter, you can't help wondering what sort of damage this must have done. Suddenly and without preparation—she was an only child enjoying little contact with others her age—Philippa would confront an uncomfortable image staring back at her in the bathroom mirror: a lab rat at large, a "study", a livestock experiment. Wasn't that inevitable? How could these intelligent parents not see, not foresee?

She was also protected from the inconveniences of her racial identity. The well appointed Edgecombe Avenue apartment was an economic and cultural world away from your typical Harlem dwelling. This is where the young child learned piano by the age of three and had worked her scholarly way through Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Romans and Greeks*

a year later. She was shielded from black poverty.

Philippa not only played piano but composed pieces of her own. For ordinary schooling, required by law at the age of eight, the parents enrolled her in a Catholic convent school. By this time she was becoming quite a celebrity, the admired friend of important people like Mayor LaGuardia, and written up in the press. Concerts were arranged together with radio appearances. Life was tantalizing and good for the little mixed race genius. But she was growing up.

And now there were concerts all over the world, arranged for the most part by her ambitious, not to say pushy, mother. It's no secret that a parent's displaced ambition can be an intolerable burden for the child, and that was to come. By her teenage years and moving on into adulthood Philippa Schuyler was concertizing across the world and performing before movers and shakers like the Queen of Belgium, Albert Schweitzer, and leading figures in the newly decolonized countries of Africa. Some of these events were glamorous affairs, attracting sophisticated and appreciative audiences in London and Paris. Others, especially in Africa and South America, involved stays in dicey hotels under gunfire from local revolutionaries. When she played for Schweitzer at his hospital in Gabon she was furnished a flashlight and large stick to goose the snakes on the way to the privy. Not every concert performer would accept such conditions; material was congealing for future writings.

But things began to change musically and personally. The now grown up half caste artist, beautiful to behold and masterful on the keyboard, was still in comfortable demand in the concert halls of Europe and much of the rest of the world. In the United States, though, the blush was deserting the peach and bookings she got were primarily before black audiences. American racism began locking the recital hall doors. Less and less was Philippa Duke Schuyler of Harlem the precious and crowd pleasing child prodigy.

The increasingly driven—and driving—mother, Jody, who was also principal booking agent, was unable to fix this. Ignoring it altogether, which seems today a possible approach, was somehow not possible. Acceptance by the American musical world became the great unattainable goal, a grail in a distant cloud, choking off all success in the wider world. By sudden and painful steps Philippa Schuyler began to wash out her black background.

First thing to go was her name. Philippa Duke Schuyler now appeared on recital notifications as Felipa Monterro y Schuyler, Spanish or Latin American concertista. Alternatively

she began to conceive her unwhite heritage as Polynesian, certainly not black. A most unfortunate climax: she had been impregnated by the desirable and cultured—and very dark—foreign minister of Togo, Georges Apedo-Amah, a man who traveled the distinguished circles she knew well in Paris. Philippa was a beautiful woman and had a number of brief, unlucky affairs, this least lucky of all. Despite sincere commitment to Roman Catholicism and amid personal torment, she left the not-to-be child at a discreet and none too hygienic Mexican clinic that catered to US women with certain inconvenient medical problems. Apedo-Amah was not consulted. A despairing diary entry of the pianist, no longer quite so young and hopeful, says plenty:

"I am a beauty—but I'm half-colored so I'm not accepted anyplace. I'm always destined to be an outsider, never, never part of anything.... I hate my country and no one wants me in any other. I am emotionally part of nothing and that will always be my destiny."

As income from foreign recital appearances began to wither, the disappointed pianist turned to another skill set, news writing. She had after all no shortage of first hand, up close experience in lands abroad. Besides her journalism she managed to publish over the years five books, one of these, *Good Men Die*, is treated below. Surprising for us is a pronounced and unshakable conservatism. Where did that come from? How many Harlem born authors glue themselves to the political right? Her black father George Schuyler, a curious favorite of the Caucasian elitissimo H. L. Mencken, gradually and more and more journaled down the right hand news column lane, drifting so far to the right that eventually no one would publish him. This at a time when not many blocks away Malcom X is rising from the ghetto's sooty New York mist. Philippa Schuyler became in consequence the primary source of income for her parents, and it would stay that way, another oppressive burden. About this same time "Felipa Monterro" went on a paid lecture tour for the John Birch Society.

She came to Vietnam in 1966 under the auspices of the State Department and at the personal invitation of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge. They expected her to stay a couple of days performing for wounded American soldiers, then leave. Only she had no intention to leave. Pointing out her accreditation as a journalist, Philippa used every device and deception to evade her minders, slipping into an ao dai beneath the conical rice straw hat and blending into the native population, much to the annoyance of the uncooperative US officials. The loose cannon of a journalist was behaving badly. During

this trip and the next she accomplished hazardous journeys into places other journalists didn't go, especially in the northernmost reaches of the republic, Quang Tri and the DMZ. One dicey night she claims was spent in a village taken over by the VC after sundown. An individual Charlie entered her hut and sat for a while on the very bed she occupied, but did not distinguish the American stranger in the darkness. Stories like this populate *Good Men Die*, published posthumously in 1969. *Good Men Die*, a hard book to find nowadays, is nevertheless a compelling read if you can will yourself past the insistent ultra-conservative viewpoint. Philippa Schuyler had a visceral contempt for Communism, surely not unrelated to a comfortable, privileged childhood, Harlem or no. She was given little reason to question her advantages. But be advised, excitable hypertensive leftists should avoid this book in the interests of health and ideological composure. The author is not pro-war, but she is pro-winning at costs few were willing to meet even then.

It was during the second trip to Vietnam, spring 1967, that she began to develop an interest and sympathy new to her and a complete reversal: the black soldier. These dark and disparaged young men responded to her and helped in any way they could; white ones ignored her, like white audiences. Had she lived longer this might have become a theme in her work.

On May 9, 1967 Philippa Schuyler died. She was on a mercy mission evacuating Vietnam orphans from Hue to DaNang where it was hoped they would be safer. At 1810 hours that Tuesday the military evacuation chopper on its approach to DaNang somehow escaped control and plunged into the sea. Regrettably its hyper-accomplished young woman passenger had never learned to swim. The guns trained on each other in the lifelong battle against herself fell silent, it was over.

There followed international news attention, a funeral parade in New York and a packed service at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Cardinal Spellman presiding. And then Philippa Duke Schuyler, together with everything she had done and been, was siphoned away into the vast, impenetrable ocean of oblivion, and there she has stayed. Nobody notices anymore.

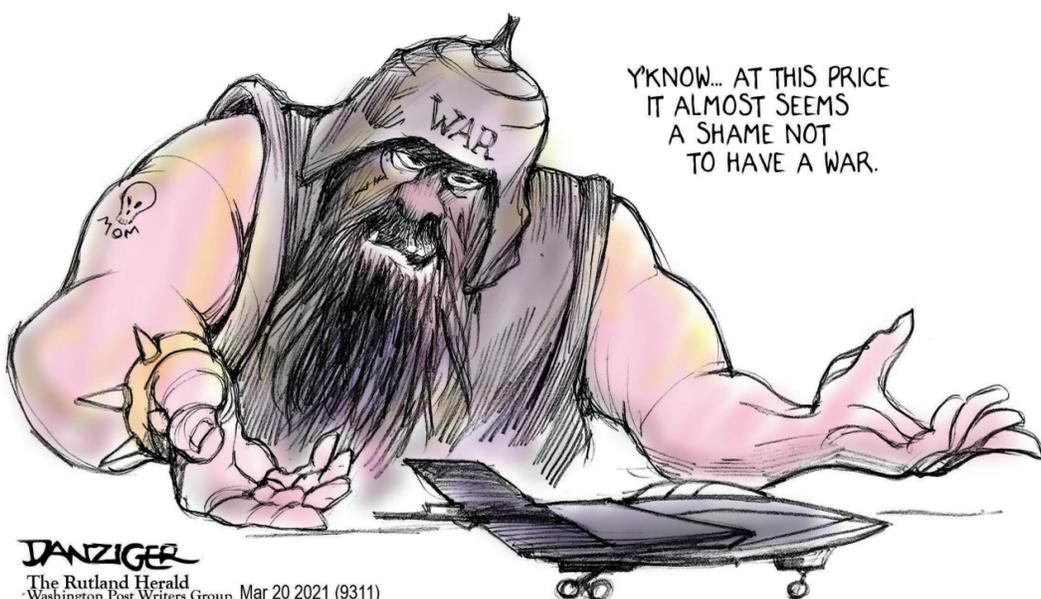
Some months after, the stricken mother Jody hung herself in her Harlem bedroom.

This is a story of racial rejection, segregation, denial, escape. It is also a story of brilliance—brilliance defeated and overwhelmed by primal attitudes. There is compassion in the story as well. What do we learn here? A young woman was once an extraordinary and troubling figure in so many ways: the early preternatural accomplishment, a tenuous and evaporating fame, disillusion, her death in a struggling far away nation ranked by war and her own country's manic urge to prevail. And what is left? Philippa Duke Schuyler is today forgotten together with her work. The coffin is empty. The white life of the child genius lies a bleached skeleton submerged beneath the tide of time. And in terms of how we think today, did even her short inconvenient black life ever really matter?



ARTHUR H. DORLAND, US NAVY
ENLISTED CLERK 1964-1967; NAVAL
SUPPORT ACTIVITY SAIGON 1966-1967.

F 35 Fighter Now Estimated to Cost 100 Million Each



The Rutland Herald
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Operation Peace on Earth and Statue of Liberty

BOBBY CLARKE

Operation Peace on Earth and the takeover of the Statue of Liberty began for me with an ad I saw for the Vietnam Veterans Against the War in *Playboy* magazine. It really caught my attention! I was still enlisted in the USAF at Homestead AFB near Miami, Florida, arriving there after two consecutive years in Thailand loading munitions on F4 jet fighter bombers. That piqued my curiosity about the group.

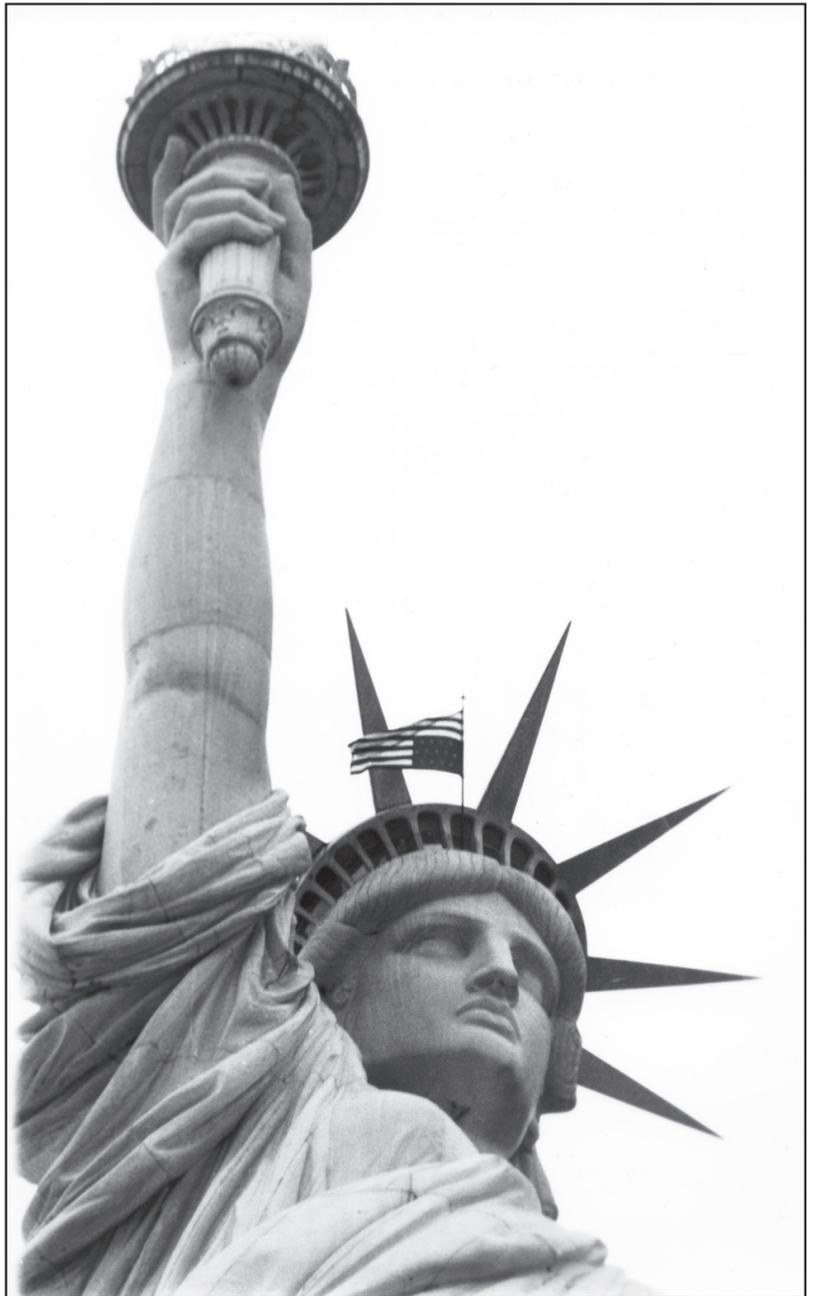
After my discharge in April 1971—I missed Dewey Canyon III—I returned to my hometown Pittsburgh. I hooked up with a couple of my high school friends and we went to DC for Mayday. I have somehow been able to erase most of that memory except that I was not arrested. It was not long after that I read in Pittsburgh's underground newspaper the *Fair Witness* that VVAW met in the same building where the paper had its offices and printing press. There were not many of us to start. But I ended running the chapter and meetings. This led to—I'm not sure officially or unofficially—me becoming the regional coordinator for Western Pennsylvania. I attended the August 1971 Regional Coordinators meeting in Kansas City where the concept for Operation Peace on Earth came about. Who remembers that meeting? I talked to John Kerry at the meeting about him leaving the organization.

Valley Forge was symbolically chosen by the leadership in Philadelphia because of George Washington's "Winter Soldier" and its proximity to both Philadelphia and New York City. I had never met Ray Grodecki or Gene Halpern until we were camped out at Valley Forge. They both quietly rounded up several of us where we gathered in one of the tents. Ray had done reconnaissance of the Statue of Liberty partially funded by legendary folk singer Pete Seeger, he told me later. After the plan was laid out Ray and Gene asked who was in. I didn't really know most of the 14 vets who volunteered. There were also to be demonstrations in Philadelphia that needed manpower. This took place on Christmas Eve.

On Christmas day we headed out to New Jersey to Gene Halpern's house where we solidified plans. We spent the night and headed for New York City on the 26th. I remember that Nixon resumed bombing North Vietnam that day. We were pissed!! We

made some sandwiches that we were able to hide under our big overcoats so that we had some food as we had no idea how long we would be inside the Statue. We arrived at the ferry and the group took several ferries over. I remember being on the very last ferry that day. The group was to mill around until close to closing time when we would assemble at the steps up to the crown. The stairway to the crown is a very narrow spiral that as you stand on them you can only see several people in front of or behind you. This helped make our "operation" successful. Partway up the stairwell there is a cage-like doorway that leads to a ladder in the arm up to the torch. Several of my SOL brothers have written about how we pulled this off. One of our brothers was able to pull the cage door open enough for one of us to squeeze through. As this was happening, we had one brother at the tail end not letting any tourists who may have gotten in line behind us up the stairwell. We hung off that ladder until our scout at the top could see out through the torch when the last tourist and employee ferry left the island. We then came down and assembled in the crown. We sent two scouts down into the main building to make sure that everyone was gone. There happened to be one night watchman that one of our scouts discovered. He let the man know we were from VVAW and that we were taking over the Statue as a protest for ending the Vietnam War. The guard wanted no part of it and left through a back entrance that we were able to secure so that no one could get in that way. The Statue was under construction inside and there were building materials that we used to barricade and secure the main entrance. Our mission was a success at this point. If my memory serves me correctly, we made a group decision that the only way we would leave was to be arrested.

We informed the VVAW office in New York City who in turn informed major press affiliates. We gave the office the pay phone numbers inside the main building. We received calls from press all over the world. I remember talking to someone from France. Throughout the next two days, many press were outside the main entrance along with various law enforcement agencies although it was the National Park Service police who had jurisdiction. The event was Walter



Statue of Liberty Occupation - December, 1971.

Cronkite's lead story on the 27th evening news. It was written up in my hometown paper the *Pittsburgh Press*. We hung a flag upside down from the crown as a symbol of distress. On the 28th a judge in New York City ruled that if we did not leave that the police were going to break in and arrest us. The group again took a vote and we narrowly decided to leave peacefully. We firmly believed we made our point through the awesome global media attention we received on how we as a group of Vietnam veterans were against the US aggression against the country of Vietnam and wanted to bring our brother's home.

I'm sure we made a statement as we left the Lady. Gene must have said something to the press. Photos were taken which have been published by VVAW in the past. The New York City office arranged for us to be taken to a

private room in a Manhattan restaurant. There we had a meal and were given Statue of Liberty postcards from John Lennon and Yoko Ono. I'm so bummed I don't have mine today as I have so much memorabilia.

It was only recently that I discovered that VVAW had a FaceBook group that I joined and have been able to connect with a few of the brothers I knew back in the early '70s when I was actively involved. This December will mark 50 years since the first takeover. Jim Murphy and I have discussed having coffee at the Lady on December 26th to commemorate. There are details that I wish I could remember from this memorable event. Paul Fisher's audio account with Jim Murphy and Don Carrico is a great listen! I have done a lot of reflection and research to make my account of the takeover as fresh as possible.



BOBBY CLARKE, SIMPSONVILLE SC, USAF 67-71, 10 YEARS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS, 30 YEARS IN IT, 12 IN CYBERSECURITY, RETIRED 2017. TRAIN AND COACH AT FIVE FORKS CROSSFIT SINCE 2013.

The 14 Remaining Veteran Participants are invited to have coffee with Jim Murphy at the Statue of Liberty on Sunday, December 26, 2021...and this time he will pay. <murphyvetsfor@gmail.com>



Coming out after VVAW's takeover of the Statue of Liberty - December 28, 1971. Bobby Clarke, front row, third from left.

VVAW and the Literature of War

ELISE LEMIRE

I teach a course at a public liberal arts college on "The Literature of War." In the first half of the course, we read novels by Rebecca West, Ernest Hemingway, Kurt Vonnegut, and Tim O'Brien, in which men go to war to fulfill their country's masculine ideal only to suffer the consequences.

In West's *Return of the Soldier* (1918), three women conspire to jog the memory of a shell-shocked Chris Baldry so he can return to WWI's western front. For them, his likely death in battle is preferable to staying home, where Chris would be what one of them describes in homophobic and ableist terms as "forever queer and small and like a dwarf." In O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990), Tim, the narrator the author names after himself, is presented with an opportunity to escape to Canada after he is drafted in 1968 but cannot imagine crossing the border. "I would kill and maybe die," he explains, "because I was embarrassed not to." In Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), Lieutenant Frederic Henry is distressed to hear that his friends want to enter his name for a medal when the circumstances of his serious leg injury do not fulfill his ideal of masculine wartime valor. He was, he protests, eating spaghetti in a bunker with several other men when they were hit by a mortar. Each of these narratives is riddled with memory lapses, moments of disassociation, and other marks of trauma. Readers are not simply told about war's horrors, they are shown the effects of what Dr. Jonathan Shay calls "moral injury." At this point in the semester, my students are convinced that *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which recounts the American firebombing of Dresden at the end of WWII, provides the last word on war. "So it goes," the novel's famous refrain, repeats a grueling 106 times.

In the second half of the course, I ask students to read the Vietnam war memoir *Born on the Fourth of July* (1976). Ron, the narrating self-author Ron Kovic crafts, compares his birth with the nation's, initially believing that both he and it are beacons of freedom and democracy. In Basic Training, however, the values of the patriotic citizenry and the Catholic church square off in his head with the homophobic and misogynist orders he receives. Kovic represents Ron's internal confusion with run-on sentences, italics, and capitalization: "Oh hail Mary full of grace the Lord is motherfucking cocksuckers! Oh Our Father KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! Who are in COMMIES JAPS AND DINKS hallowed be IF YOU WANT TO BE MARINES...." and so on for several pages. Ron becomes convinced he must kill Asian people or become a "lady" and a "maggot." And thus, in Vietnam, after mistakenly firing upon and killing civilians and their children, he tries to redeem himself by playing the hero in a firefight that leaves him paralyzed from the chest down and, later, furious with the Veterans Administration for its inhumane treatment of wounded American soldiers. Deeply shaken by what Ron endures, my students rejoice when his journey does not end there. Ron takes back the agency the military and the VA denied him by joining Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), an organization that gave him a powerful voice on the national stage. For the first time in our course, my students are hopeful that individual Americans can affect meaningful change.

To make clear that Ron Kovic's experience was not unique, I end the course by asking students to read interviews conducted by the Lexington (MA) Oral History Project (LOHP) with those members of VVAW who

participated in Operation POW.

In what follows, I have woven together with a minimum amount of commentary three lightly edited accounts of Operation POW culled from the LOHP archive as well as from an interview I conducted myself. I offer them here with thanks from my students for whom "so it goes" is not an acceptable answer to the problem of war.

Chris Gregory's father was a moderate-to-conservative Republican who envisioned a future for his son as a priest or as part of the family business.

"When I was seventeen, I decided that it would be a good thing to leave," Chris explains.

He enlisted shortly after his next birthday.

"It was really the only acceptable way to get out of the New Jersey town I was living in, the situation I was in."

It was 1964 and, for Americans at least, "Vietnam was not on anybody's map."

The Air Force trained Chris to be a medic. For almost two years, he worked in hospitals around the country, his longest stint being in an intensive care unit on a base in Florida's Fort Walton Beach.

When Chris asked the sergeant running the ward why he had not been promoted for what he knew to be good work, the sergeant explained that it was simply a case of someone being ahead of him in the queue. To make it up to Chris, the sergeant proposed sending him to train to be an Air Evacuation Medic, which paid more.

"I would go to Alaska, meet planeloads of wounded soldiers and distribute them around the East Coast," Chris explains of his new job.

After the Tet Offensive, Chris started flying to Vietnam where he would pick up the wounded in plane loads of two hundred men at a time and take them to whatever stateside hospitals had room.

"We got people who were quite badly hurt and quite recently hurt, who had not been in a hospital, who had only been triaged. They still had on battle fatigues and were very recently wounded, but there was no place for them so we would take them somewhere. Japan or the Philippines were the closest places."

Many of the wounded were dealing with severe emotional trauma as well as, or as a result of, their grievous physical injuries.

"They had just realized how badly they were hurt," Chris notes. "A lot of them wanted to get out of the country so badly, they would conceal the seriousness of their injuries. They would actually be bleeding and hemorrhaging and not say anything, because they thought you'd take them back. So, you'd end up having big, big problems when you got off the ground, because there was no physician. Even if there was a physician, you don't have an operating room or anything. You can do what you can do, but it's not the same as a hospital. It was very, very...." here his voice trails off. "It's very hard to describe because you're so passive. One is so passive at this time. This is happening to you and you can't affect it in any way; your imagination doesn't work as well as it does when you're influencing something."

Chris describes feeling bad that he did not have time to be as sympathetic or gentle as he would have liked.

"I still think about some of the injuries I saw. People were very badly burned or very badly wounded, losing more than two limbs and so on. You wonder, 'Wow, how could I not have related to that person in a more gentle way?' But at that time, it wasn't



Lenny Rotman in the VVAW-NE office. Photographed by and reprinted with permission of VVAW-NE member Rand Martin.

possible for me."

He remembers reading Susan Sontag's article "Trip to Hanoi: Notes on the Enemy Camp" in the December 1968 issue of *Esquire*. ("I came back from Hanoi considerably chastened," Sontag writes. "It would be a mistake to underestimate the amount of diffuse yearning for radical change pulsing through this society.")

But he also remembers putting aside Sontag's compelling case for Vietnam's independence and getting back to work.

"Whether the war was right or wrong didn't occur to me."

"My life wasn't really going anywhere," is how Lenny Rotman puts it when describing the spring of 1968. He had graduated from a public high school in Boston and was working as a salesman in a shoe store on Boston's tony Newbury Street without paying too much attention to what was going on in the wider world.

Unbeknownst to Lenny, Robert Talmanson was receiving sanctuary at a church visible from the store where Lenny worked. Arlington Street Church had decided to open its doors to the twenty-one-year-old Massachusetts resident after the US Supreme Court refused to allow him to appeal his conviction for burning his draft card two years earlier. On May 22, after Talmanson had been in the church for three days, US marshals swept in. When Talmanson went limp in peaceable protest of his arrest, the marshals proceeded to drag him outside only to confront a growing crowd of protestors who stood between the church and the marshals' vehicles with their arms locked. After a forty-five-minute standoff, during which the protestors sang patriotic and civil rights songs, over thirty Boston police officers showed up to escort the marshals.

"I watched the police charge through groups of people who were sitting there passive and then banging people up against cars and clubbing them," Lenny recalls. "Blood was everywhere."

Not long thereafter, Lenny got drafted.

Two of his friends who also got drafted found ways to get out of serving. One, who Lenny describes as an "outstanding athlete," obtained a doctor's note to the effect that he had sustained some sports injuries, even though he was still active. Another "ate a dozen eggs or something" and thereby elevated his blood pressure.

For Lenny, however, the draft was an opportunity, not merely to surpass a local football hero, but to see

for himself what was at stake in the showdown at Arlington Street Church.

"I was home for quite a while from Vietnam and out of the military before I could admit that while I didn't really want to go, a big part of me really was interested in having that experience."

That fall, Fred Davis was on his way to Vietnam with the charge "to conserve the fighting force."

Fred had completed medical school on the Berry Plan, a federal program that allowed medical students to delay induction until after part or all of their specialty training in exchange for establishing a firm date for the commencement of their tours of duty. He had completed part of his training as a surgeon in Boston, Massachusetts, and his wife was pregnant with their second child when he was ordered to begin his one-year tour overseas.

Fred recalls that there was supposed to be a two- or three-day orientation once he arrived in-country, but a doctor got killed and Fred was needed to replace him.

This and the fact that all of the dispensaries were named after doctors who had also been killed made it immediately clear he would be in danger.

He started counting down the days.

Fred spent two months of his tour assigned to a small emergency room near a route traveled daily by a United States convoy. The military could easily have flown in supplies but American officials were determined to show they could establish a land route.

"We'd have lunch and then wait for the casualties to come in," Fred recalls of the daily ambushes.

Those who avoided physical injury suffered from acute stress.

Fred remembers sedating them with Thorazine for 24 to 78 hours. It was a way to provide them with rest and "a little amnesia," as he puts it.

Another persistent danger was boredom.

"There was an open area with a big drain pipe in the middle and a tent," he explains of the bathing area. "A guy decided to role a smoke grenade into the tent and then have a big smoke bomb in the middle of the shower. Well, he rolled a regular grenade down there instead. Fortunately, it went down the pipe before it went off and so it just blew a big hole in the roof." As opposed to five or ten fatalities, there were, he recalls, a few concussions and ruptured eardrums.

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Other victims of boredom were not so lucky.

Fred recalls that nearby American troops were charged with ensuring that Vietnamese guerrilla fighters did not swim under the bridge they were guarding and plant dynamite charges.

"One of the ways they would counteract them was taking grenades, pulling the pin, and dropping the grenades into the water. Well, that got boring and so guys would pull the pin and see how long they could hold the grenade before they would drop it."

The results were catastrophic.

"In would come a kid without his arm," Fred remembers, sighing. "Things like this happened over and over."

What Fred most remembers, however, was the extreme youth of the American troops. When he asked what he could get for the wounded at the nearby PX, the request was frequently for comic books.

"I remember thinking that these are really little kids here. Here they are in the middle of this war and what they do for entertainment or relaxation is read comic books. I hadn't read one of these comic books for fifteen years."

Fred was twenty-eight.

While he had arrived in Vietnam "more of a hawk," he quickly learned that the war was not only costly, it was "pointless." The Tet Offensive clarified that none of the Vietnamese wanted the Americans there, even those Vietnamese ostensibly working alongside the Americans.

"The Vietnamese cook's daughter was in the dispensary for days with pneumonia," Fred remembers. "She was getting better but was far from okay when the cook insisted on taking her home. We should have realized what was going on," he later recalls.

That night they were attacked and the base was overrun.

"She knew that was the night."

When the mortars started coming in, Fred ran to the nearest bunker and discovered that the other Vietnamese working in the compound were already there.

They knew too.

By September of 1969, Lenny was in Vietnam with the MOS 11 Bravo. ("That's the guy who carries the M16 humping in the boonies" or, in civilian terms, one of the soldiers carrying out search-and-destroy missions.) Three months later, Lenny was called out of the jungle for a family emergency. Back in the States, he ended up in the hospital for a week with a lingering infection from where some leeches had attached to his leg. There had been no way to have his leg treated properly out in the field other than to swap cigarettes for penicillin,

so the cellulitis had spread. The doctor who treated him noted that if he had not been called home, Lenny could have lost his leg.

An increasingly difficult family situation got Lenny a Compassionate Reassignment, and he spent the rest of his time in the military as a clerk at Fort Devens, which by the spring of 1970 was a hotbed of GI resistance.

"That's when I started my anti-war GI work."

First, Lenny worked on *The Morning Report*, an underground newspaper. ("For those of you who realize that the aims of the military are wrong," the first issue, published in May of 1970, proclaimed, "we want to help you resist.") Then he started helping the Legal In-Service Project (LISP), a group of veterans counseling people in the service about how to get conscientious objector status. LISP's volunteers were forced to meet with GIs in the woods outside of the base. Later they were able to use a nearby anti-war bookstore.

Chris remembers feeling "sort of numb" when he got out of the service in April of 1968 and enrolled as a twenty-two-year-old freshman in a program for veterans at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. Neither his parents nor anyone else had asked him about his experience in the service. And while he was pleased to be free of the military's rules, he was not free of the war. The television reported nightly on the increasing number of American dead.

Not having anything in common with the sheltered eighteen-year-olds in his classes, Chris found himself alone with his memories about moving among so many wounded soldiers without the time or the emotional strength to address anything but their physical needs.

It became impossible to talk to people who would not have been able to understand.

"I went on one silence," as he calls it, "for two weeks."

Recalling the camaraderie of the military, Chris found his way to Fort Devens at the same time as Lenny and other resisters were ramping up their efforts.

"We had a shared experience, a shared analysis, and a shared discomfort with our participation," he later told the Boston Globe of the men he met there.

Chris decided to work alongside Lenny and the others at LISP.

One day, Jerry Grossman, the Boston businessman and founder of Massachusetts Political Action for Peace (MassPAX) who had dreamed up the Moratorium to End the War and who had helped LISP

get a newsletter into wealthy donors' hands, approached them about having lunch with a former Naval lieutenant named John Kerry, now working as a spokesman for Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

Chris recalls saying yes because it would be a free lunch. But he also recalls that he, Lenny, and the others very much liked what Kerry was proposing.

"We want to put together a chapter here," he recalls Kerry saying. "We have a thing in New York. We've been working on it a couple of years. We had one demonstration," Chris also remembers Kerry explaining about Operation RAW during which VVAW members marched from Morristown, New Jersey, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. "We offer some services. We have rap groups, where these people can talk about their experiences. We put together a pressure group, a method of pressuring the VA into giving better services. Some of these guys have readjustment problems. We help them deal with them, but basically it's a political effort."

And with that, the New England chapter of VVAW was born.

A photograph of Lenny reveals a portion of the two rooms MassPAX gave the new VVAW chapter at 67 Winthrop Street in Cambridge, not far from Harvard Square (*page 18*). Lenny is seated next to a framed poster whose title "Jamais. Jamais Plus. Jamais Plus La Guerre" indicates it is a transcription of Pope Paul VI's address to the United Nations on October 4, 1965, which he gave in French, the traditional language of western diplomacy. ("Never. Never again. Never again war.") Above Lenny, on the wall, is an enlarged version of a 1962 photograph taken by British photojournalist Larry Burrows for *Life Magazine* that depicts a South Vietnamese soldier brutally interrogating what Americans would call "a Viet Cong suspect." VVAW-NE's juxtaposition of these two posters asserts members were angry that a plea from one of the world's preeminent spiritual leaders was being ignored by the United States, which in invading Vietnam had caused the civil war Burrows documented. The photograph also reveals that Lenny has grown his hair in rejection of both traditional masculinity and the military's insistence on a shorn head. It and joining VVAW were decisions that left him looking confident and, with his chair tilted back against the wall, very much at home in VVAW with other like-minded veterans.

For more than a year, Lenny lived on the unemployment benefits to which he was entitled as a veteran so that he could show up daily at the VVAW-NE office.

Chris enumerates the hours they put in.

"I never got there later than 7:30 AM and I never left before 9:00, 10:00, or 11:00 o'clock at night for months, and neither did anybody else."

At this point, Fred was back in the states and doing a rotation at one of the VA hospitals in Boston.

No longer willing to overlook the emotional needs of the wounded, Chris and the other veterans had made sure VVAW-New England had a strong presence there.

"We used to go visit them and take them out," Chris recalls of what he, Lenny, and other VVAW members did for their wounded brothers. "We'd try to get tickets to the Red Sox and take them all to the Red Sox. Anything to please them because they were great guys and they were being warehoused."

He recalls the VA insisting that the wounded be back by 7 PM because they did not have adequate staff later in the evening to care for them if they were not already in bed.

"You can't have any social life

as a twenty-year-old if you're got to be back in your bed at seven o'clock at night."

Fred decided to start attending VVAW-NE meetings.

After the success of Operation Dewey Canyon III, an effort towards which both Lenny and Chris contributed mightily, Chris by organizing the transportation for over two hundred New England veterans in what amounted to the largest delegation, regular VVAW-NE meetings had to move outdoors as the number of veterans who showed up swelled to a hundred. Determined to keep the national spotlight VVAW had finally won in Washington DC, the chapter decided to continue the mobilization of American symbols begun with Operation RAW by marching Paul Revere's famous midnight route in reverse over Memorial Day weekend.

They invited the Connecticut and the Rhode Island chapters of VVAW to what they named Operation POW because "we are all prisoners of this war." Both chapters immediately agreed to help VVAW-NE bring a message to the people in the tradition of the famous patriot rider.

Following the mythic version of the events of April 18, 1775, penned by poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, sixty or so veterans convened on Friday night at Concord's Old North Bridge. On Saturday morning, more veterans arrived from area VA hospitals.

"People in wheelchairs, guys on crutches, paraplegics, quadriplegics, people with prosthetic devices showed up," Chris recalls. "It was something to stand there and watch these guys. You see a bunch of eighteen-year-old, twenty-year-old guys on crutches and in wheelchairs—it's astonishing."

Massachusetts General Hospital donated a medical van for Operation POW. Fred, who had recently moved his young family to Lexington, which would be the march's second stop, and who had garnered so much experience in Vietnam with both physical and moral war injuries, was one of many doctors and nurses in the Boston area who volunteered to staff it.

Having medical support was just one of many logistics the veterans coordinated.

"I felt myself to be an administrator at this thing," Chris explains. "I was involved in trying to see where were we going next, how are we going to eat, where were we going to set up the tents, how are we getting latrines, bureaucratic stuff."

He, Lenny, the chapter coordinators, and several other VVAW leaders were faced with an increasingly complicated situation as reactions from officials varied from a warm welcome in Concord to downright hostility in Lexington.

And thus one of the first orders of business on Friday night was taking a vote about how to proceed in the wake of the Lexington Selectmen deciding to deny VVAW permission to camp or perform mock search-and-destroy missions in their town. VVAW operated according to majority rule, and with only four against the idea of committing civil disobedience, the decision was made to proceed to Lexington the next day and risk a mass arrest.

Before leaving Concord on Saturday morning, Lenny and a small contingent of the veterans stopped in Concord's Monument Square to perform, with permission from the town's selectmen and its police chief, a mock search-and-destroy mission in front of early morning shoppers. To make the interrogation and murder



Dr. Fred G. Davis (right) treats a veteran's blisters during Operation POW. © Cary Wolinsky, Trillium Studios

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of those who had volunteered to play the Vietnamese look as realistic as possible, Lenny wore fatigue pants with a tiger stripe pattern, a tan stateside shirt, and a Boonie hat. He did not, however, pair his fatigues with the jungle boots the other veterans were wearing. Rather, he wore an elegant pair of leather shoes from the days when he worked in the shoe store, a private reminder perhaps of how far he had come in his transformation from a bystander at Arlington Street Church to activist and VVAW mainstay.

Chris, who wore his fatigue jacket with its Air Force patch, helped lead a parade of veterans and the civilians inspired by VVAW's guerrilla theater to Lexington.

Fred decided not to wear a white coat but rather to appear in his fatigues, carefully blousing his pants in his jungle boots so that he could be part of VVAW's political theater (*page 19*). Even as his assigned task was treating any medical needs that arose, he also wanted to participate in creating the illusion that Concord and Lexington had been invaded once again by imperialist troops so that residents would be prompted to feel empathy for the Vietnamese while also understanding that the US had become the very tyrants they had fought to vanquish in these Boston-area towns so long ago.

Once the march crossed into Lexington, Fred felt compelled to disembark from Mass General's medical van and walk in the veterans' procession. Grabbing a stack of VVAW pamphlets, he handed them out to his fellow residents. The pamphlet explained why the organization had decided to protest the war in the town where the American Revolution began.

"Lexington Green in 1775 could be a South Vietnamese or Laotian village in 1971."

When the veterans finally reached the Battle Green, Lenny quickly devised an effective alternative to their usual but now prohibited mock search-and-destroy missions. When the veterans formed a circle around the Green and began alternatively chanting and singing, he decided to dance into the middle. Holding his Mattel M16 over his head for a moment, he ceremoniously discarded it in the grass.

"This en masse thing creates immense energy," Chris explains of why every veteran was inspired to take a turn discarding his own weapon.

Not long afterward, the still growing number of veterans were served by the town's selectmen with an injunction that significantly increased the punishment they could hand down to those who chose to occupy the Green.

"This really was a heroic spot," Fred notes of the Green, recalling that eight colonists were shot and killed there by imperial troops.

He recalls thinking he had a right to be there because of his own service in an American war.

When VVAW took another vote about how to proceed in the face of the injunction, it was unanimous: the veterans would commit civil disobedience. Those who initially harbored doubts had changed their minds after marching in the footsteps of their patriot forefathers.

The one thousand civilians who joined the veterans on the Green also believed that American soldiers had a right to have their say where the nation's founders had taken a stand for freedom. The outpouring of support was incredibly affirming, especially to those of the veterans like Chris whose families had never asked what it had been like to serve in the Vietnam War.

"Everybody was happy and singing, or drinking beer, kissing and hugging each other," Chris recalls. "It was terrific."

When the police finally did come hours later, Fred, Chris, and Lenny were arrested along with some four hundred other people. The town's makeshift jail was full to overflowing, leaving many on the Green frustrated that they would not have a chance to appear in court.

While Chris and the other veterans were elated at the sympathetic coverage the mass arrest was receiving from the liberal press, Chris knew that once they had paid their fines in county court, they had to continue their efforts in what might be more hostile territory. The plan had always been to spend the third night on Bunker Hill, which is located in a community very different from Concord and Lexington.

"This was a tight-knit, working-class community hugely represented in the service," Chris explains. "A lot of Marines come from there. Everyone in Charlestown is a veteran."

He was surprised to find there was no cause for concern as the anti-war veterans approached their third camping site.

"Here is some coffee, boys. Here are some donuts," Chris remembers being asked.

The veterans' warm welcome in Charlestown was evidence that VVAW had brought a divided country together.

For Chris, however, there was no time to celebrate this historic accomplishment. Early on Memorial Day morning, he left his tent for VVAW-NE's office to write the speech the VVAW-NE leadership had asked him to give on Boston Common during the march's final rally. The chapter's co-coordinators were moving on to graduate school and they wanted Chris to replace them.

His weeks of silence now far behind him, Chris spoke readily to the thousands who joined the veterans on the Common.

"The nation expects things of its young men. When they call them to arms, if they're called for legitimate purposes, people will answer. But they're in danger of having people never answer again. People are not going to feel the same about their country."

After an anti-war speech by Eugene McCarthy and several musical acts that led the crowd in anti-war songs, Operation POW came to a close. The effort had dominated the front page of New England's newspapers for four days in a row and been reported in newspapers across the country. The three chapters of VVAW that participated had done their part in keeping the public's eye focused on the necessity of ending the Vietnam War immediately. Other VVAW chapters across the country were also keeping up the pressure.

By August, Chris was the coordinator of the VVAW-NE office, a job he held for two years.

Lenny was elected to VVAW's National Executive Committee, where he served alongside Jon Birch, Al Hubbard, Larry Rottmann, and Joe Urgo.

There was still a lot of work to do, particularly as the military was countering growing GI dissent with the automatization of the war effort.

Chris put his energy into planning three days of VVAW-sponsored hearings at Boston's storied Faneuil Hall in October of 1971, to which he invited former military analyst Daniel Ellsberg to speak. A hero to many for his role in bringing the Department of Defense's secret history of the



Chris Gregory (left), Daniel Ellsberg (center), and another VVAW member at Winter Soldier II.

Vietnam War to the public, Ellsberg was thinking only of giving Chris his undivided attention when the two were photographed with another veteran at the hearings (*page 20*). Ellsberg's decision to wear a VVAW pin is further evidence of the respect Chris and the other anti-war veterans had won for their efforts over the past year.

A transcript of the testimonies at what VVAW-NE called Winter Soldier II runs to 1,300 pages. In the introduction VVAW included with the abridged version it distributed, the organization asserted that the war "is being ruthlessly escalated. In indiscriminate butchery of civilians, destruction of entire civilizations and savagery of conduct, it is infinitely worse than the struggle of contending land armies." VVAW further explained that the war had become "sanitized": the "airmen, computer technicians and electronics specialists who conduct it seldom see the blood and destruction they have caused."

It was not only an accurate statement but a chillingly prescient assertion of how the United States would wage war going forward.

"That's one of the things I'm most proud of doing," Chris says of this effort to alert the public.

That winter, Lenny joined other members of VVAW in occupying the Statue of Liberty. To signal their distress about the war, they turned every flag on the statue's plaza upside down, eventually flying one of the upended flags from the statue's head. A journalist took a photo from a helicopter that ran in newspapers around the world (*page 17*).

"Until this symbol again takes on the meaning it was intended to have," Lenny and his co-conspirators told the press in a statement, "we must continue our demonstrations to all of the nation of our love of freedom and of America."

From Valley Forge and the Lexington Battle Green to Faneuil Hall and the Statue of Liberty, Lenny, Chris, and the other VVAW members had proven adept at marshaling the nation's symbols of freedom so that the citizenry was forced to see how far the United States had fallen from its founding ideals. From the liberal elite to the working-class, virtually the entire nation was behind VVAW weeks before the publication of the leaked *Pentagon Papers* confirmed what the anti-war veterans had already reported about the illegal and immoral Vietnam War.

Eventually, Lenny and Chris moved on to other endeavors.

"That type of rebellion is very hard to sustain," Chris notes of his and Lenny's work with VVAW. "That type of agitating and rebelling against the norms of the government and the norms of the people around you, it's very hard to sustain. It takes a lot of endurance. It's quite different than politics in the Democratic Party. You're an outsider and it becomes wearing on people."

Both he and Lenny credit VVAW with replacing silence with

understanding and agency.

"Being against the war changed me more than the war changed me," Chris concludes. "It made me feel that there was something to stand for, that there was some hope that you could redeem your circumstances, and you could really help other people in a way that I don't think I would have understood had this not happened."

"As a result of this experience," Lenny agrees, "I was able to stand up on my own two feet and say what I thought about something as big as war, which I was never able to do previously. I just never had. And I became a different person because of that."

As for Fred, when asked about protesting against a war in which he had served, he says the experience changed him as well. He points to a moment years later when he took his college-bound daughter to the Boston airport.

"I thought if I was putting her on a plane to Vietnam and she wanted to get on a plane to Canada, I would have bought her a ticket."

If I have learned anything teaching the literature of war, it is that while college students come to appreciate literature for its ability to create empathy for soldiers and veterans, they want to know what else besides writing novels and memoirs can be done to stop the perpetual wars that leave characters they love and many of their authors bereft of hope. Ron Kovic's memoir and other VVAW accounts like those of Chris, Lenny, and Fred show students that activism is art's powerful twin. In VVAW, students see a collective using highly creative political methods for change that they can replicate as they take up the fight for peace, racial justice, and a healthy planet. They see, in other words, that "so it goes" does not have to be our refrain.



DR. FRED G. DAVIS WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ON OCTOBER 26, 1992. A VIDEO OF HIS INTERVIEW IS AVAILABLE AT LEXINGTON'S CARY MEMORIAL LIBRARY. CHRISTOPHER GREGORY WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECT ON MARCH 14, 1995. A TRANSCRIPTION OF HIS INTERVIEW IS AVAILABLE ONLINE. CHRIS WAS ALSO INTERVIEWED BY THE AUTHOR ON DECEMBER 11, 2011, WHILE LENNY ROTMAN WAS INTERVIEWED BY THE AUTHOR ON NOVEMBER 9, 2011.

ELISE LEMIRE IS PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE AT PURCHASE COLLEGE, SUNY, AND THE AUTHOR OF BATTLE GREEN VIETNAM: THE 1971 MARCH ON CONCORD, LEXINGTON, AND BOSTON (UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2021), WHICH RECOUNTS THE EXPERIENCES OF SIX OF CHRIS, LENNY, AND FRED'S VVAW COLLABORATORS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPERATION POW AND HER BOOK ABOUT IT, VISIT WWW.BATTLEGREENVIETNAM.COM.

Dissenting POWs

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Dissenting POWs

by Tom Wilber and Jerry Lembcke
(Monthly Review Press, 2021)

There are many "universal truths" regarding the American war in Vietnam, legends, and myths that have been accepted all these 50+ years despite abundant evidence and common-sense thinking. There are still folks who believe American soldiers remain incarcerated in secret North Vietnamese prisons, or in Russian prisons where they were sent for some obscure reason. Somehow, it is generally accepted that American POWs were tortured in North Vietnamese prisons, most notably the Hoa Lo or "Hanoi Hilton" where such notables as John McCain, Janes Stockdale, and Jeremiah Denton became famous via their accounts of institutionalized mistreatment at the hands of their North Vietnamese captors. Their plight was accepted as being virtually the same as that of Korean War POWs, subjected to "brainwashing" and physical tortures. We simply accepted that Communists would abuse our Americans imprisoned in a North Vietnamese prison. This general acceptance was supported by a number of popular movies, including *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Rolling Thunder*, *Some Kind of Hero*, *The Deerhunter*, and Sylvester Stallone's macho man *Rambo* series.

I bought it. Looking back at my experiences in the army, my greatest fear was of becoming a prisoner of war and being tortured, so I bought those stories without question. When John McCain ran for President, I just accepted that his arm wouldn't work due to tortures inflicted at the Hanoi Hilton.

A couple of years ago, I enjoyed a lunch with Heath Lee, the author of the 2019 book *The League of Wives*, described on the back cover as "The true story of the fierce band of women who battled Washington—and Hanoi—to bring their husbands home from the jungles of Vietnam." Also, "These American servicemen had endured years of brutal torture, kept shackled and starving in solitary confinement, in rat-infested, mosquito-laden prisons, the worst of which was the Hanoi Hilton." We enjoyed delicious sandwiches and delightful conversation centered upon the rigors of trying to publicize a book in the day's America. That was pre-COVID. We have stayed in touch, and Heath was kind enough to attend the publishing party for my book *Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter*. Heath's "book tour" has taken her hither and yon across America; her book is a best-seller and has been optioned to become a movie produced by Reese

Witherspoon.

Heath Lee is a valued friend and fellow writer, and I have the utmost respect for her background as a curator at several museums. She appreciates history and has achieved outstanding success with her books. She did an enormous amount of research, including many interviews with the wives who became frustrated in trying to learn anything about their husbands' welfare or to see any realistic effort to bring their husbands home. It is a spellbinding book, revealing a backstory from the Vietnam War that was unfamiliar or forgotten to most of us. A splendid contribution to the history of that terrible time, and I recommended the book in my review in the fall issue of *The Veteran*.

A few weeks ago, I learned of Jerry Lembcke's new book, *Dissenting POWs*. Confident that Heath Lee would be interested in a new look at the history of the Vietnam POWs, and especially the revelatory disclosure that a number of them were insisting that they had not been tortured, I emailed her. To be honest, I hoped she would order the book to learn more about the subject that had brought her so much recognition. That would contribute one more sale to Jerry Lembcke, who I also consider a friend. I immediately ordered the book! And, the very next day, Heath Lee answered my email with a suggestion that Lembcke's book was the work of an unpatriotic communist! I have suggested that we get together for another lunch, hoping it might give me an opportunity to defend one friend against the misperceptions of another. Sadly, the "fourth wave" of the dreaded COVID Coronavirus pandemic has caused us to postpone that lunch for a while.

Jerry Lembcke is the author of *The Spitting Image*, a landmark book exposing the probability that all those stories about returning Vietnam vets being spit on or called "baby killer" upon their arrival at home airports were completely suspect, improbable, and undocumented. He had also done a book titled *Hanoi Jane* about Jane Fonda, decrying the "fantasies of betrayal" that have followed Jane Fonda among many Vietnam vets for the past fifty years. His book *PTSD* tells the story of the American society's and government's reluctance to deal with the unanticipated mental anguish that resulted from sending us off to a tragically mismanaged and unnecessary war on the other side of the planet. Altogether, Jerry Lembcke has authored eight books, all dealing with some aspect of the Vietnam War, and each helping to define the truth of what really happened.

Dissenting POWs is a terrific book! It reveals that the highest-rank-

ing POWs, especially Air Wing Commander Stockdale, Navy Commander Denton, and Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Risner decided that their Vietnamese guards' compassionate treatment while attempting to educate them on the history of the Vietnamese independence movement was actually an attempt at mind control. The prisoners agreed to resist, and the officers to enforce a standard of absolute non-compliance with the enemy. They would not be viewed as "brainwashed" by their communist captors. However, they did make concessions to their captors, and they conspired to say they had been tortured into talking. The book rather diplomatically wonders if they were simply managing a story they thought would benefit the entire POW population once they were released, or if it was a function of their officers' authoritative personalities. They insisted upon a chain of command by rank within the prison and insisted that all lower-ranking personnel comply with their ruse. In fact, they expected the lower-ranking to resist to the extent that they would, in fact, invite tortures by their captors! When a number of enlisted men from South Vietnam were transported north and imprisoned in and near the Hanoi Hilton, they dared to express strong anti-war attitudes in direct opposition to the officers' plan. Sound familiar? Stockdale assured them that he would, once they were freed, have them court-martialed for treason and refusal to obey orders. He did carry out his threat, but the matter was quickly tossed out of court. The most divisive war since the Civil War was over, and no one wanted to revisit the acrimony. The tales of torture and patriotic resistance became the accepted history, and the POWs attempted to return to "normal" American life.

In December of 1970, Canadian journalist Michael Maclear interviewed a few lower-ranked POWs in Hanoi and was surprised to find some very sincere anti-war opinions and acceptance of the Vietnamese need for independence. Six of them signed letters decrying the "many innocent people dying a totally needless and senseless death" from the American bombings. One of the prisoners was Navy Captain Gene Wilber. In June of 1973, then Rear Admiral Stockdale charged Wilber and another former POW with "mutiny, aiding the enemy, conspiracy, soliciting other prisoners to violate the Code of Conduct, and causing or attempting to cause insubordination and disloyalty." In September of the same year, the two officers were issued letters of censure and retired "in the best interests of the naval service." Tom Wilber, co-author of *Dissenting POWs* with Jerry Lembcke, is the son of Gene Wilber.

Members of VVAW will likely recognize the basic elements of this story. The senior officers were the products of a prescribed training regimen that demanded they perform their patriotic duties to the utmost, maintaining the highest standards of loyalty to America and traditions of honor taught in the military academies. Sadly, far too many of them construed those requirements as conferring upon them superhuman powers and inferring upon them the overreaching authority, rank, benefits, and justifications nearly as all-powerful as the ancient gods. Arrogant and hubristic, they "played the game" with ferocity and contempt for all human life except, of course, their own.

The story told in *Dissenting POWs* is all too familiar when we think about it. Often referred to as "lifers" by their lower-ranking troops, they were arrogant and unfeeling, and by 1973 had created so much resistance and ill-will that much of the American military was in a state of near-mutiny, unwilling to continue the immoral, unnecessary, and incredibly destructive war any longer. Far too often, the war had been revealed as an all-out rush to gain promotions, medals, or an office in the Pentagon, and the lives of the troops be damned. Ultimately, their strategies were not ordained from above, and in the end, they failed miserably. James Stockdale authored a book telling his side of the POW story. Now, at long last, Tom Wilber and Jerry Lembcke have researched what really happened and authored *Dissenting POWs*, and to this Vietnam veteran at least, it is a far more realistic and recognizable history. It is a story of GI resistance to the war in Vietnam, and to the absurd, malevolent behavior that crafted the stories, the POW officers told. Yes, they conspired to mislead America, and they were all too successful for a time. Well, time's up! *Dissenting POWs* tells a very different story. I hope this book will be passed around to the many Americans who, like Heath Lee, continue to believe the false history of the war in Vietnam as told by the officers who conceived and carried out the atrocities against the Vietnamese people, and against their own American troops! The front cover of *Dissenting POWs* says "From Vietnam's Hoa Lo prison to America today." Exactly! Congrats to Tom Wilber and VVAW member Jerry Lembcke for revealing the truth about what happened at the "Hanoi Hilton," and so much more.



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

Uncle Ho

JIM HALE

The following is lifted from my forthcoming book, *Casualty of Peace*.

When our sworn enemy the president of North Vietnam died, on September 2, 1969, I happened to be living on Le Van Duyet Street, Gia

Dinh, Saigon.

It was evening and the city was starting to cool down. I was smoking my pipe on my balcony watching the street scene below. For some reason, the din of people and traffic suddenly

quieted. All the noise and humanity in motion came to a halt.

Cars and Honda's pulled to the side of the road as a long procession of mourners came up the street. Wide-eyed, bystanders stood frozen in reverence. In front of the march, Buddhist monks in gold robes slow-walked. Behind them, a cart with a huge banner displayed the image of their national hero, Ho Chi Minh.

I was already against the war but was stunned. Why hadn't the South Vietnamese National Police stopped them?

Exactly four months later I was watching the nightly Armed Forces TV news program. Two uniformed reporters, one a Marine, the other a US Army soldier ended the broadcast with a personal statement.

"We are not allowed to report

the truth."

The disastrous war went on for years more. It ended with the collapse of the unpopular government. Tens of thousands of Americans and millions of Indochinese lost their lives in the gruesome process.

This was just the beginning of my education. As we see another disastrous war come to an end I was reminded of this story and wanted to share it.

I'm left to wonder. Why am I always a witness to such historical spectacle?



JIM HALE IS A VIETNAM VET WHO SERVED IN THE AIR FORCE FROM 1965-1969. HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS.



Conscientious Objector

GERALD R. GIOGLIO (REVIEWER)

Conscientious Objector: A Journey of Peace, Justice, Culture, and Environment
by Wayne R. Ferren Jr.
(Archway Publishing, 2021)

Full disclosure: the author uses a quote from my book *Days of Decision: An Oral History of Conscientious Objectors in the Military During the Vietnam War*; he also cites one I edited; *I Refuse: Memories of a Vietnam War Objector* by Don Simons.

Wayne Ferren has a story to tell. Several actually. It's a story of childhood and the geological wonders of Southern New Jersey; a story of intellectual explorations and the attraction to science; it's a story of countercultural and spiritual pursuits, of the festive and turbulent 60s; of the history of Vietnam and its cultures, and of course, dealing with the Vietnam War, the signature event of our lives. Importantly, it is also the story of one man's quest to be recognized as a conscientious objector (CO) to war and to perform civilian work in lieu of being drafted into the military.

Ferren is many things, initially just a kid from southern New Jersey who became interested in earth science with a developing passion to care for creation. Early on he came to the conclusion that man-made institutions, like war, have a devastating impact on the living earth. More than anything else, this realization would lead him to become conscientiously opposed to war. In addition, his spiritual journey through Christianity, Buddhism and transcendentalism directly influenced Ferren's anti-war beliefs and eventually led him to become a minister for the Universal Life Church, a person who appears to be no stranger to the metaphysical, one able to tie material

and nonmaterial phenomena into a cohesive anti-war position.

What we have in *Conscientious Objector* is a sweeping look at social, cultural, political and environmental conditions in the United States during the tumultuous 1960s and early 1970s, and how this brought the author to a position of civilian conscientious objection and war resistance.

This all-encompassing memoir is fact-based, academically formal and scrupulously footnoted with dates, illustrations and a great deal of personal and historical detail. All the pieces are joined into a fairly complete picture of a life. Indeed, given the global nature of the work, one might argue the book is more autobiographical than memoir. For example, one could suggest there is an overabundance of personal and early educational experience presented here, but as the subtitle suggests, it is a story of one young person's journey, so rather than split hairs let's leave it to the scholarly community to battle this out.

One notes a decent synopsis of the youth culture of the time, complete with lyrics from some of the songs that served as the soundtrack of our experiences. There is also detail on peace and social justice activity that occurred in the Southern New Jersey/Philadelphia area, along with a comprehensive timeline of prominent national and local events occurring in 1970.

The early narrative provides context leading up to the main event, i.e., the formal quest for CO status. For peace activists and anti-war veterans, the action heats up in Chapter 8 with a survey of 1969. The personal and societal turmoil continues in 1970 with his pursuit of CO status taking flight in

Chapters 10, 11, and after something of a diversion, Chapters 13-15.

One great strength here is the presentation of a vast quantity of original material—letters, summaries of interactions with the Selective Service System (SSS), return replies and supporting documentation the author amassed, saved and used in this book. The presentation of this material gives us a rare, detailed look at one registrant's experience with a local draft board, especially as it relates to acquiring CO status. We don't see this much. This type of material is exceedingly difficult to find. Indeed, as the author points out, local boards destroy individual records submitting only draft cards for storage by the National Archives.

As an in-service conscientious objector and former draft counselor, I can say no matter how you slice and dice it acquiring CO status was not easy, whether one was applying to enter the military as a noncombatant (which did help local boards meet their induction quota), or especially if applying for civilian service. The cards are stacked against those who take either position; indeed, as Ferren's experience demonstrates, it takes a yeoman's effort on the part of the applicant to be successful.

Ferren was up for the challenge. He freely admits he was the beneficiary of the *Welsh vs US* decision which established an expanded definition of conscientious objection. But more, he had the schooling, experience, and support to stand up for his rights and prepare his unusual, ecologically focused, case for conscientious objection. His good fortune in having these tools guided his interaction with the SSS, leading him to astutely follow Selective Service requirements, guide-

lines and deadlines, like making sure he submitted paperwork on time and responding to local board expectations. In addition, although he doesn't mention it, he seems to have understood if you want to get something done you have to establish a good rapport with an office's administrative assistant. It appears the secretary of Ferren's local board was respectful, dutiful and might have even liked the guy. In any case, she did her job monitoring his paperwork and maybe, just maybe, ran a little bit of flack for him along the way.

With this documented overview of his experiences Wayne Ferren provides an important service for historians and future men and women who may have to deal with the Selective Service System, or some sort of mandatory civilian National Service scheme.

Finally, expect to find a lot of opinions expressed throughout the 426 pages ahead of the backmatter. Some will resonate with you, some not so much. However, all are well-considered and thoroughly examined.

We'll end with words the author uses to close the book as he expresses the hope that: "...my life and the times in which I have lived will inspire others to take a stand and to take the necessary action required to bring about a peaceful, equitable, and harmonious world."

Amen to that brother.



GERALD R. GIOGLIO IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF THE UPCOMING BOOK *HUNGER AND THIRST: A JOURNEY FROM WE SHALL! TO HELL NO! DUE TO BE PUBLISHED IN SPRING 2022* BY ACTA PUBLICATIONS.

Bikes for Education in Vietnam

NADYA WILLIAMS WITH DAVID CLARK

In the frontier area of Vietnam, children that live over 6km (3.7 miles) from school and do not have a bicycle are unable to attend school. The idea to give these kids bikes started informally around 2009, when a group of American Vietnam veterans, friends, and family, responding to a word-of-mouth campaign raised enough to purchase and distribute about 200 bicycles.

Since 2015, the Veterans For Peace, Hoa Binh (Peace) Chapter 160 in Vietnam has so far provided these children with over 1,300 bikes. The bikes are not only a life-enhancing but a life-changing opportunity. The recipients are not only disadvantaged by living in remote rural areas, but are often children from "minority" populations historically left out of Vietnam's development. Thank you letters to the Da Nang-based VFP chapter say that unlike their parents or grandparents these children can

now learn to read and write. Please see: www.vfp160.org/bikes/

David Clark, a former Marine 1966-'70, who lives full-time in Da Nang since 2007 with his wife, "Ushi" Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong, heads up the project. David is the secretary-treasurer of the Hoa Binh VFP chapter. Despite the challenges of the pandemic and limits on international travel, a delegation of chapter 160's Bikes for Education team traveled throughout Central Vietnam during April 2021 and distributed a total of 175 bicycles to ten schools. That delivery represented an especially important event for the students of a region battered by devastating typhoons in an abnormally stormy 2020 season. Difficult-to-access communities in rural and frontier regions, that were already contending with poverty, suffered significant flooding. The typhoons impacted the daily lives of many families, who saw their homes and

neighborhoods destroyed overnight.

David and Ushi also raise funds for DAVA (the Da Nang Association of Victims of Agent Orange). Of his time in Vietnam, David says, "I came here as a young man to die for my country. Thank God I didn't die. I made it, physically I made it. But, I may get to die here by my own choice." Of the bike program and all his humanitarian work in Vietnam, he says, "In a way, this is a chance to make personal amends. Before, I was a very, very small part of a big problem, now I'm a very, very small part of a big solution."

Each bicycle costs \$100. Funds are also reserved for simple safety gear like reflective tape for nighttime cycling, and later repairs and replacement of tires, parts, etc. Funds are sent to Vietnam by the San Francisco Chapter 69 of Veterans For Peace. Donations are tax-deductible, and no fees whatsoever are taken out.

Please include your contact information (address, phone, email), so you can receive confirmation, tax information and, a thank you!

Make checks payable to:

VFP 69

Memo: VFP 160 Bikes

Mail to:

Veterans For Peace

5519 Plumas Ave

Richmond, CA 94804

Contact info:

www.vfp160.org/bikes/

David Clark

davide.us.vn@gmail.com



NADYA WILLIAMS IS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VFP, SAN FRANCISCO CH. 69 AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION. DAVID CLARK IS A VIETNAM WAR VETERAN AND SECRETARY/TREASURER OF THE VFP, VIETNAM CH. 160.



School children of Hai Hoa Primary and Secondary School.

Jersey City, NJ: Honoring VVAW Member Clarence Fitch at James J. Ferris High School

JOE HIRSCH

On June 29, 2021, after a struggle lasting over three years, a signpost honoring VVAW member Clarence Fitch was finally installed at the always busy main and only student entrance to James J. Ferris High School in Jersey City, NJ.

The installation was marked by a two hour outdoor program put together by the Jersey City Board of Education. Speakers included the Superintendent of Schools, an elected member of the Board of Education, a VVAW member, and Clarence's family. The event received front-page coverage by the *Jersey Journal*, a local newspaper.

Clarence was a graduate of James J. Ferris High School and died of AIDS in 1990. He was a Marine Corps ground combat veteran of the Vietnam War, a trade union activist at the United States Postal Service, and a fighter for peace and social justice as the East Coast coordinator of VVAW. He is commemorated in Pershing Field Park in Jersey City as a "hidden casualty" of the Vietnam War

along with too many others (including Dave Cline).

Clarence's story was the subject of the award-winning 1998 documentary *Another Brother* which was screened on a national Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) broadcast. It was made by his good friend Tami Gold. VVAW members Greg Payton and Ben Chitty served as project advisors.

The successful effort honoring Clarence was a joint project of VVAW, Veterans For Peace/Chapter 021 (Northern New Jersey), and the Fitch Family led by Clarence's sister, Reverend Mona Fitch-Elliot.

Additionally, the Jersey City Board of Education is now planning to use the documentary *Another Brother* as a teaching tool at the high school level.



JOE HIRSCH HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1970. U.S. ARMY 1966-1970. PHU BAI 1968-1969.



The signpost. JCPS is the abbreviation for Jersey City Public Schools.



Members of VVAW and VFP/021 along with the Fitch Family after successfully presenting their project to hundreds in the community attending a public meeting of the Jersey City Board of Education. Clarence's wife Elena Schwolsky-Fitch is 3rd from the left.

Bronze Star

I cannot carry this.
I am no hero.

When I hold this star
in my palm,
I feel the jagged edges
of splintered bones.

And I break,
I break like a bronzed mirror
reflecting shards of
a survivor's face.

I'm sorry.
I will not parade with a star,
and a red, white, and blue
ribbon round my neck.

There are stars still
inside my chest,
shrapnel stars within stars
flaring in my blood-red heart.

Their tarnished points
pierce through my skin
as bone fragments
as I wash off the blood

in my morning shower's
monsoon rain.

—rg cantalupo

Home, 1970

No one asked about the confirmed
kill or the rocket that just missed
four or five days before. The silence

the Monday you returned
from the war, it was dawn
and the roads weren't crowded

at that hour. You stopped at
your brother's and then went home.
And no one asked. No one.

No one asked about the blood
splotch, no one asked about
the sniper, the mine, Cambodia.

You took your first hot bath
in months and thought of that
whore in Cam Ranh. That night

you dreamt what became years
of your recurring Nam dream.
And no one asked. No one.

—John Samuel Tieman



On the Ho Chi Minh Trail

SUSAN R. DIXON (REVIEWER)

On The Ho Chi Minh Trail: The Blood Road, The Women Who Defended It, The Legacy by Sherry Buchanan (Asia Ink, 2021)

Between 1965 and 1975 the United States dropped some 7.5 million tons of bombs on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, more than double the weight of bombs dropped on Europe and Asia during the entire Second World War. While there were multiple and changing objectives to the bombing, a major one was the disruption of the flow of men and materiel to the south. Consequently, much of that fury was directed at what the Vietnamese called the Trường Sơn Road and the United States named the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The Trường Sơn Road /Ho Chi Minh Trail threaded through the Trường Sơn Mountains, known in the West as the Annamite Range, that runs roughly north-south through almost the entire length of Vietnam. The Trail was not a paved highway but a track that shifted, changed shape, collapsed, and regenerated over time and in response to changing circumstances. It eluded all attempts to destroy it, though it became an obsession on the part of the United States military to do so. That the military failed is due in large part to the efforts of thousands of women.

These women play a central role in Sherry Buchanan's *On the Ho Chi Minh Trail*, which documents her search for those who had lived under those bombs. What drew her to the Trail—oddly, for a story that is so much about bombing runs and tonnage and death—were drawings of the landscape and daily life made by both military and civilian artists. Her curiosity was driven by the large number of women who populated these drawings.

Buchanan started in Hanoi in the winter of 2014 and traveled by car with two companions, stopping at key sites and meeting with those who had memories of living beneath the bombs. She began, she said, by looking for "the other side of the war,"

the humanity of those the United States had so fiercely sought to destroy, and she found "another side, a gendered one."

She found the remains of a trail on which some stations provided food, shelter, fuel, and security, a complex communications network, and anti-aircraft units all hidden in natural caves, man-made tunnels, and under jungle canopies. She also found why destroying the Trail had been such a futile endeavor:

The women in the war drawings "protected" all this. They prepared food, repaired roads, transported ammunition and weapons between stations, drove the trucks, decommissioned live bombs, joined anti-aircraft defense units, nursed the wounded, and buried the dead.

She meets as many of these women as she can, starting with the actress Kim Chi who had hiked 600 miles on the Trường Sơn trails after having talked her way into the war. She finds Nguyen Thi Kim Hue who had been given the highest military award by Ho Chi Minh himself for her work on one of the most dangerous stretches of the Trail. After her village was destroyed, Hoang Thi Mai trained first as a sniper and then as a nurse. Ngo Thi Thuyen who, at 92 pounds carried two ammunition boxes with a combined weight of 216 pounds, tells her that the reason Vietnam won was that "We were home, they were far away from home."

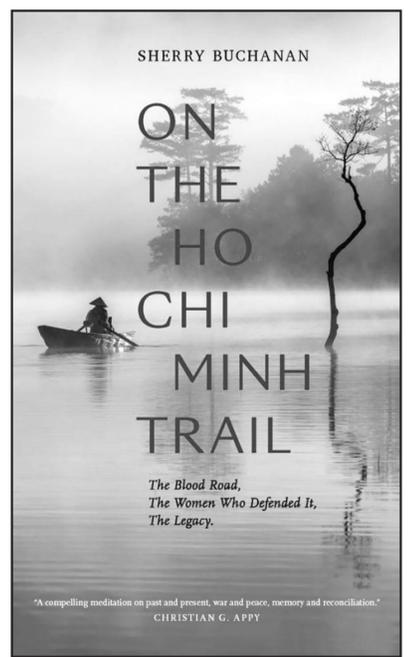
She finds the artists, too. In Hanoi, she visits Tran Huy Oanh who has a collection of portraits and lyrical landscapes, surprisingly large given the grueling conditions under which the drawings were preserved. She speaks with another artist, one who said he had seen the souls of five girls killed on the Trail. Two of Nguyen Van Hoang's watercolors, both called "Crossing the River" and dated in 1971 and 1972, are quick sketches that capture the strength of the landscape and the movement of human figures through it.

Her fascination with the Trường Sơn Mountains is infectious. She had been captivated by the beauty she

had seen in the landscape drawings and, as the journey progressed, hoped for the clouds to break so she could see the mountains themselves. When that happens for the first time, she recognizes that "the landscape depicted in the drawings expressed more than a geographical place, it reflected a state of mind, 'the calm mind needed to survive such a cruel war.'" This "calm mind" (the quote in her sentence is not attributed) seems to be a clue to the dignity and courage she finds in the artists and veterans she meets.

This is a beautiful book. Published in London and printed in Italy, it contains maps for each section and color reproductions of art, as well as photographs of women and landscapes taken by the author. It is also a confusing book. In her Preface, Buchanan says she made the journey to collect stories "from both sides of the front line." She wanted their testimonies "to confound the abstraction of war that makes it acceptable to those of us who live in more peaceful places." That alone makes a profound and almost unique contribution to the all-too-limited awareness in the United States of the stories of individual Vietnamese people. She does not let that stand on its own, though. Threaded throughout is a personal quest that competes for attention.

The welcome that Americans receive in Vietnam, usually called "forgiveness" (although it is unclear if the words are understood in the same way in both cultures) is so mysterious and compelling that many Americans, Buchanan seems to be among these, look to Vietnamese for answers. In all her interviews, for example, Buchanan asks probing questions, such as whether the person she is visiting was afraid or felt hatred or thinks the United States should pay reparations. By the time she reaches the Epilogue she has decided that she went on the Trail because she "cared that a government that claims to bring democracy and human rights to the world—and preaches it to others—was partly responsible for two million civilian war dead in Vietnam

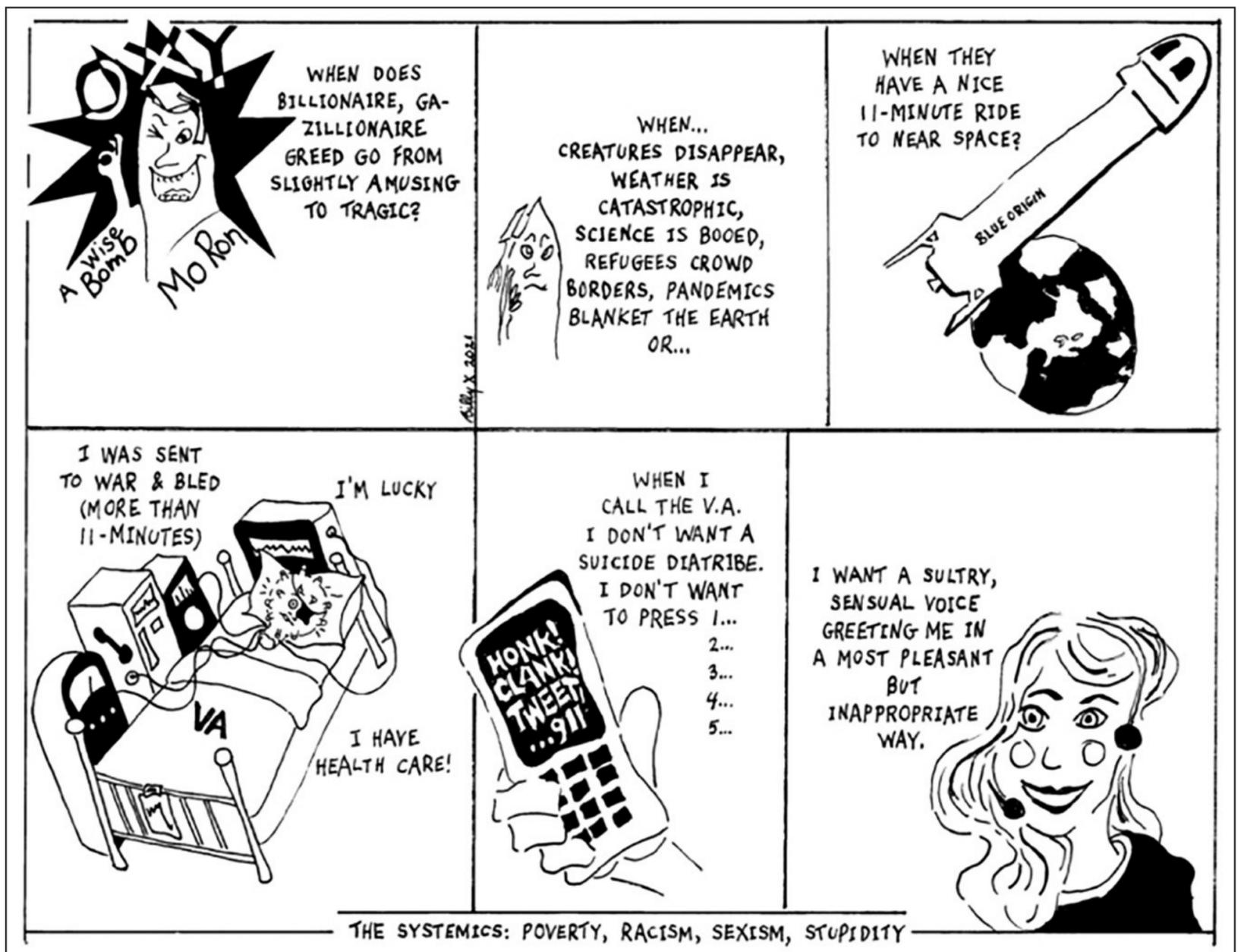


and hundreds of thousands more in Laos and Cambodia." She decides the United States has not done enough, that colonialism should be confronted, and the civilian deaths we are responsible for should be commemorated. By the end, the journey has become personal, a lament for the damage war inflicts, for how it affected her own family, and how she has moved on. It is difficult not to feel that once again the stories of Vietnamese have been subsumed into the stories of Americans.

This observation does not undermine the contribution her book makes, however. Buchanan's journey may have had a confusion of both motivation and outcome but she made the journey. She set out to find stories, stories that are utterly foreign to most Americans. She found them and she told them. Coming to terms with those stories and others like them is a responsibility that lies not with her alone, but with all of us. Current events continue to demonstrate the urgency of that task.



SUSAN R. DIXON IS THE AUTHOR OF *SEEKING QUAN AM: A DUAL MEMOIR OF WAR AND VIETNAM*. SHE MAY BE FOUND AT WWW.SUSANRDIXON.COM AND WWW.SEEKINGQUANAM.COM



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



Memories of Dewey Canyon III

BARRY ROMO AS TOLD TO JEFF MACHOTA

Part 2 of an interview with Barry Romo conducted by Jeff Machota on March 6, 2021.

JM: Jeff Machota - Interviewer
BR: Barry Romo

JM: After the Winter Soldier Investigation, did your role in VVAW increase? What happened next?

BR: I go home. I hang out with all the people at Valley Junior College, and the anti-war people. I got a call asking me to become California Coordinator of VVAW.

JM: You said yes, then?

BR: I said yes and asked Mark Hartford to be co-coordinator with me. I couldn't do it alone. I asked the Ashtons as well, old friends from the anti-war Democratic Party. They said they would; because you had to do things like set up phone trees and stuff like that.

Dewey Canyon III was brought up at Winter Soldier. And the fact that there was going to be a demo afterwards. Then they flew me to New York City. We held a national meeting. It may not have been the first national meeting, but it was the first real national meeting with people from all over. We voted on the Objectives, like the Panther's Ten Point Program.

JM: Was it called Dewey Canyon III at that point or was it just a national demo?

BR: It wasn't, not yet. Then, we talked about having this demonstration, throwing our medals away.

JM: So first you came up with the Objectives, then you talked about a big demo?

BR: Yeah. Most of the people were feminists at this point, myself included. Then some people's egos started to show. Oh, lets call it ... I don't know; okay names. So, we argued for a while and one of us, said "During the WSI, one of the Marines brought up that Operation Dewey Canyon II was an illegal invasion of Laos." We thought that was pretty important for the American people to hear. Someone said "Why don't we call it Dewey Canyon III and that way we can bring up we're the legal occupation of congress land and bring up the illegal invasion of Laos?" So, we did! We also plotted out a bunch of stuff, throwing our medals away, stuff like that.

JM: At this point, was Al Hubbard running the show?

BR: Jan Barry, John Kerry, Scott Moore; but all of them after Hubbard.

JM: So after the meeting, you go back to California. Then you start organizing for the event there?

BR: Yes, but New York members had to welcome me on my first trip to New York. So, we drank until I passed out. We walked the streets looking for furniture. We tried to steal a bed that was in the trash, that we pushed.

JM: This was for office furniture, for the office?

BR: For individual people's apartments. Damato and I became best friends.

JM: So that was your first trip to New York then, when you went to that meeting?

BR: Yes. I flew back home. The National Office told me to sign up as many people as I could. We were going to have tons of money, including the Playboy jet, to fly out of Los Angeles.

JM: That's what they were telling you, you are going to be flown—have people fly out in the Playboy jet?

BR: Yeah, and we were going

to have so much money, we could fly anybody. We didn't go for a train, like we did in 1976. Then, like a week beforehand, or less, they called me up and said that the Playboy jet had fallen through and they didn't have money. They could only send nineteen people, maybe less from Los Angeles. I had to call up and talk to people and say I'm sorry. I promised you that you could go. Some people gave me their medals. So, when I threw my medals away, I threw their medals away also. A lot of us did that.

JM: So, the contingent was still pretty big, but it would have been much bigger.

BR: It would have been; Oh god yes! It could have been at least 70, 80, 100 people.

JM: How many ended up going. You said like 20 or so only?

BR: Yes. With one from the Bay Area, who was a guy I met up there. He ended up being crazy and not even a vet. He stole my fatigue jacket.

JM: How was the airplane ride out there? That must have been a riot.

BR: It was great! We had so many vets together and we were all anti-war. That was back when there were 747s. We flew into Baltimore; and then from Baltimore to DC, just outside Arlington Cemetery. The VVAW leadership had a flag up. We refused to register while the flag was flying.

JM: The VVAW National Office had an American flag at the registration area?

BR: It wasn't flying upside down. Then they turned it upside down.

JM: So, right off the bat, California was bringing a different flavor to VVAW?

BR: Yes.

JM: What do you attribute that to? Was the California delegation younger, more recent vets? Or was it the work that had been done already?

BR: We were more radical than other people. Maybe not Hubbard, but certainly more than Kerry.

JM: Why do you think that was?

BR: We were doing GI work. Other people weren't doing stuff like that. We were working in coalition politics, from Democratic Party, ACLU and stuff like that, and Panther support.

JM: Once you were there, after this incident, what activities did you participate in over the weekend?

BR: We were there one night, and that was registration. We slept there.

JM: Where you slept, was that at Anacostia Flats, or was that at the Mall?

BR: That was at Anacostia Flats. They refused to let us go into Arlington Cemetery. Then, we marched and chanted to the area where we were going to sleep.

JM: You marched to the Mall then?

BR: Yes.

JM: That was not supported by the National Office at the time? Was it rank and file?

BR: We were supposed to march there.

JM: Did you participate in the Supreme Court demo?

BR: I was arrested along with another 125 VVAW people.

JM: That was not part of the initial plan, was it?

BR: No. Totally spontaneous. Because the Supreme Court, actually the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, said we couldn't sleep. He was a Nixon appointee.

JM: Was it Warren Burger?



Barry Romo at Dewey Canyon III, April, 1971.

BR: Yes. He thought we were the French Revolution coming to guillotine them. That's in the book *Brethren*, by the *Washington Post* guy. It was written afterwards. All the other Supreme Court Justices were mad and said we could sleep there. So, now the stuff was in turmoil, including the Black NAACP justice, Thurgood Marshall. They were embarrassed that Burger would presume to do something like this. Then they started bringing busses up to arrest us.

It was one of the cops or one of the vets; I think it was one of us, came and said they had been told we were going to be violent and therefore should be treated with no respect. So we said, you know what. They are saying we are violent. So, let's dance. So, we did a can-can with the California delegation and other vets.

Sure enough, we got away without getting beat up. Because of dancing vets. That picture made the front pages of over 200 newspapers the next day.

JM: What was the arrest for. Was it for not dispersing, for being there?

BR: Yeah. For not dispersing.

JM: How long did they keep you in jail for then?

BR: A couple of hours. That's all. Then, either the ACLU or the Lawyers Guild asked to have the charges dropped. It was a ten dollar fine, which they paid. Then, the DC prosecutors appealed it and the appellate court sided with us and dropped the charges! When people were getting arrested, one of the Marine vets looked down and saw a cop whose life he had saved in Vietnam was there to arrest him. He ran down, in front of all of us, and told his buddy "Hey, ... you know we are right. You know this war is wrong. Arrest me." The cop had a mental breakdown.

JM: Did you go lobby then?

BR: I never lobbied, but we had people that did lobby. So, we did everything.

JM: The night that you were sleeping on the Mall, Ron Dellums came out?

BR: Tons of Congressmen; Kennedy came to the Massachusetts delegation. Ron Dellums came to ours. Bella Abzug did. Shirley Chisolm came there. Dellums came and stayed with us. He said that he wasn't going to get any publicity, but if the cops arrested us, he was going to get arrested too.

JM: So, were you guys prepared to get arrested that night?

BR: The National Office said they wanted us to sleep. Mike Oliver said "We took speed in Vietnam (I

didn't of course) and so we'll take speed. We got to be able to stay here until we can throw our medals away on Friday, because that's the most important thing. We want you to stay awake." The California delegation sent a Jewish vet from Los Angeles [Sam Schorr], whose parents had been in the CP. He went up there and said "We're not going to take any drugs." (That was the California position). "We didn't have to have permits in Vietnam and we will be damned if the Congress that sent us overseas will make us now."

We voted. We had more votes to sleep. We did sleep. The cops walked through. They said "We're not going to fuck with you. We are waiting for Mayday. We're going to fuck those motherfuckers up."

JM: That was what the cops were saying?

BR: Yeah.

JM: Were you actually able to sleep that night?

BR: Yeah. For ten minutes and then woke up and then went to sleep. It was sort of like Vietnam. We were so fucking happy when we voted to break the law!

JM: So nobody left? The people who voted to stay awake; they didn't leave then; they stayed too?

BR: They stayed. If you are going to vote, then you should follow our democracy, the majority rule. If we vote to sleep, then everybody stays here and supports defying the ruling.

JM: How about the returning of the medals? How did that all go down? What do you remember from that?

BR: The night before, they called a National Office meeting. All the Coordinators and the national officers held a meeting. John Kerry gave a speech saying; "We shouldn't throw our medals away." He said that was too Left, that we had to show respect for them. Therefore, we should collect our medals in a body bag. That way we could still show that the medals were meaningless, but show respect for other people, as well. I said No.

JM: So he wanted to return the medals; he just wanted to do it in a different way? He wanted to just collect them and deliver them?

BR: Yeah. But, not throw them away. I said that we had to throw them away. We had to prove that the Napoleonic statement about "I could get people to die for a piece of tin and ribbon" was false. Napoleon had marshals that had started out as privates and worked their way up to

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Memories of Dewey Canyon III

continued from page 25

be the highest-ranking people. On top of that, he had great food for his men, and he gave medals to people who were super brave and honorable in combat. So, he came up, I think, with the first medals like that; for everyone, not just for officers.

So, I brought up that and the fact that we had to tear at masculinity and turn our backs on medals being worth peoples' lives. This would prove to the world that medals were not worth lives.

JM: How did that vote go down?

BR: I can't remember, but I think it was big.

JM: The next day was the return of the medals?

BR: Right.

JM: Any specific memories that you have of that day?

BR: The ones you've seen in *Only The Beginning*.

JM: How long did it go on? Because all the video coverage is only the same couple of minutes over and over.

BR: It went on for hours and hours. I think twelve or fifteen hundred people. Every group doubled in size. When we started out, we had like twenty people from California. By the end, we had forty or fifty, maybe even more vets, including active duty people, who joined.

JM: Where did they come from?

BR: Television and radio coverage.

JM: They weren't from California, they just showed up?

BR: No. They were from California.

JM: They flew out there and joined in then?

BR: No. They were on active duty at bases near DC.

JM: So there were a bunch of active duty people who joined up at the event?

BR: Yes.

JM: Were there many non-vets at this event or was it all vets?

BR: Very small number, except people's girlfriends and wives who were there.

JM: Was the returning of the medals the culmination of the event?

BR: That was it. We left and

went from there. We were just filled with PTSD and Joy! I mean throwing our medals away was one of the most amazing things for me to do, personally, in terms of atoning and shit, and saying "No Longer."

So then, we went to the DC airport and one of the managers came and said "Well, you can't leave now. (I just thought we could fly, and others thought the same) "You can't leave until tomorrow, not from here but from Baltimore."

JM: Who was telling you that?

BR: The head of the airlines. Whichever airlines. We said fuck that. We just got through sleeping on the Mall. We can sleep in your waiting area. (I had rowdy vets backing me up from California). The guy says "Oh no, let me check with Baltimore." So, they drove us to Baltimore. We got on a plane there, instantly. Because we had just made the pages of the papers by sleeping in DC. Sleeping there would have been nothing to us.

So, a 747 back. They had a bar on the second floor of the airplane. We went up there and it was all the business class people drinking their brains out. The whole group of us went upstairs. The business people said "Whatever you want to drink, we will buy your drinks." We made jokes about people and they said "We support you." In fact, they collected money and bought us free drinks. That was pretty intense.

We get off at LA and we are just higher than a kite, from drinking, no sleep, PTSD, and happiness. The delegation (not me, I had no energy left) can-can'd off the plane.

The local press was all impressed with so many people being from San Bernardino and LA.

JM: So, this is still just April. What about the rest of 1971? What else did you do with VVAW, locally or nationally?

BR: VVAW quadruples in size. After all that coverage, everybody wanted to join. Our generation were TV kids, not radio kids. We knew the power of the press and also the written press. I had been a paperboy, like you.

We knew how to play upon the press. We didn't feel like the press was our enemy. Even though, of course, a lot of times they didn't cover us. Especially as time went on.

People held local Winter Soldier Investigations, all over. In California, we held a gigantic one at Pacifica, at *KPFK* in LA, which was a gigantic leftie event.

JM: So how many of those do you think happened across the country?

BR: At least ten or fifteen.

JM: Since there was no national VVAW newspaper yet, did those just get covered in the local press?

BR: Yes.

JM: For the rest of 1971, did you go to any more of the national demos, like Operation Peace on Earth, or was that more of a regional demo?

BR: Those were more regional.

JM: So, you stayed organizing in California for the rest of the year?

BR: Yeah.

JM: And you were still a Regional Coordinator then?

BR: Yeah.

JM: As 1971 is ending, what thoughts did you have on where the anti-war movement was going, where you were going, where VVAW was going, in general?

BR: We had people refusing to go to Vietnam, in a revolt that we haven't seen in centuries. Plus the anti-war movement was just getting bigger and bigger, holding bigger demos. Every DC, LA, San Francisco, and New York anti-war regional or national demo brought out twice as many people. We always had speakers. We had a ton of money.

JM: The national, or the regional or chapters?

BR: National. I've never been good at collecting money.

JM: I've seen you passing the bucket at events, Barry.

BR: But, that's now!

JM: Any closing comments? Why is what happened in 1971 important to talk about today?

BR: People before us, wouldn't criticize until they got old. Like Japanese vets from the Nanking massacre or American vets from World War II.

Like Band of Brothers. There were scenes in there where they shot prisoners, scenes where they sent silver home, stealing Nazi stuff. We knew that by testifying to war crimes, we couldn't just hide by the medals we got. Our grandkids would know that we lied. By bringing up racism; I mean the Klan was still super strong in the South.

In one the local areas, we were giving a speech to the local ACLU. Afterwards, everybody wanted to talk about Kerry. It was ok. He did a great job! His speech "How do you ask the last person to die in Vietnam."

JM: You weren't in there when he did that, were you?

BR: Not in there, but I heard about it afterwards. I wish I was. There were a bunch of our VVAW people in there.

We had such a reactionary, racist Congressman (Pettis), Republican, evil person, non-vet. So, most of the vets didn't feel it was worth it to lobby him. But other vets went to Senators and stuff.

We were giving that speech to the ACLU. Before us, Chukia Lawton, the wife of Gary Lawton, was asking the ACLU to back her husband who had been arrested and framed on killing two white cops. Afterwards, we went oh, my god, fuck us! And the ACLU was mostly white.

JM: Was that when you first heard of the Gary Lawton case?

BR: I had gone, prior to that, to civil rights demos, in Riverside, and heard him speak. Friends pointed him out as being the Mayor of the Black part of Riverside. Seeing his wife say that he was being framed. We had already worked on other anti-racist stuff. So then, we hooked up with her and started going to the trial and pre-trials and stuff. Gary Lawton's case ended up becoming a major focus of my time and VVAW's.



BARRY ROMO IS A LONG-TIME LEADER OF VVAW. JEFF MACHOTA IS A MEMBER OF VVAW'S NATIONAL STAFF.



Barry Romo (3rd from left) with VVAW doing the can-can on the steps of the Supreme Court at Dewey Canyon III, April, 1971.

A Soldiers' Home Companion

MARC LEVY

Not long ago my neighbor Carol suggested I apply to live at a soldier's home. She knew I'd done a tour in Vietnam as an infantry medic in 1970.

"My father lives there," she said. "The food is great. The rent is cheap. They take care of everything."

I'm on two housing lists but figured why not? I filled out an application; two months later I had an interview at the Chelsea Soldiers' Home in Boston.

On a chilly New England morning, Salem veteran's agent Kim Emerling and I visited the Home. We arrived early and waited in the car. I would have to take a rapid COVID test to enter the three-story building. After a time, a nurse I'll call Hank emerged from the blue canopied front door. A tall, muscular man, he carried a basket filled with medical supplies suited to his present task. Ambling toward us, he stopped abruptly to chat with an elderly female veteran. A few minutes later, he leisurely conversed with the driver of a delivery van. During this time Kim growled words that I will not relate. Finally, as if in a dream—mine or his I could not tell—Hank sauntered toward us. I had the curious impression that here was a man bereft of intellect and medicinal insight.

Leaning into the passenger side window, Hank confided that to properly administer the rapid antigen test I would first have to blow my nose. My neighbor had warned me of this.

I told Hank "No," I could not do that.

"Is that a medical condition?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "My nose will bleed if I blow it."

Nose bleeds were the scourge of my childhood and continue, less frequently, to this day. I've had my nose cauterized several times. Hank returned to the building to check with the administrative staff. He came back

a few minutes later.

"You can't enter without taking the test."

I had a bad feeling. Something told me things would not go right. What to do? I did not blow my nose but reluctantly allowed Hank to swab my nasal passages.

"I'll try to get a good sample," he said and swabbed diligently three times inside each nostril.

As Hank inserted the swab into a container, loud and clear I said, "I'm bleeding."

Hank looked up from his task. He saw the blood on my face. "You weren't kidding," he said.

Undeterred—or, inspired by the sight of red liquid dripping down an old man's chin—Hank said he would return the swab sample to the building, wait fifteen minutes for the results, then revisit me to administer a PCR swab test, also required—with results in five to seven days.

While we waited, I contemplated my reflection in the visor mirror. A shiny red rivulet coursed from my nose, over my lips, down my chin, and splashed onto my tan Carhartt jacket, branding it with a distinctive red scar. Kim handed me tissues to staunch the bleeding. I pushed the tissue into my nose. This is absurd, I thought. Do I really need to be twice bludgeoned by a public servant incapable of mercy? It is one thing to knowingly cause medical injury without thought of consequence. But to even consider inflicting soft-tissue insult a second time is a most ricky-tick cause for alarm.

When Hank returned, I announced, "Never mind. I've lost enough blood for today."

Almost cheerfully, Hank said he would talk with admin to see if I could enter the building without the second test. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Instead, I imagined

calling in heavy artillery from LZ Ranch—a remote firebase in Cambodia which I'd had the pleasure to occupy while it was overrun—and moments later I swore I heard the welcoming sound of incoming 155 shells whistling overhead. In the eye of my mind, I witnessed their fiery crumpBANGs exploding upon the building's immense front door. Seconds later I fancied power diving Cobra gunships unleashing salvos of white-tailed rockets, 40 mike-mike grenades, and withering miniguns into the black tar roof. I imagined that inside the home it was pure havoc. I was momentarily elated. Please note that I am not discounting the proven efficacy of the B40 rocket-propelled grenade launcher, the primitive but deadly Chicom grenade, or the wicked tripod-mounted 30 caliber machine gun. In my reverie, only American weapons were employed. When Hank returned, he asked that I call admin. I did so. A woman I'll call Linda stated I could not enter the building without taking the slow result PCR test. Three times, quite clearly, I half-shouted, "Miss, I'm bleeding as we speak!" Three times Admin Linda ignored my distress. Anger. I had murderous anger and wilting anxiety but somehow asked Linda if the interview could be done by phone.

"Absolutely not," she declared.

I inquired about rescheduling the war. Pardon me. The visit. Linda asked me to wait in the car while she consulted a doctor.

"You can't enter the building without the PCR test," she sternly repeated. "But don't worry. The swab will not enter your brain."

Perhaps not my brain—but what about hers? I called in another airstrike. Four squadrons of B52s roared overhead. When the trembling earth quieted and the thick smoke cleared, alone amongst the ruins, there

stood Linda, grinning triumphantly. At this point, bleeding and agitated, I somehow summoned a civil tone to terminate the visit. Veterans' agent Emerling, at the wheel all this time, handed me a fresh set of tissues, then drove us back to home-sweet-Salem.

Two weeks later, for reasons known only to itself, the Chelsea Soldiers' Home called and asked if I wanted to reschedule my visit.

"Of course, you'll have to take the COVID test," said the polite female caller.

"Ahhhhh...No," I said. I noted that complaints had been filed with the Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Affairs. With the VA Inspector General.

There came a gulping noise. "Oh," she said.

"Oh," I echoed, and politely hung up.

A month later I received a letter from the VA IG. My complaint had been forwarded to the Massachusetts Secretary of Veterans Affairs. A full two months after the initial nasal attack I received a phone call from the director of the Chelsea Soldiers' Home. Our conversation was cordial. I emphasized the beguiling way my conspicuous bleeding was ignored—by Hank, the Nurse and Adminda Linda. The director offered to consider my suggestions on how to improve patient care in anomalous circumstances. Several times he encouraged me to reapply to the Soldiers' Home.

Politely, I said, "That's not gonna happen. But thank you for calling."



MARC LEVY SERVED AS A MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 FIRST CAVALRY IN VIETNAM/CAMBODIA 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME.COM.

After Two Decades US To Pull Out of Afghanistan



WELL, I MANAGED TO FORGET ALL ABOUT VIETNAM, SO I GUESS I CAN FORGET ABOUT THIS...

Apr 15 2021 (9523)

DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group

Letter to the Editor

GARY SCHAFT

July 11, 2021

Dear Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.,

I am a longtime supporter of VVAW and want to complement everyone who wrote those excellent articles for the spring issue of *The Veteran*. I feel that 1971 was a turning point in United States history when Vietnam veterans came to Washington to protest and speak out against the

atrocities of the Vietnam War. This clearly illustrated to most Americans that the Vietnam War was immoral and must be ended.

In 1971, I was a Social Studies teacher in northern New Jersey and was taking evening courses at Montclair State College. I was fortunate to also receive an occupational deferment for teaching but felt a strong responsibility to do all I could to stop the war. As a result, I became active in the

protest movement and attended the huge rally held in Washington on April 24, 1971. I did what I could but always wished I could have done more to stop the horrible war. I feel that Vietnam veterans are the greatest Americans of my generation because of what they endured in that unpopular war. But also because they are still speaking out for the rights and needs of veterans. In addition, VVAW is committed to the struggle for peace

and social and economic justice for all people. Finally, I applaud VVAW for speaking out against the fascist mob who attacked the Capital on January 6, 2021. As long as I am here, I will continue to support VVAW because this is what America should stand for.

Sincerely,
Gary Schaft



Keep On Singing

MICHAEL ORANGE

It's the third Thursday of the month. I park my van at the Minnesota Veterans Home in Minneapolis, and, with my music briefcase over one shoulder, music stand case, and mic stand strapped over the other, I carry my small amp and fifty-five-year-old guitar to the fourth floor's Memory Care Unit. Everywhere are staff, family caretakers, visitors, and other volunteers like me. A woman with a therapy dog coming the other way pauses to say hello and, "Thank you for your service." I'm donning a hat that I only wear here at the Veterans Home. Its gaudy embroidered message shouts that I served with the Marines in Vietnam. It's a bridge to the veterans I've come to entertain.

I will use the same song set here in the Memory Care Unit that I played earlier in the week at two other facilities at the Veterans Home, the residence building for veterans who do not need intensive nursing care, and the Adult Day Center. My friend, Jim, joined me for both of those other performances to tell jokes in between my songs. Music and mirth, that's our schtick. We met playing pickleball at the YMCA three years ago. He always had a joke that he delivered with whatever convincing Norwegian, Irish, British, or Russian accent the joke demanded. He'd have all the guys in the locker room laughing. So now, at the Veterans Home, he gets these old vets roaring.

Jim is convinced that, before he delivers his best jokes, he needs one or two "groaners," puns or one-liners in the style of Rodney Dangerfield. He explained that the vets want to laugh and the groaners make them hunger for a good joke. Nick is one of our favorites at the Adult Day Center. He sits in the front row and, good joke or bad, he often exclaims "Oh, brother!" and triggers a secondary round of merriment. I invite ideas for songs. For example, one of the younger vets, Richard, suggested Frank Sinatra's

macho, signature song "My Way." "Only if you will sing it with me," I challenged him. Many times now, Richard and I have crooned the song together, Las Vegas style, for the group.

"Oh, brother!"

Jim and I listen to the stories from the vets in the residence building and the Adult Day Center: The Special Forces vet who had completed more than forty parachute jumps, and another paratrooper who was wounded in World War II's Battle of the Bulge. The three sailors who saw combat off the coast of Vietnam on board the aircraft carrier, USS Hancock, and the guided-missile cruisers, USS Boston and the USS Buchanan. I was delighted to meet Mark at the residence and learn that we both served as grunts in Vietnam with the First Marines during the same period, only in different regiments. We both fought the North Vietnamese Army in the jungles and the Que Son mountains on Operation Durham Peak. Turns out that Mark and I met at the Veterans Home on July 20, 2019, exactly fifty years after the first moonwalk. Although people at least my age still remember that day with as much clarity as JFK's assassination, I first heard about this momentous accomplishment the day I left Vietnam eight months later. Mark burst into laughter when I recounted this experience. He had a similar story. Both of us had honed similar survival strategies of ignoring the rest of The World to maintain a laser focus on keeping ourselves and our fellow Marines alive.

As the automatic door to the Memory Care Unit opens, soft music mixes with the faint smell from adult diapers doing their job. I walk between a big-screen TV playing an episode of Bonanza with the sound off and a half dozen old men sleeping, slumped and slack-jawed in lounge chairs on wheels. Becky, the unit's recreation director, attends to the man I call

"Mr. Hey." She sees me, waves hello, and I stage my load under one of the eight-foot windows that flood the room with warm morning sunlight. I have twenty minutes to set it all up, pee, and get a cup of hot tea for my aging vocal cords.

I have prepared a dozen songs from my coming-of-age period in the late '60s and early '70s for the twenty-five men Becky has wheeled into position in front of me. Most appear to still be asleep. I introduce myself as a fellow veteran and begin belting out "With a Little Help from My Friends," trying to channel Joe Cocker's interpretation of the Beatles song. "What would you do if I sang out of tune? Would you stand up and walk out on me?" I know there is little chance of that happening with this captive audience. As I launch into the Beatles' "A Day in the Life," "Mr. Hey" begins his loud chant from the back of the room: "Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!" I sing closer to the mic as Becky wheels him to a different room on the floor.

Three caregiving wives are also in the audience plus other staff members who drift in and out, tending to individual veterans or just listening. I see some heads bob with the music, some feet tap, some hands wave. For most, there is no reaction whatsoever, but it doesn't matter. Becky applauds loudly after every song along with the wives and other staff. A couple of the veterans join them haltingly. One veteran to my left waves both hands enthusiastically with a broad smile on his face.

I hold up my guitar for all to see, a Gibson J45 Dreadnaught that I bought with the \$187 I requested from my parents for my high school graduation in 1966. I describe, with some degree of pride, how a falling lamp gouged its face; how my friend's wife stepped on it and cracked the body; and how it survived a winter hitchhiking trip to New Orleans. The penultimate story is how my cousin set it on fire. He said

he could take care of a slight warping of the body by heating it with an iron. He didn't know that in 1966, Gibson used a nitrocellulose lacquer finish that was highly flammable. He did his best to refinish it, but the affected area remains clearly visible like an iron-shaped birthmark. I bang out an E chord, the best sounding chord on any quality guitar, and it reverberates throughout the room.

After forty minutes of performing, I ask Becky to pass out the sing-along booklets I brought and ask for requests. They have thirty-three songs to choose from, and Becky asks for "Leaving on a Jet Plane" by John Denver. We get through the first verse and I notice that one of the men off to my right in the front row is crawling on his hands and knees towards me. I stop playing and bring it to Becky's attention. "No problem, Michael," she says calmly. "You can keep singing." Becky brings the man to his feet and they dance to the music. I struggle to hold back soft tears—and keep on singing.



"It's a good day. Nobody's shooting at me." For thirty years, that mantra caged the ghosts from Michael's war experiences, but at great expense psychologically. His book, Fire in the Hole: A Mortarman in Vietnam (2001), described his wartime experiences as a combat marine. His new book, Embracing the Ghosts: PTSD and the Vietnam Quagmire, serves as a bookend to those stories. Michael held thirty-four paying jobs including one that lasted thirty years as a city planner for the City of Minneapolis. Currently, he provides environmental consulting services to local governments via his company, Orange Environmental, LLC. He joined VVAW at the Washington DC protest in April 1971.

Bayonet Etiquette

"You can get a lot done with a bayonet,
but sitting on one is uncomfortable"
—from *Secondhand Time*, Svetlana Alexievich

I. Things you can do with a bayonet

Kill people.

Persuade people to do things they don't want to do
by threatening to kill them.

Control unruly crowds
by threatening to kill them.

Control peaceful crowds
by threatening to kill them.

Control your wife
by threatening to kill her.

Rob a bank or convenience store
by threatening to kill the clerk.

Wave it in the air on your front porch or in your backyard
to demonstrate your manliness.

Eat peas with it (this one's challenging).

Kill snakes (which I did one morning in Vietnam in 1967
for no good reason I can think of).

Bash open your C-ration cans
if your John Wayne can opener is broken
or otherwise unavailable.

II. Things you should not do with a bayonet

Sit on it.

—W. D. Ehrhart

Veterans Day

Years
Away from over there
I traveled through the decades,
Through the bottles, the kegs

Names and places I don't
Remember or never knew.
The faces and bodies,
They're not new

The war is never more
Than a few minutes away;
At a restaurant or bar,
I sit facing the door.

I always avoid
Where there's a crowd.
Being ever vigilant
When walking around.

Here is different,
The area near the wall.
Among the thousands
A calmness befalls.

The people, the faces,
I've never seen
Yet there were no strangers
Anywhere about me.

I looked out over the crowd;
I saw the fortunate,
The humble, the proud.

There is a camaraderie
That can only be shared
By those who were there.
For a while there is peace.

—Daniel E. Rihn

A Tale of a High School Class Going to War

ED WHITE (REVIEWER)

The Boys of St. Joe's '65 in the Vietnam War

by Dennis G. Pregent
(McFarland & Co, 2020)

In writing this short 232-page book, Dennis G. Pregent has created a one-of-a-kind story about 11 of his high school friends who went to Vietnam. He shares their experiences and brings the reader up to where they are today. I am not aware of any author, or study of this kind.

In the graduating class of 1965 from Saint Joseph's Catholic High School, North Adams, Massachusetts, there were 80 women and 66 men, of which 40 men served in the Vietnam era. According to an unofficial statistic of those whose names appear on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC, 29% were Catholics; another 29% were categorized as Protestant, and 16 % coming from Baptist churches. So, the author's 1965 class was in line with the Catholic church's push on anti-communism and support for the war.

The students of Saint James came from blue-collar families where the mother stayed at home. Most of the group had fathers who served in World War II. North Adams has the same population today as it did in 1965: 13,000 residents. Perched in the foothills of the Berkshire mountains, North Adams is described as a Norman Rockwell kind of a town, and the photos and description of the town

certainly confirm that notion.

Pregent's book is divided into two parts: in the first part—*My Vietnam*—the author describes his own experience. The second part, *Their Vietnam*, describes the life and experiences of his other eleven schoolmates. Before the two parts begin, the author has a map (I love maps!) where he indicates where each classmate served. The author also researched the *Corps Tactical Zones, 1963-1973: US Armed Forces Organizational Structure*, which I found to be very helpful. Additionally, he referenced *Military Occupational Specialties* which details each branch of military service. Again, I found this a unique contribution offering an important context for how the war was organized.

The format of the chapters of the veterans goes into deep research of each of those classmates who served. I do mean deep research. Dennis Pregent spent hours on the phone; he wrote numerous letters, attended the 50th Saint James High School Reunion, conducted extensive interviews, and reviewed countless family photos. He begins each chapter with their experience of being in Vietnam, then the author details each individual's life growing up in North Adams. He concludes each chapter with a description of where each classmate lives today. I believe each chapter could be a novel, as he has poured everything into it.

For example, Mike Gorman was an Army Helicopter Crew Chief/Gunner. In the *Growing Up* section of the book, Pregent traces his family history coming from England and then each family member and the places they moved, high school jobs, where he studied, what he studied, and many photos of the family, as well as his military decorations.

Perhaps the most fraught with emotion was Russell Roulier, a Marine, as was the author. The detail of the firefight that killed Russell could only be described by those who were present. Again, the author also goes into the details of growing up in North Adams. There are family photos of Roulier growing up; photos of his girlfriend, and vacation pictures with friends; as well as his final rites at Notre Dame Church in North Adams. What really stands out is the telegram that his family received from the Commandant of the Marine Corps informing them of Roulier's death, relating the details of funeral expenses. There are excerpts from letters the Marine wrote his parents from Parris Island and Vietnam, ending with the last letter he sent his sister.

What I found interesting is that he includes in these chapters the story of the class historian, Carol Bleau Boucher, a war protestor. Again, Pregent goes into the details of her family, and the arguments she had with her father over the Vietnam War. Boucher's father was the town barber.

He fought in the Pacific during World War II. Carol was dating John Hartlage from a small town in Massachusetts. He later went to Vietnam where he died in 1968 at Dong Ha Combat Base. He was in the Seabees. Due to the injuries and deaths of high school friends, she became even more resolved to protest. The author ends her section by noting that she drives a sporty two-seater Mazda Miata and sports a Boston Red Sox hat. Hmmm...

The author ends with an Epilogue. Seven of his classmates served in the Army; three in the Marine Corps and one in the Navy. Of the 11 men, nine received, or are receiving, disability payments. All received an Honorable Discharge. All were proud of their service. Most continue to think it was a winnable war, although they now believe politicians or military leaders did not know what they were doing at the time.

In the end, the author realized he had PTSD, and in 2017 became part of a therapy group. The book was therapy for Dennis Pregent, and we are grateful for what he has shared. The book is enlightening and will be long remembered.



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

The Shadows From Which We Rise

RG CANTALUPO

From a new memoir by rg cantalupo.

Time.
Time drifts on an endless dream.
I wanted to be a writer. John Steinbeck. Someone.
Someone.
I wanted to love Janice forever.
Want.
My wormhole filled with want.
With daydreams and dream shards.
With gray images from a past life like cardboard men on a shooting range—two-dimensional, empty of expression, empty of life.
Time before, time after, and time now.
Time in the hospital, one day slipping into another, one week into two, until two and a half months are gone.
When I was lying on the ground after I got wounded, time slowed into

a flicker of an eye, a half-step caught mid-air.
I heard each of my heart beats like seconds ticking away on a windup clock—tick, beat, tick—tick, beat, tick.
And as the blood poured out, puddled beneath my back and soaked my head, time stilled to a slug's slow crawl.
As I lay on my back, stars flickered through the smoke, the night so quiet, so quiet except for the dull drone in my ears, my arms and legs heavy as lead pipes floating in the warm pool rising under my body.
Time before, time after, and time now, each moving at relative speeds.
X-ed out, sweat-drenched, mud-born days, days burnt like the pages of a rice paper calendar in a hootch I lit on fire.
Interminable days humping through the bush drifting into endless

nights on listening patrols, nights so long I felt like I was falling in a falling dream, falling and falling through the pitch dark until I woke alive in a misted dawn, a dawn so hazy even the bushes danced in the mist like ghosts.
Time in the hospital in Chu Chi—one week there and four in Saigon—weeks punctuated by intense moments of ripping-off bandages, each bandage taped over a new, raw layer of skin, tearing off the old so it bled to prevent infection, day by day, scabs growing over the filament of the war—monsoon nights streaming into the wintry mornings in Japan, mid-March greys sifting into sun-bright April—February's monsoon morphing into March and now April's Spring, April blooming into soon-to-come May.
Today, a Monday in April.
I will be going home soon. That's what I'm told.
The end of May, or early June probably.
Summer in Yokohama.
Summer in LA.
A little over a year now since I'd gone to boot camp, ten months since I'd seen Janice.
She still looked like a cheerleader at Bell High School in the photos she sent: strawberry blond hair, blue, blue eyes, rose-blushed cheeks.
God, how I loved her.
In Monterey.
Before.
I take out a piece of paper, gaze at the blank page, and then scribble words with my right hand.
Dear Janice,
I'm sorry I haven't written. I write you over and over in my mind, but when I try to write the words down on paper they're not there.
I want to tell you I am fine, that I am the same person that kissed you at the airport, my face the same, my laughter, my voice—but I cannot say that.
I am not the same.
My wounds are healing. The physical therapy is helping me to move my left arm. Little by little, my strength is coming back.
But something is wrong with me,

Janice, and I don't know what it is.
I don't feel right.
I can't remember things.
I can't feel things.
I can't feel this body I live inside.
When I look in the mirror, I see a stranger.
Sometimes I think the doctors took more than shrapnel from my brain.
I think they took some part of my being that made me who I was.
At night, I still feel the war in my bones like monsoon rain, still wake up drenched with sweat, still have the same shakes that shivered through me my last month in the bush.
The war feels more real to me than home.
Fragments of firefights play over and over in my dreams, and I wake up with my fingers clutched tight around an imaginary trigger guard.
I know you don't want to hear this.
I know you don't want to hear about the war.
I know
And then I stop, read the letter over, fold it up, and put it in my pajama pocket.
Maybe I will send it.
No.
I will write a different letter to send.
Or I won't.



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

Invisible Wounds, Part Three

JOSEPH GIANNINI

October 30, 2013

Veteran: Joseph Giannini
VA Claim: Chronic Ischemic Coronary Heart Disease caused by exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam 1967-1968
Service: USMC 1966-1970
Military Occupational Status: Infantry
Rank: Captain USMC retired 0101088

Veteran's Statement in support of Agent Orange Claim

I am 73 years old. Since 1973 I have practiced criminal defense law as a trial attorney. I am known for taking on difficult cases, including organized crime, drug cartels, and murders.

In 1975, during my first felony trial, I defended an Army Vietnam War Veteran who was framed, by overzealous anti-crime police officers, for selling drugs. He had been indicted under the recently enacted Rockefeller Drug Laws. He was facing an A-1 mandatory sentence of 15-Life. The same sentence for a Murder 2 conviction. He went into the laws of death and was found not guilty.

My next felony trial could be my last, I am defending an Army Desert Storm Veteran, being held without bail for 18 months. Why? Because the judge and ADA, know my client is a combat veteran and claim he is too dangerous to be out on bail. He too was framed by crooked police officers. This coming trial and the one above could be great bookends for my career.

In 2010, I signed up, at the urging of a WWII Veteran, with the VA for health care. That same year I filed two service-connected claims. One for PTSD and the other for hearing loss. Both are pending before the Veteran's Board of Appeals. What is that I heard? "Delay, delay, deny, delay, delay, die."

On a regular basis, I began to visit the new VA Clinic in Riverhead, New York. Dr. Richard Castagnino was assigned as my Primary Care Physician. He proved to be a nonsense outstanding PCP.

In the early fall of 2012, I visited Dr. Castagnino for another checkup at the Clinic. Moments after arriving, a VA Nurse brought me into her office. She interviewed me and did the regular tests. Then she walked me into the Doctor's office. I took a seat and waited while he, seated, intently read. After several minutes of silence, he abruptly got up and indicated for me to follow him. I went into the hallway. He turned back to me holding my EKG results, and said, "You have an abnormally low heart rate. And you must go to

our Northport Hospital for further tests." I did not even think to ask a few questions before Dr. Castagnino went back into his office and shut his door. A man of few words.

Thus began the long trips, eighty-five miles to and from, to the Northport VA Hospital, for a series of tests to determine if I had heart disease. No way I could have. A low heart rate is common amongst athletes. I, for certain, was athletic from my early teens to the present. I worked out regularly with weights; still do. I wrestled, played baseball and football. At 18 I got addicted to surfing. I still surf, even through winters. At Parris Island and Officer Candidate School, I scored the highest on the Physical Fitness Tests. My weight, 145 lbs., is the same as in my teens.

For the next several months I was given a series of tests at the Northport VA Hospital. These included the following: Electrocardiogram, Stress test, Chest X-Ray, Nuclear Scans, Echocardiogram, and Holter Monitor. The doctors and technicians hardly said anything to me about the tests. I assumed they were all negative. Not a word was spoken about Agent Orange. Nor did I think about it re: heart disease.

Nikki, my spouse for 35 years, was not satisfied with the VA testing. She was born with several congenital heart defects. On January 5, 2010, Nikki underwent open-heart surgery to repair her damaged heart. It was done on the advice of her long-time cardiologist Dr. Geoffrey Bergman who practices at New York-Presbyterian. Nikki convinced him to take me on as a new patient, even though he had stopped doing so.

In December 2012, Dr. Bergman started the same series of tests I had gone through at the VA. With the same negative results. In early July 2013, he told Nikki and I that he could not justify doing a Cardiac Catheterization. Nikki insisted he do it based on her observations of my behavior. Dr. Bergman relented and scheduled the test for July 24, 2013.

On July 23, 2013, I appeared in Nassau County Court for Joseph Lorenzo the Desert Storm Vet. After his case was put over for trial, we spoke in the holding area. He was still being detained without bail. I reassured him the trial would start in August. Not sure whether I said anything about the test coming up the following day.

On July 24, 2013, Nikki and I drove into Manhattan for my test appointment at NYP. While driving she reassured me that a Cardio Cat test was not painful and lasted about

a half-hour. Nikki knew because she previously had two. Further, Dr. Bergman, who she trusted completely, would do the test.

That morning Dr. Bergman's technicians prepared me for the Cardio Cat Test. Then he took over. Sometime went by, and I fell asleep. I woke and sensed that way more than a half-hour had come and gone. Dr. Bergman approached and knelt close to me. And said, "I am humbled by the number of blockages in your coronary arteries. You need surgery." I was taken aback. Could not grasp what he meant. Nor did I feel a sense of urgency. I was taken into the recovery room.

Nikki was there waiting for me with Doctor Karl Krieger, a heart surgeon. He explained to us that I had Chronic Ischemic Coronary Heart Disease. Nikki asked how serious it was. He replied 90% of my coronary arteries are blocked. That me being in excellent shape had put off a heart attack for 30 years. Now it could occur at any moment. He advised Quadruple Bypass Surgery there and then, which meant I would be staying for the operation and recovery. I told Dr. Krieger that is impossible. I have clients depending on me. Got dressed and Nikki and I left the hospital. Her cell phone rang as we entered a restaurant nearby. It was Dr. Bergman. He wanted me to come back immediately. I refused but did agree to return on August 1, 2013, for the advised surgery. Thinking it would be enough time to get my practice in order. Turned out it was not.

On July 31, 2013, Nikki and I returned to Manhattan and stayed overnight in a hotel nearby NYP. On August 1, 2013, just after 6 am, I was in the pre-op room. A young doctor, part of the surgical team, made small talk with me. I came to near midnight on August 1, 2013.

Then, five days in the ICU. Nurses round the clock. Some could not hide their concern. One, a moment after she started my second blood transfusion, came close and whispered, "You know you've been through a lot." She too, and all the others, above and beyond.

Early on the morning of August 2, 2013, the same young doctor who spoke with me in pre-op, came to see me. During his brief visit, he told me they had opened me twice. I thought that could be the reason I woke up near midnight. Later that morning Dr. Krieger came by with a small entourage. He made some small talk avoiding any specifics about the operations. Within several minutes he was gone. Entourage and all.

After eight days I left NYP

weighing 133 lbs. Down 14 from 147 lbs. And physically the weakest I have ever been. My recovery so far has suffered several troubling setbacks. I learned there is no cure for heart disease.

Through all the above I did not realize the VA, since October 30, 2010, has presumed ischemic heart disease is associated with exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. The above decision is, better late than never, good for Vietnam Vets still alive and suffering from ischemic heart disease. They can get benefits and care but never a cure. All Vietnam War Veterans were unknowing victims of our leaders' unlawful decision to use chemical warfare against the Vietnamese. These weapons, mostly Agent Orange, were sprayed on the Vietnamese for ten years! The spraying caused widespread destruction of Vietnam's jungles and rice paddies.

Surprise, surprise, the chemicals used in Agent Orange got into the bodies of those exposed. Did "The Best and the Brightest" foresee the coming, ongoing and unrelenting human tragedies? They were bright enough to know none would ever be held accountable.

Respectfully,

Joseph Giannini
 Capt. USMC Retired

Note: My defense of Veteran Joseph Lorenzo was my last trial. The jury found him not guilty of all charges. Free at last.

Note: On June 23, 2015, the VA, after delaying five years, settled my claims. They decided I was totally and permanently disabled due to my service-connected disabilities and unemployable.

Note: Since my open-heart surgery I got two more stents and a Pacemaker. Ominous note: I have two sons from different women. The oldest from my first marriage is Schizophrenic. The youngest from my second marriage is Bipolar. Two more human tragedies, amongst the millions, from so long ago.



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.

I Want to Kill a Commie for Mommy

JOHN ZUTZ (REVIEWER)

I Want to Kill a Commie for Mommy
 by John Lindquist
 (2021)

This self-published memoir is a series of vignettes memorializing the author's time in the Marine Corps. It includes basic training as well as his Vietnam experiences.

Marine boot camp was much stricter than my experience in the Army. Though we were in different services, and we served in different areas of Vietnam, the Vietnam section of the book includes many experiences that were similar to my own.

Driving down roads that were turned to tunnels by the tree growth, filling sandbags and building bunkers, punished with crappy duty for minor infractions, meeting at night in secluded areas to smoke dope. Been there, done that. Only the names are different.

In fact, I think this is where Lindquist's story stands out. I've talked to many Vietnam vets, and I've

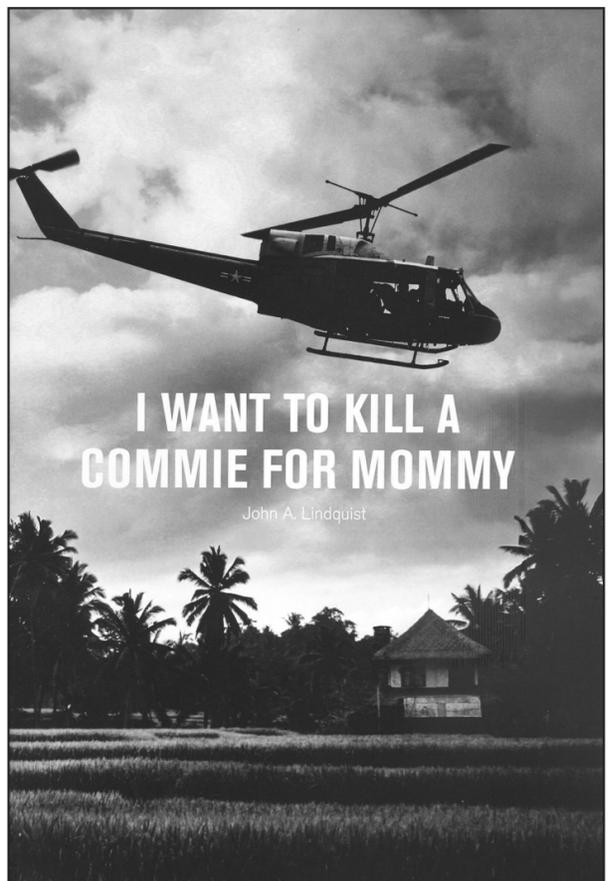
read many versions of others' time "in country." The refreshing part of Lindquist's story is the open way he discusses the frequency of drug use, and the variety of drug availability. I've heard, "Oh, we smoked a little pot, but never in the field." I know from my experience that's a lie, and according to Lindquist, the Marine experience wasn't that different.

Lindquist's writing inexperience is obvious. In the beginning, he introduces characters without giving their background (though this improves later in the manuscript). He uses Marine jargon, and though there is a glossary included, it is attached to the back. I'm sure Wendy—who got the hand-written version into readable condition—cleaned up the spelling, but there are few obvious typos.

This isn't the great Vietnam novel, but even with these faults, it's worth a read.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



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

Gold Star Mothers

TOM GERY

I stood there with watery eyes, a thickening throat, and feelings of sadness. Was this a flashback? My war was more than a half-century old. Did it have something to do with my failure to listen a lifetime ago?

I was on holiday. The excursion included a B&B accommodation. Although the host was out when I arrived the key was available. I fiddled with the antique front door lock not seeing the symbol of wartime sacrifice on the wall near the doorway.

The circa 1840's red brick farmhouse included fireplaces in every room, wide plank floors, high ceilings, and a memorial. Standing in the living room I noticed the symbol not seen on the way in. A son of America had lived within these old walls; in his place an award of honor no one wants, the Gold Star Service Flag.

An antique display cabinet held the memories. My body felt a shiver of emotion as I learned what happened to a nineteen-year-old infantryman. Prominently centered was the photograph of a handsome youth in uniform. The Tropical Lightning patch of the 25th Infantry Division on his sleeve. Elements of the Division were in Mosul, Iraq in August 2005. To the left, I saw the tale's tragic end, a Veteran's Burial Flag. Custom dictates the flag be given to the next of kin.

The soldier's story continued. A group picture of young men in battledress, smiling, happy, radiating a gung-ho message. Next, the image of GI's mugging for the camera while sitting on top of a five million dollar Stryker fighting vehicle. The picture was a symbol of national blood and treasure. To the right, the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge earned by "grunts" who fought in active ground combat. There was a Bronze Star awarded for heroism and a purple heart adjacent to the patriotic symbol given to the fallen warrior's family. I heard more from the mother herself. On a deadly day in the summer of '05, a sniper's bullet took her oldest of two children, the only son.

In 1969, I refused to talk to a different Gold Star Mother. Years later I regretted the callous indifference. The times and circumstances were different then. I was 21, recently returned from Vietnam with separation

papers in hand. Once again a civilian I thought the horrors of war were behind me.

The Gold Star Mother's son was an Army helicopter pilot. I was part of the low-level scout team searching for the enemy. His aircraft was hit by several rounds. He crashed in flames. My pilot took us in to pick him and the observer up. He was on fire, badly injured. Fourteen days later the unit's command conducted a memorial service.

The deceased pilot's parents learned in a letter from the new platoon leader of my part in the rescue. They wrote to me in Vietnam; the letter arrived at my home. I was shocked. They lived thirty miles away.

These parents were reaching out to someone who had been with their son at the end. They assumed we were buddies. They were expressing gratitude for my actions that day. Words of grief were in the letter, they wanted to meet me to say it in person and hear about their boy. They longed for some closure.

They did not have the full picture. I was not their son's friend because of his rank, nor did I like him. I saw him shoot at innocent civilians like a little boy with a BB gun shooting birds for fun. He seemed to disdain anyone not white. I wanted no part of meeting his relatives. What could I say? They were desperate to fill in some blanks for themselves and his wife and baby. Survivors hold on to memories; to grieve is to remember. He was their hero. There were medals awarded posthumously. The memory was to be honored and I was part of the memory, like it or not. I cared little for their memories or their grief. I ignored the second letter. Years later after rereading the letters I felt disgusted for my behavior. Was I feeling guilt when looking at the story of the PFC from the 25th Infantry Division?

My wife and I spent a couple of nights at the B&B which included a full country-style breakfast. We being her only guests she had some time to talk. I drank coffee and listened while she cooked and spoke about her hero. We both were tearful. I felt that lump in my throat again. Was I feeling her sorrow or my regret?

His mom drew a vivid picture of the PFC's life before the Army. He



Gold Star Mother Ann Pine at Dewey Canyon IV, May 12, 1982.

was a good kid, a proficient student, and part of his tightly knit rural community. They were a Christian family involved with their church. Military service was part of his mother's family history; uncles in WWII and Korea. I saw photographs of men in Class A uniforms with ribbons and medals. They were his role models. As a little guy, he had a GI Joe figure with a uniform and toy gun. The PFC enlisted after graduation. The parents hoped he wouldn't but respected his decision; their love and emotional support never wavered.

Although the broken heart would never be whole, the military funeral at Arlington gave her some comfort. The Gold Star Mother felt honored; the dreadful sacrifice recognized. "The Old Guard" service members were present: casket team; firing party; bugler. The grieving woman

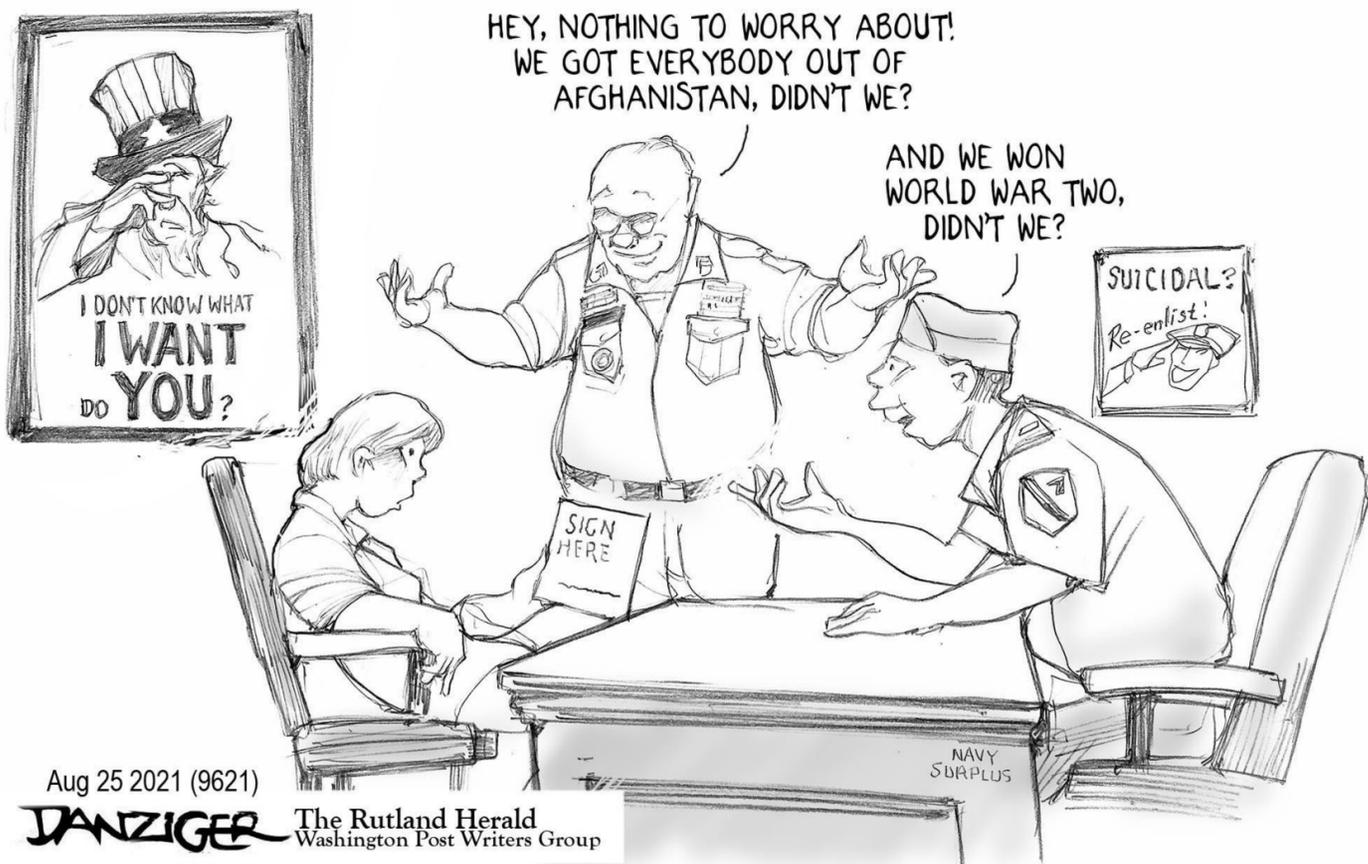
appreciated the customs and traditions guiding the process of a nation saying goodbye to her boy: The flag-draped across the casket later given to her; taps played; three volleys fired; three spent shell casings; three words - duty, honor, country.

The sixteenth anniversary of her soldier son's death was approaching. So was the fourteenth anniversary of her husband's death. He could not overcome the loss of his namesake. She grieved for two. This time I listened and had my answers.



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

Army Recruiting After Kabul Withdrawal Not Getting Any Easier



Aug 25 2021 (9621)

DANZIGER The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group