

THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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On the Necessity of Struggle

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

Our politics and political unity were forged in our opposition to the war in Vietnam. Some of us were drafted, others volunteered. Many fought in the jungles, some in the rear or offshore. Many of our fathers and uncles fought fascism. All of us changed over there, often more intensely after we returned. As VVAW emerged from the late 1960s, we fought to bring our brothers home and to stop the senseless killing of the Vietnamese people. We realized the Vietnamese had the right to defend themselves and that we were on the wrong side. We realized that our service did nothing to advance freedom or democracy abroad or at home.

Some of us lost comrades and part of ourselves to the war while in Southeast Asia. Others lost the struggle once back home, whether from the ravages of Agent Orange, PTSD, or any other effects of the dehumanizing war we engaged in. Our advancing understanding of the war and our role in ending it helped us realize that a fight for democracy was going on in the streets of the US. Our struggle continued as we fought to save Vietnamese lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters affected by that war.

Our strength was in organizing. One lonely picket sign is an honorable

start, but the power for change lies in organizing others and educating the public about the true costs of war and the role of the US Empire.

We learned that the Military Industrial Complex would use us and spit us out. It was up to us to save each other. We fought for recognition. We fought for care from the VA. We fought against the senseless loss of life. Not just for GIs, but also for Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians.

The nuances of war and the rights to self-defense and self-determination meant that most of us did not emerge as pacifists but as anti-imperialists who engaged in struggle and solidarity. When imperialists test the boundaries of international norms, we understand the importance of speaking out.

As such, we recognize:

- the imperial might and expansionist impulses of Putin and his Russian cronies. The struggle for self-determination and freedom from Russian control of the Ukrainian government and people is still paramount;

- the difference between engaging in self-defense and the unjust destruction of a population. The Palestinian people must have their state without the puppet regime imposed by Israel. A permanent cease-fire is the first step toward reconciliation. The US can bring about this cease-fire by stopping all arms



shipments to Israel; and

- the chaos that is spreading throughout countries that don't catch the spotlight of global media. Autocratic rulers and armed criminals create humanitarian crises that ripple across the world as people flee their homelands in search of safety and better lives for their families.

Those of you reading this have survived (mostly) the damaging effects of war. Some of us are now seeing our problems accelerated due to what we experienced and were exposed to. In many cases, our aging has exacerbated these mental and physical injuries—thereby seeming to run our clocks out sooner than desired.

We know that combatants and

non-combatants of every war will also carry these burdens into their futures.

The number of vets who take their lives every day is still unacceptable and unpardonable. It is a cost of war deferred and ignored. But we cannot condone or applaud a vet taking his own life to make a political statement. The words that they may say or write before death can in no way balance that loss of life. Being part of the struggle means we keep engaging with others.

VVAW welcomes vets and non-vets from all eras as they come to an understanding of the costs of war and imperialism. Many of us have found

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New VVAW Library and Learning Center Update

KHOI TRAN

Binh Dinh, Vietnam March 14, 2024

I have been working with the many officials that the Library of Vietnam Project has befriended since 1999. My first translation was with the People's Committee of Bong Son in Hoai Nhon District, Bong Son, Binh Dinh in December 2011. This is my thirteenth year. Now, we are back in Binh Dinh Province. It is in this province, where I was born, that I worked at various jobs, including in the private sector for an East Indian National Sugar Cane Company and, more recently, in the public sector for the Provincial People's Committee Department of Planning and Investment.

Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans Against the War grant, we are now building a library at An Nghia, and it is our history with the provincial governments here in Binh Dinh that has eased our introduction. An Nghia is an impoverished area near An Khe. This is the first foreign NGO grant in this district since the end of the Vietnam War on April 30, 1975. The process of working through the paperwork has been extended, but



Groundbreaking ceremony for the third VVAW Library and Learning Center in Vietnam, An Nghia, March 4, 2024.

the dedicated resolute desire inspired by the VVAW grant has spurred on the District Ministry of Education and Training. The groundbreaking

event for this library has kicked off this project! The kids are all over the place, excited by the prospect of the new VVAW library sponsored by an American NGO!

working with the District official, Mr. Hiep. He is a very effective leader, and we are lucky to work with his able staff again. ☮

Upon my return to the USA in early April, I will make the initial Project Progress Report. I am now

KHOI TRAN IS THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF THE LIBRARY OF VIETNAM PROJECT.



Khoi with Mr. Nhung and Mr. Quang L, An Nghia, March 4, 2024.

More on VVAW Libraries on pages 2, 6, 7 & 8.



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VVAW Readers' Garden Inspires More Local Investment

VVAW

VVAW has funded an addition of a Readers Garden for the first VVAW Library and Learning Center in Pho Vinh. VVAW has sent funds for this project, to hopefully be completed in 2024.

Ms. Suong, the New Headmaster of the Pho Vinh School, Duc Pho District, Quang Ngai Province, requested these funds in January.

As of March, progress is already underway. The Readers Garden

funding by VVAW has been more than matched by local authority, the People's Committee of the local commune as the Library becomes the center of campus activity. Soon they will add a soccer field behind

the Library and provide more books from the John Henry Foundation in Japan. All of this activity and growth is because of the original VVAW investment and your support.



Proposed addition of a Readers Garden for the first VVAW Library and Learning Center in Pho Vinh.



Readers Garden and Legacy Projects first VVAW Library and Learning Center in Pho Vinh as of March 26, 2024.

Veteran Staff

Jeff Machota
Bill Branson
Joe Miller

The Veteran is available online, article by article, or as a downloadable pdf at www.vvaw.org/veteran/

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Marc Levy, Chuck Theusch, Khoi Tran, Joe Miller, Morgan Wachtendonk, Margarita Baumann, David Clark, Laurie Sandow, Nadya Williams, and others for contributing photos.

VVAW Merchandise



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NOT THE WAR**

Vietnam Veterans Against the War
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(312) 566-7290
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 (312) 566-7290 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	

VVAW National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

Four Dead in Ohio

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio
by Derf Backderf
(Abrams Comic Arts, 2020)

Many years ago, when people wrote letters, I received a moving acknowledgement of my book, ... and a hard rain fell from Canada. The first version of the book, a hardbound by Macmillan, featured cover art designed as a high school yearbook page, featuring actual yearbook pictures of myself and five others, plus one photo of a Vietnam soldier peering out from under his helmet with eyes vets recognize as "the thousand-yard stare." Alongside my photo was my wife's likeness, and the gent who had written the letter recognized her immediately. Throughout high school, he had been seated directly behind her by the alphabetical spelling of their last names. The letter revealed that he and his wife were college students in 1970. After the Kent State shootings, they left America. He had achieved a prominent elected position in the Toronto city government, and as they watched the news throughout the intervening years, they had never wanted to return to America.

On April 30th, 1970, President Nixon announced that he had authorized US troops to enter Cambodia to destroy Communist supply depots and command bases. A passionate series of protests erupted across America, including the burning of an ROTC building on the campus of Kent State University in Ohio. Two days later, on May 4th, 1970, 28 National Guard troops suddenly turned and fired their M-1 rifles, some into the air, some directly into the crowd of protesters.

Over just 13 seconds, nearly 70 shots were fired in total. Four Kent State students—Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, William Schroeder, and Sandra Scheuer—were killed, and nine others were injured. Schroeder was shot in the back, as were two of the injured, Robert Stamps and Dean Kahler.

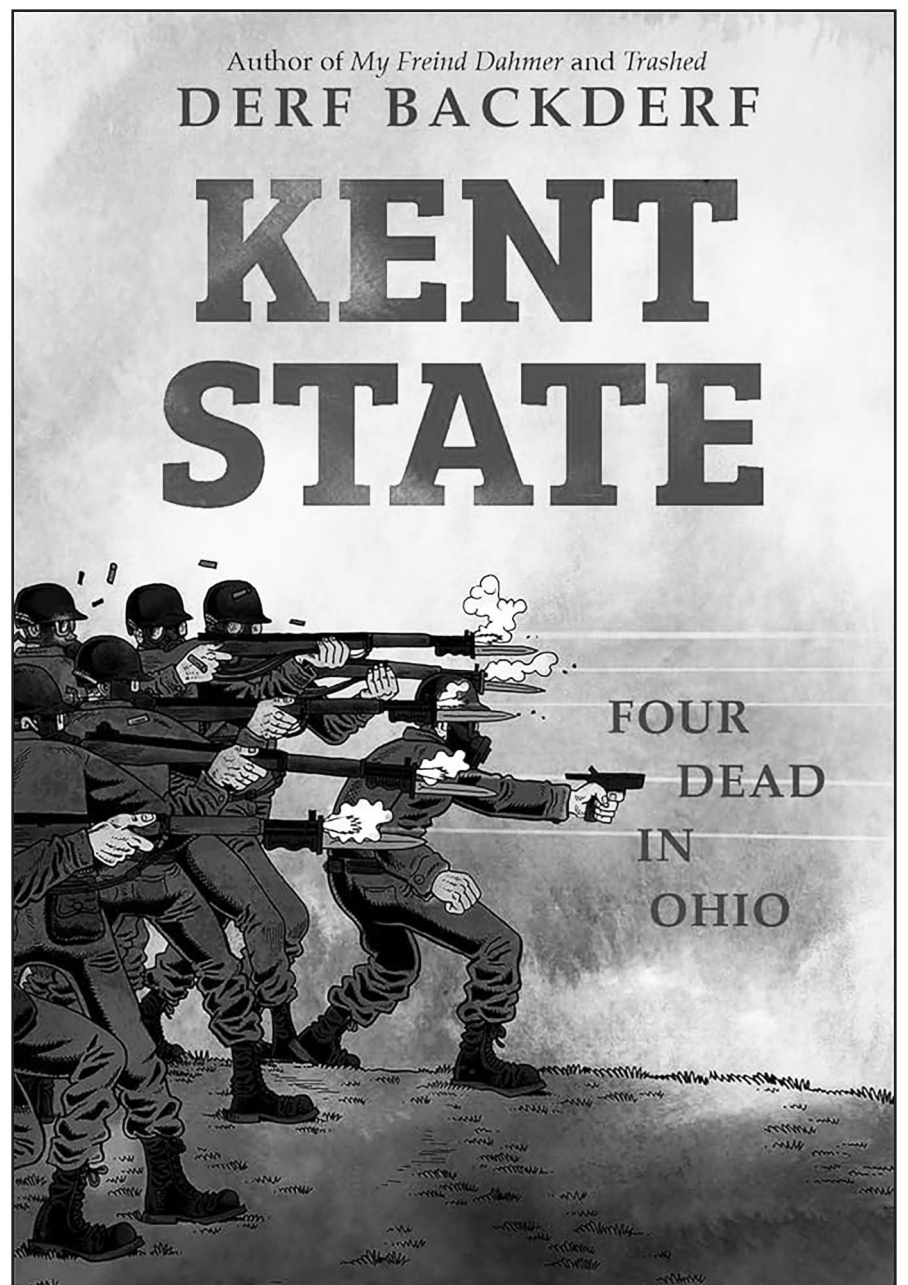
A seismic upheaval erupted on

college campuses across America. Over 500 colleges and universities shut down, and 51 did not reopen that year! Students at 1,350 schools went on strike in protest, and the presidents of 37 universities and colleges drafted a letter to President Nixon urging him to clearly show his determination to end the Vietnam War. ROTC facilities at thirty colleges were burned or bombed. The Kent State campus was closed for six weeks. On the weekend of May 9th, four million Americans protested in the streets, including 130,000 in Washington, DC. President Nixon left town, spending the weekend at Camp David despite major renovations underway.

Numerous investigatory commissions and court trials followed, during which members of the Ohio National Guard testified that they felt the need to discharge their weapons because they feared for their lives. However, disagreements remain as to whether they were, in fact, under sufficient threat to use force. None of them went to jail. In a civil suit filed by the injured Kent State students and their families, a settlement was reached in 1979 in which the Ohio National Guard agreed to pay those injured in the events of May 4th, 1970, a total of \$675,000.

Today, more than half a century later, the Kent State massacre is remembered as a landmark event of the widespread protests of the Vietnam War. After Kent State, protesters had to be fearful of being shot by the military or law enforcement. All across America, many felt the shootings had upped the ante. They armed themselves and turned to acts of violence opposing the continuation of the war.

I have seen books about Kent State and own a few of them. I discovered this book by accident and ordered it out of curiosity. I'm so glad I did! *Kent State* is a graphic history, a carefully researched non-fiction story of the events leading up to and after the massacre. Best-selling author



Derf Backderf interviewed students, parents, survivors, National Guard soldiers, faculty, and Kent State security. He researched documents and many, many photographs. Then, he sat down with pen and ink and created this illustrated or graphic history book. The book measures 7 1/2 x 10 1/4 inches, almost big enough to qualify as a coffee table volume. There are 251 pages of artwork, many featuring incredible detail and amazing resemblance to photographs of the massacre. As a reader, I cannot begin to estimate how many hours, days, weeks, or months it must have taken to create the drawings, not to mention researching the history of what happened and assembling the many drawings into a realistic and

factual story. This book is incredible, named a "Best Book of the Year" by the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, and *National Public Radio*! I strongly recommend this book!



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

On the Necessity of Struggle

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meaning in organizing with others and value in engaging with mental health professionals when we need to. For whatever reason it happens, suicide is a tragedy. We don't need fewer people in the struggle, we need more.

We know our time is not infinite, but we won't give up the fight for VVAW's goals. While we've won many struggles, the VA could still be better and open to all who served regardless of discharge status. And GIs are still being used and tossed away in wars for profit.

The act of living is not easy, especially as we see so many of our fellow neighbors and residents of this country engage in and support racism and fascism. As many of us grab our canes, walkers, or wheelchairs, we know our time storming the gates has passed. And the gates are no longer as easy to storm. Life is challenging and

complex; easy solutions are not found in a news feed or an ideology that can be purchased off the shelf.

What we can do is tell our stories. We can share our wisdom with our families, our political representatives, and with current and prospective GIs. And we still have libraries and learning centers to build in Vietnam. We can do this to show ourselves, as much as the current and future generations of Vietnam, that we honor our debts to them. Our time has not passed. In whatever ways we still can, we need to walk the walk and keep fighting for global peace and justice, and for GI/veterans' rights.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.



VVAW Milwaukee Agent Orange Demo.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Some words mean different things to different people. For instance, there is the word "patriot." Back in the days of anti-Vietnam War protests, there were people waving flags and dissing us because we were opposed to fighting the commies thousands of miles from Los Angeles. Were they patriots?

Who should be considered to be a patriot? You might think that presidents are. Yet in our lifetime, we've seen our share of wars that presidents did not attend for a variety of reasons, like staying in school, being protected by daddy's influence, or having bad feet. If a president did his best to keep out of the military, would that mean he was something other than a patriot? How many people would designate current service people and us veterans as patriots no matter our political positions? How many times have you been thanked for your service?

How about the rest of us? Back in the days of protest, we were denigrated for our actions by those carrying American flags. Today, one out of six people carrying flags are insurrectionists. Who's the patriot? Don't get me wrong. I made an effort not to go into the military myself. I was drafted, and I appealed. I appealed on the grounds that I had knee surgery. It seemed like the draft board gave it little thought, but it bought me a year while the bureaucracy checked it. There was a guy who hung around the same bar that I frequented. He also got drafted and was supposed to report two weeks before me. Two weeks later, he was back in the bar. It was the same bar stool if I could remember correctly. What happened? Asthma. There was hope.

My dad dropped me off at the reporting station at 06:00 or some ungodly hour. Remembering my lucky friend, when I got to medical, they asked if I had any medical reason not to do this. I said I had bad knees. The doctor said squat. I squatted. Six hours

later, I was sitting on a bus looking at the spring scenery in the Ozarks. Destination: Fort Leonard Wood.

I was sent to Vietnam. I wasn't thrilled, but I thought communism was wrong, so okay. So now I was a patriot because I thought correct thoughts. Then something happened. It was November, 1969. In the first week of the month, I was a patriot. One day, I got to thinking. The Vietnamese who worked on the base seemed to have a low opinion of President Thieu and the government. There were little things. Thieu shut down a newspaper. This was the thirty-something paper he had shut down. It didn't seem right. So, I became an anti-patriot the second week in November.

My sister had a hobby of making clothes. She made a shirt for me for Christmas. Lo and behold, the shirt had a peace sign on the front. What was happening? I was now a former patriot with a peace sign. So, my company in Vietnam was going to have a Christmas party in the company area. With much trepidation, I decided to wear the peace shirt—sort of like a coming-out party.

My knees were shaky as I walked to the party. The CO, the XO, and the supply sergeant sat at one table. Nobody said anything about my shirt. As the drinking escalated through the night, a strange thing happened. More and more of the EMs started yelling at and disparaging the occupants of that table. They were not exactly popular in the first place because they were bastards, and no one would give them any slack. Their body language was revealing. It was as if they were folding inside their bodies. Then there was Hans. He rotated back to the States months before me. I never talked to him, but others speaking in low and conspiratorial voices told me Hans said he would protest when he returned home. I was still pro-war, but I was in awe of him for some reason.

After Vietnam, I met Jerry, a vet.

He wasn't the kind of guy who'd like VVAW because of the flag and those of us who clashed with flag wavers. Jerry's reasoning was simple. During his personal hell in Vietnam, the flag was the only thing that he could hold on to. I have respect for Jerry. I don't know what criteria determine who is a patriot or not. I don't know if it's important. I do know that one in six insurrectionists, using the flag as cover the same way they did fifty years ago, shouldn't be mistaken for patriots. As for myself, I am still deciding where I am on this issue.

If you live in or near Chicago and like jazz, you likely have your radio tuned to WDCB, where the jazz disk jockeys have most of the week covered. One of those disc jockeys is Bruce Oscar, who will do a radio show on Memorial Day and Veterans Day to honor veterans. He will play patriotic music and reminisce about his veteran dad. Several times I listened, but it didn't go well. He would start to talk. Then there would be crying and the playing of Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder: God Bless America and

the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Finally, he kept it together, and I heard the full narrative. He talked about his father. Dad had enlisted in the Navy in 1940. He was on station in the Pacific when Pearl Harbor happened. His ship arrived in a day or two. Crying, Bruce related how his dad and his shipmates spent days climbing down into half-sunken ships to remove bodies and body parts. To honor his father, Bruce enlisted in the Navy when Vietnam started.

Bruce mentioned that he knew many who signed up for the various services because of Vietnam. Most of them came back. Of those who came back, there were many with physical or mental problems. And I shed tears also just hearing this over the radio.

On a personal note, thank you to the VVAW Board of Directors for the Winter Soldier Service Award. It has been my pleasure to write the column.



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



Detroit VVAW Demo.

Back to the World

JOHN LINDQUIST

May 25, 1969, was the date to start my trip "back to the World." I had orders for a 30-day humanitarian leave in London, England, where my first wife (an American) was in the hospital. My 11-month-old daughter Jessica was being cared for by her maternal grandparents, who lived and worked in London.

On day one I flew from Dong Ha to Da Nang to Okinawa. Then, on to Hawaii and El Toro, California. The next day, I flew from Los Angeles to New York City and ended up at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey.

After a night there, I flew to Frankfurt, Germany, and on to London. I took the subway to Finchley, North London. I walked a short distance to Hendon Lane and rang the doorbell. I flew 19,500 miles in four days, but seeing my beautiful baby daughter was worth it.

On day one in London, I was

trained to change diapers. My first wife was still in the hospital, and my orders to the 2nd Marine Division were altered. I was given a humanitarian transfer to a Fast Company in London that was guarding NATO headquarters. NATO was not in Brussels back then. I could not do guard duty since I had only one short-sleeved tropical uniform, so I was put on Mess duty. There was no room for me in the barracks (a British base near Abbey Road), so I lived with my in-laws on Hendon Lane and took over the care of my daughter.

I had to be at work from 0500 to 1330. The buses did not run that early, so I rode a bicycle. Thirty days out of the Nam, I was on a bike in London and still in the USMC. What a mind-blower!

I want to thank "Mouse" who let me stay overnight in LA, and his dad, who drove me to the airport in the morning. I would also like to

thank my daughter's grandfather, who was probably responsible for the work with the Red Cross regarding my transfer and hardship discharge on August 8, 1969. Finally, I must thank the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Leonard Chapman, who signed the order for me to be

discharged in London. But that is another story!!

Semper Fidelis



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



John Lindquist at 1980s Agent Orange demo in Chicago.

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 libraries 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.

Passing Through A Gate

W. D. EHRHART (REVIEWER)

Passing Through A Gate: Poems, Essays, and Translations
by John Balaban
Copper Canyon Press, 2024

John Balaban may be the most unusual writer ever to have emerged from the American War in Vietnam. He was never in the military, but he probably saw more action than three-quarters of the American service personnel who served in Vietnam. He requested and received conscientious objector status from his draft board, so he chose to do his alternative service in Vietnam.

Initially tasked with teaching at the University of Can Tho, he found himself without a job when the university was flattened during the Tet Offensive soon after he arrived in Vietnam. He subsequently managed to get a position with a non-governmental organization called the Committee of Responsibility to Save War-Burned and War-Injured Children.

Balaban's job for the next two years was to go out into the countryside to locate and identify children so severely injured in the war that the medical care available to them in Vietnam was simply not adequate. Children chosen would be flown to the United States and provided free medical treatment. However, the Saigon government allowed this only if every child was returned to Vietnam after treatment was completed.

So this young, unarmed American civilian found himself wandering all over rural Vietnam in the midst of the war. Learning to speak Vietnamese in the process, he also came into contact with the Vietnamese people

and culture in a way that very few other Americans ever did.

In the process, he discovered Ca Dao, the ancient Vietnamese tradition of oral folk poetry. Fearing—incorrectly, as good fortune would have it—that the American war would end up eradicating this tradition, he returned to Vietnam a few years later. He spent the better part of another year wandering around the countryside with a tape recorder, still in the midst of the war, getting farmers and fisherpeople to sing for him, work that he translated and eventually managed to get published bi-lingually.

I first encountered Balaban's poetry when Jan Barry and I were co-editing *Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam* in 1975. We used a handful of his poems in that anthology, and I have remained a fan and admirer of his writing ever since. I included a healthy chunk of his work in *Carrying the Darkness: the Poetry of the Vietnam War* and chose to include him as one of the poets in *Unaccustomed Mercy: Soldier-Poets of the Vietnam War*. However, he was not—strictly speaking—a soldier; he is certainly a veteran of that war.

Balaban went on to a rich and varied writing career, publishing seven collections of his poetry, a memoir, a groundbreaking tri-lingual translation of the Vietnamese poet Ho Xuan Huong (who wrote in the ancient Vietnamese script called chu Nom), translations from Romanian and Bulgarian, a novel, a children's book, several travelogues, and multiple essays.

Like the rest of us Vietnam

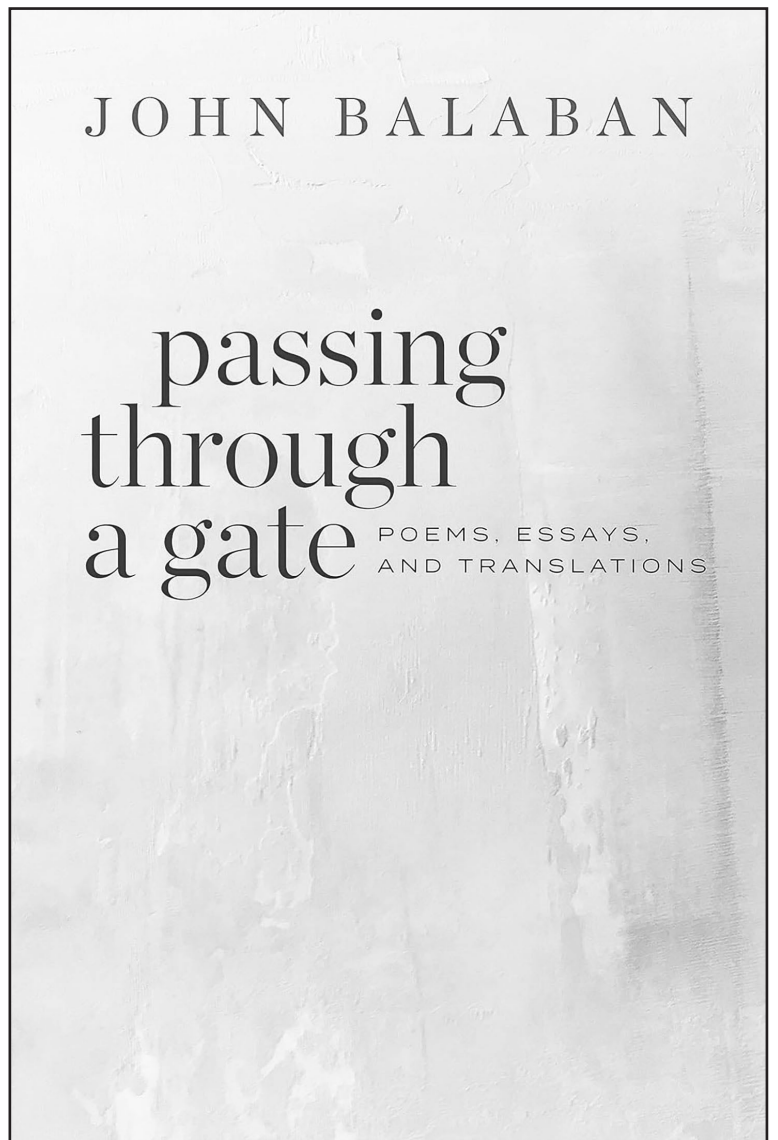
War veterans, Balaban is not getting any younger. He speculates that this book, *Passing Through a Gate*, may be his last hurrah. While I hope he's wrong, I'm not taking bets. Be that as it may, however, this is a wonderful opportunity to take in a vast swath of Balaban's writing over the course of his long and productive life.

The collection includes a generous sampling of his poetry, translations of Ca Dao, Ho Xuan Huong,

Romanian and Bulgarian poetry, and selected essays. The book's official publication date is May 28th, 2024. I highly recommend it.



W. D. EHRHART IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER, POET, AND AUTHOR.



Eating Oysters in Easton

for Ron Ferrizzi & Scott Moore
3rd & Ferry Fish Market

So here we are together once again,
old friends for over fifty years:
an army infantry platoon commander,
an aerial scout with a Silver Star,
a Marine with a Purple Heart,
Vietnam Veterans Against the War
in the days when we were hailed by some
as heroes, and as traitors by the rest.
We've brought our wives today,
a hundred and fifty years of marriage
between us, and still just one apiece;
patient women, durable. Lucky boys.
The waitress just keeps bringing oysters;
we keep saying, "Just bring more!"
The check is going to break the bank
at Monte Carlo, but who cares? We're
happy. Who knows how much longer
we've got left, and we can't take it
with us. "Oysters! Bring more oysters!"

—W. D. Ehrhart

On Being A Nonagenarian

Distant memories come closer, gain clarity,
pre-empt current concerns retreating from urgency.

Affairs of state, while interesting,
are less so than people's responses to them.

Degrees of activism depend more on one's legs,
one's energy levels, one's endurance.
The flame, now lambent,
that once flared so brightly,
still lights a certain way.

Landscapes once hosting wild things
now scarred by roads, encrusted by buildings,
thoroughly tamed.

Highways give way to interstates
avoiding towns, stalking through cities on stilts,
towering in sterile air.

Indeed, nature has retreated
threatening to abandon the human race.

Dead people come into focus
as friends diminish in number.
Remaining friends, new friends,
are much to be treasured.

Routines are an antidote
to forgetfulness.

Progeny, while almost always lovable,
have become inhabitants of another world.

—Woody Powell

VVAW Libraries Visit

KEN EMBERS

What an exciting and rewarding time visiting libraries and orphanages with the Library of Vietnam Project! Vietnam veteran Chuck Thuesch and his wife Khoi arranged an intensive tour of some LOVP libraries, including the VVAW libraries. I've left out many of the stops we made, but here are some highlights, including those with which VVAW members are involved.

On November 23, 2023 we visited the Phu Hoa Orphanage in Quang Tri, the LOVP My Lai/Son My High School Library, and the VVAW Hanh Trung Library, where we presented scholarships to students and certificates of appreciation with monetary gifts to the teachers from the nearby schools. As we left, an excited mass of kids greeted us with cheers of welcome and goodbyes.

On November 24, we visited the Pho Vinh VVAW Library. What an occasion with the Library being used as a classroom to deliver lessons to a large room full of kids who watched as the teacher used the latest educational technology via a large video screen and encouraged the students to participate eagerly and loudly in an enjoyable educational adventure. This was followed by singing by the students and even a congratulatory dance with one of our veterans, the brave Gary Counihan, dancing with the headmistress of the teaching staff while students looked on appreciatively. VVAW members should be proud of how their financial contributions have encouraged cooperation between Vietnamese kids, teachers, and all Americans involved

in this project.

Then we drove to Bong Son and visited the 61st AHC Lucky Star Blazers Library, which is doing well and was the first built in Binh Dinh Province. Then on to An Nghia the site of the new VVAW Library. This location is about 25 kilometers from Bong Son to the southwest along a branch of the An Lao Valley river. It's a remote location in the mountain range's foothills where kids can really use this library.

We reviewed the site of the proposed library building and discussed monetary affairs and necessary documents with the staff and district personnel. We then met the contractors who are going to build the library. We were graciously asked to dinner by school officials, where everybody got to know each other through the traditional feasting and drinking session accompanying such an occasion. Shouts of Mot, Hai, Ba, Ho! (One, Two, Three, Bottoms up!) rang out in the outdoor covered restaurant as we were served traditional Vietnamese cuisine of several kinds of meat with sauces, vegetables, rice, noodles, tofu, drinks of your choice, and hearty handshakes.

Seriously, the guidelines for who was responsible for what was determined, follow-up visits arranged, and a general accounting of what was to take place in the ensuing months of finalizing the paperwork and construction of the library were defined.

Then we drove an hour and a half through the night along dark highways

as our daredevil van driver threaded his way through motorbikes, cars, and large trucks, finally arriving at a nice hotel in Quy Nhon situated on the beach of the South China Sea, or as the Vietnamese refer to it, the East Sea.

We awoke the following day to a view of waves coming into the beach, had a great breakfast, and moved on to Mang Lang, where we visited singer/songwriter/producer/comedian and Vietnam vet Billy Terrell's Mang Lang Orphanage. The sight of needy Vietnamese kids being treated with warmth and affection by Catholic nuns is a heartwarming experience.

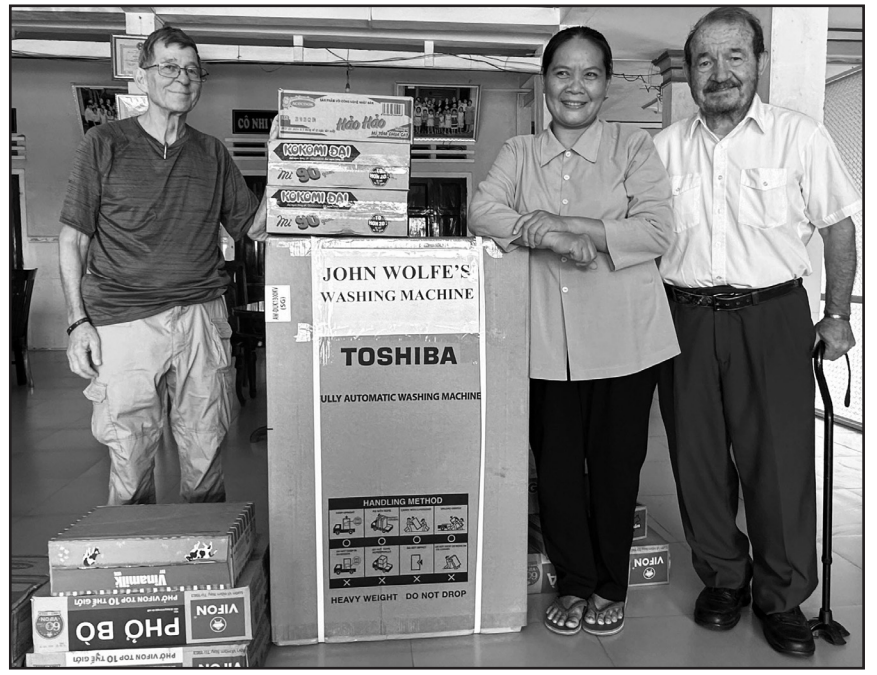
It's hard to describe the good feelings generated by this LOVP/CLI organization through the hard work of Chuck, Khoi, and all the people that Chuck has grouped around him.

As a new VVAW life member,

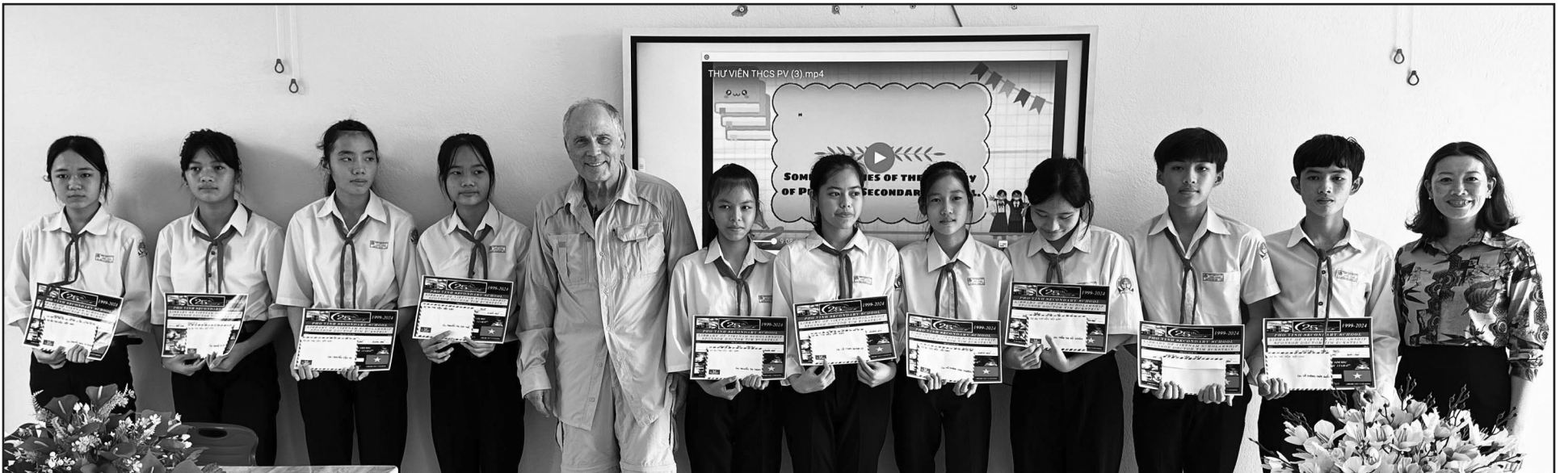
I encourage participation, whether through financial contributions or joining Chuck and Khoi on their trips to establish reconciliation with the Vietnamese people and map out a rewarding and positive future for the young people of America and Vietnam. And by the way, setting an example for other projects of similar nature. One of the keys to the Library of Vietnam Project/ Children's Libraries International's success is the phrase that Chuck announces as we drive away, "We Always Come Back!"



KEN EMBERS WAS IN THE ARMY, 61ST AHC, AND IN VIETNAM FROM OCTOBER 1968 TO OCTOBER 1969. HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.



(l-r) Gary Counihan, Sister Ha of the Phu Hoa Orphanage, and Ken Embers presenting fellow AHC 61st pilot's (John Wolfe) gift for the kids. Quang Ngai, Vietnam, November 23, 2023.



Dr. Tim Eckstein and Ms. Suong (Headmaster) presenting 10 scholars with certificates and 1,000,000 VND awards at the first VVAW Library and Learning Center in Pho Vinh, November 23, 2023.



Teachers and vets at the second VVAW Library and Learning Center in Hanh Trung, November 23, 2023.

More Photos of VVAW Libraries & Learning Centers



Teachers and kids celebrate the gift of books at the second VVAW Library and Learning Center in Hanh Trung, October 23, 2023.



Ms Tu & librarians with gift of books at the second VVAW Library and Learning Center in Hanh Trung, October 23 2023.



Second VVAW Library and Learning Center in Hanh Trung, November 23, 2023.



Sign at the groundbreaking ceremony for the third VVAW Library and Learning Center in Vietnam, An Nghia, March 4, 2024.

VVAW Library Project Updates



Entry gate for location of the third VVAW Library and Learning Center in Vietnam, An Nghia, November 24, 2023.



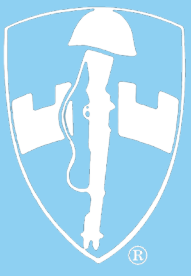
Groundbreaking ceremony for the third VVAW Library and Learning Center in Vietnam, An Nghia, March 4 2024.



Mike Dixon speaks while Khoi Tran translates at the groundbreaking ceremony for the third VVAW Library and Learning Center in Vietnam, An Nghia, March 4 2024.



Chuck Theusch and students at second VVAW Library and Learning Center in Hanh Trung, November 23, 2023.



THE VETERAN

SECTION B

Volume 54, Number 1

Spring 2024

Winter Soldier Service Awards VVAW

In October 2023, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War board voted to give our Winter Soldier Service Awards to several members of VVAW.

These awards are meant to recognize important work done with and for VVAW over the years.

Jan Barry, Bill Shunas, Sukie and Jim Wachtendonk, Billy X. Curmano, and Chuck Theusch all received awards this time. Thanks much.

Presented to Jan Barry

In recognition of your lifetime of work for peace, justice, and veterans through activism and poetry.

Presented to Bill Shunas

In recognition of over 45 years of writing *Fraggin'* for *The Veteran* and sharing your wit and wisdom with us.

Presented to Billy X. Curmano

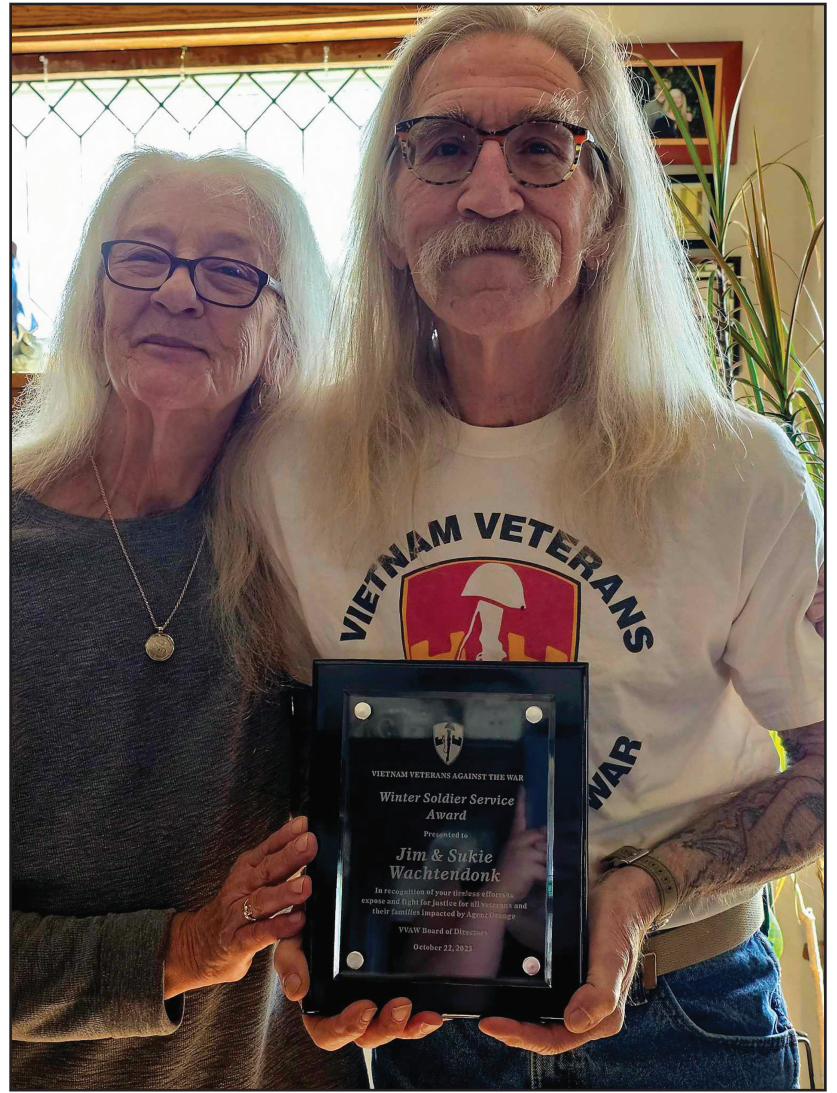
In recognition for sharing your creation, Oxy the Smart Bomb's precisely-guided political barbs in *The Veteran*...20 years and counting!

Presented to Chuck Theusch

In recognition of your efforts to aid the children of Vietnam by building libraries and learning centers that will positively impact future generations.

Presented to Jim & Sukie Wachtendonk

In recognition of your tireless efforts to expose and fight for justice for all Veterans and their families impacted by Agent Orange.



Sukie and Jim Wachtendonk.



Billy X. Curmano.



Chuck Theusch.



Jan Barry.



Bill Shunas.

A Half-Century of 1973's War Powers Resolution

AL WELLMAN

Although the declaration of war is a power given to Congress by Section 8 of Article 1 of the United States Constitution, the Vietnam War experience, including the secret bombing of Cambodia, encouraged Congress to adopt the War Powers Act in 1973 to limit future Presidential actions which might have similar consequences. The Act requires the President to notify Congress within 48 hours of committing armed forces to military action. It forbids armed forces from remaining for more than 60 days, with a further 30-day withdrawal period, without Congressional authorization. The Act was passed by two-thirds of the Senate and the House of Representatives, overriding President Nixon's veto. There have been 130 Presidential notifications over the past half-century.

During Lebanon's civil war, Congress passed Public Law 98-119 in August 1982, authorizing President Reagan to station United States Marine Amphibious Units in Lebanon as part of a multi-national force. The Marines were later supported by air strikes and naval gunfire. Congress pressured the President to remove all troops in early 1984 after the situation no longer met the conditions upon which the mission statement was premised.

After the elder President Bush stationed a half million US troops in

the Middle East in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Congress authorized the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq as Public Law 102-1 in January 1991.

President Clinton kept the 1999 bombing campaign in Kosovo going for more than two weeks after the 60-day deadline had passed but withdrew United States forces from the region 12 days before the 90-day deadline.

In response to the September 11, 2001 attacks, Congress passed Public Law 107-40 authorizing the use of necessary and appropriate force against those the President determined had planned, authorized, committed, or aided those attacks. Failure of this law to specify any locations has enabled subsequent Presidents to launch classified military campaigns in at least 22 countries with military deployment to Afghanistan, Cuba, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and the Philippines. Some criticize this authorization as a blank check, giving the government unlimited powers to wage war without debate, preferring the President to target terrorists with covert operations through the CIA to avoid the use of military force.

The younger President Bush obtained a second Congressional authorization for military action against Iraq as Public Law 107-243

in October 2002 based on false reports Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

President Obama never received Congressional authorization for the United States' 2011 military intervention in Libya. When United States military forces remained engaged for more than 60 days, President Obama alleged no Congressional authorization was needed because the leadership had been transferred to NATO.

Congress rejected President Obama's 2013 request for authorization to use military force in Syria. Despite Congressional prohibition of the introduction of United States troops into hostilities, President Obama and Trump introduced ground forces into Syria, primarily for training allied forces, and the United States became fully engaged in the country, including the 2017 launch of missiles at Shayrat airbase in Syria.

In 2019, Congress invoked the War Powers Act to end US support for the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen. President Trump vetoed the action, and Congress could not override that veto.

Notification of President Trump's 2020 assassination of General Qasem Soleimani was clouded by allegations of secrecy, which prevented American voters from assessing the basis for that action. President Trump stated

the assassination was justified by the 2002 Congressional authorization for the use of military force against Iraq, and President Trump vetoed Congressional action to prevent further military action.

On March 16, 2023, the Senate advanced a bill to repeal both the 1991 and 2002 authorizations for the use of military force by 68 votes to 27. As of this February, the present 118th Congress Foreign Affairs Committee was holding the companion House of Representatives bill H.R.932. Less attention has been paid to the repeal of the 2001 authorization described by the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman in 2021, as the one they need to hang on to because it is critical for continuing operations. Others characterize these continuing military operations as a worldwide war, all the time, everywhere, forever.

5G-grandfathers who sailed with John Paul Jones as a Marine aboard Providence and a sailmaker aboard Ranger inspired AL Wellman's interest in history.



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

Letter to Aaron Bushnell (1998-2024)

I write this from the other side, from the world of the living, where the situation, as you so painfully know, is dire. It's been a week since you set flame to your body outside the Israeli embassy in protest of the genocide in Gaza. Your words clear like the sky, your voice steady.

"This is what the ruling class has decided will be normal."

I didn't get much sleep in the days after.

I watched your video. You held your message till the end. Your uniform fell from your body in fiery tatters as you clenched your fists and stood fast. "Free Palestine!"

I carry the image as a branding on my heart. It stings, as it should.

The Pentagon gave a statement, expressed condolences to your family, said their support for Israel remains "ironclad."

Your story stayed in the news cycle for longer than I expected, but mainstream outlets watered down your intention.

Your statement circulated to the farthest reaches of social media.

Veterans in Portland, Oregon, burned their uniforms in a barrel.

Vigils and protests. Art and poetry. Debates and op-eds.

Still no ceasefire. This is what the ruling class has decided will be normal.

I don't want any more service members to do what you did, Aaron, but I respect and honor your sacrifice.

Rest easy, airman.

You gave your life for a question:

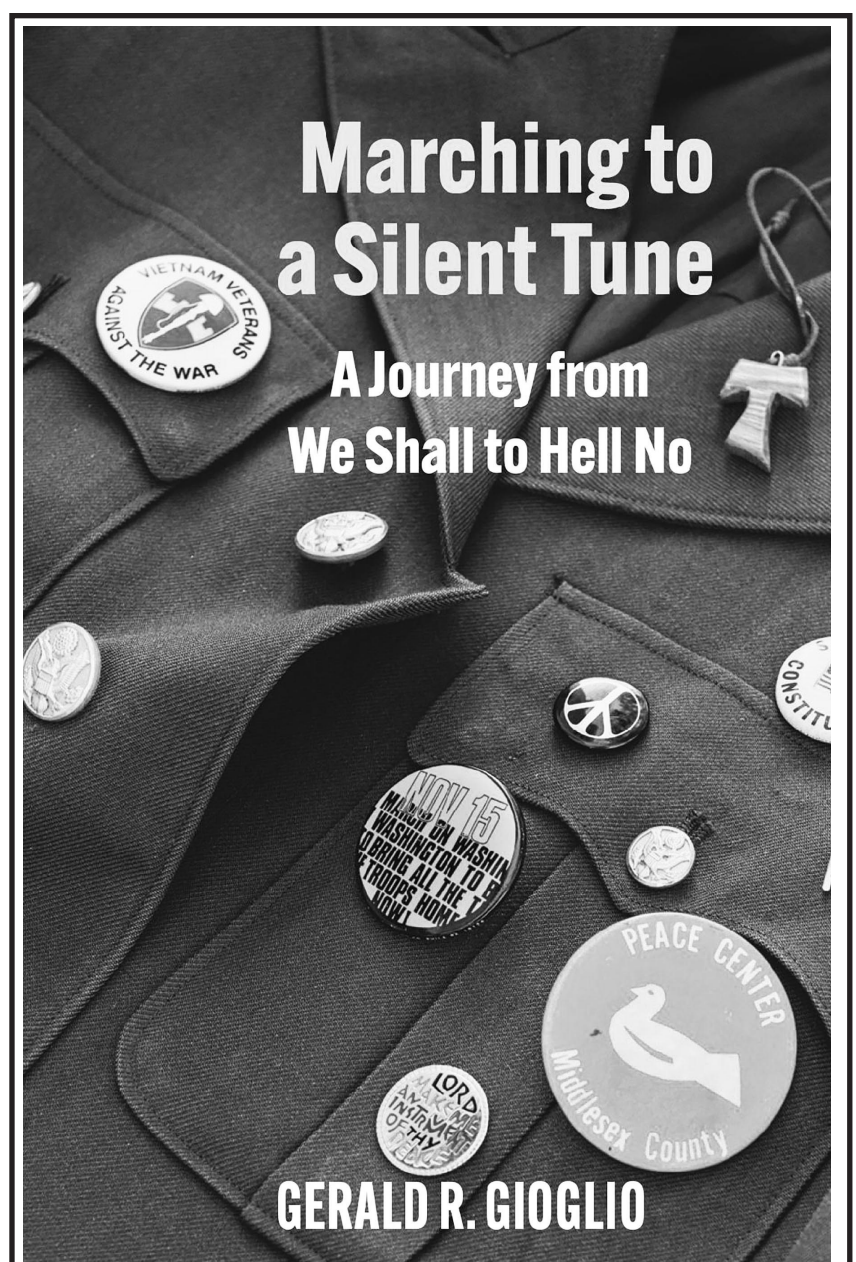
What are you going to do with your one shining and glorious existence to keep our world of the living from becoming a land of the dead?

—Kevin Basl

Bird

Nope, no way
Lady Bird was no Martha Mitchell
All that she had suffered
And never fought back
And went along for the ride
But she, more than anyone
Had had the goods that day
Then she was locked in, solid

—John Crandell



Set against the backdrop of the turbulent 1960s, this remarkable memoir details the author's personal experience as a conscript in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. Jerry Gioglio relates with compelling honesty his struggles to understand and embody his working-class upbringing while responding to civil rights challenges, the military draft, and the dehumanizing aspects of military training.

MARCHING TO A SILENT TUNE

A Journey from We Shall to Hell No by Gerald R. Gioglio

ISBN: 978-0-87946-701-2 Paperback 306-pages \$19.95

www.actapublications.com 800-397-2282

Also Available from Booksellers

1964: From "Spookville" to the Tonkin Gulf

JOE MILLER

The year began with my being outed by one of my language school buddies, CT First Class Baker, the senior enlisted man in our barracks at the Shu Lin Kou base. He discovered my relationship with Hui-fang, one of the waitresses at the Linkou Club in Taipei. These waitresses were official Taiwan Defense Command (TDC) employees.

We dated for six months, even though I knew the restrictions on Communications Technicians (CTs) interacting with the local population. Our Officer-in-Charge, then Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Norman Klar, ordered us to have no personal relationships with individuals or families.

Once CT Baker learned of my relationship, he felt duty-bound to report it to the top. I first met with our Operations Officer, Lieutenant Dickey. At that meeting (and a subsequent one with LCDR Klar), I was told to end the relationship. Then, I would be transferred overnight, never to see Hui-fang again. If I refused, I would be removed from the Naval Security Group (NSG), lose my clearance, and be sent to "regular" Navy duty.

I chose Hui-fang, and we decided to marry before I could be transferred. We feared we might not have time to complete all the paperwork for permission to marry.

The US Naval Attache to Taiwan, Captain David Bryan, was a schoolmate. We had been students together at the Army Language School. I decided to plead my case with him. We had a long talk about my situation, and he decided to see what might be done to get the TDC off my back. He went directly to Vice Admiral Melson, the TDC Commander, with my case.

As inquiries began coming down from the Admiral's office, my action did not win me any friends. My transfer orders came through quickly.

Since this was a permanent change of station from overseas duty, I was entitled to thirty days leave before reporting to the USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14). The Personnel Office at Headquarters Support Activity (HSA) asked for my home address, thinking I would be going back to the States for leave. I told them I would stay in Taipei for the whole period. We might just be able to complete the necessary paperwork to marry.

Everything was done five days before my departure date. We were married on June 9th, 1964, at Holy Family Catholic Church in Taipei by Father Jacques Bruyere, a Jesuit missionary.

Two days later, on June 11th, Hui-fang and I said our goodbyes at Sung Shan Airport. I boarded the flight to Japan, where I was to report on board the Ticonderoga. She was now left to complete all the paperwork for her eventual travel to the US. A couple of my buddies, still in Taipei, would assist her.

When I arrived in Yokosuka, I was told the ship was not there, and no one knew where it was. What? The Navy "lost" an aircraft carrier? Say

it isn't so! I spent the next three days swabbing floors and doing general duties until they could locate the ship.

Finally, word came that the ship was heading for Manila, almost two thousand miles South of Japan. I wondered how the Navy would not have known this and sent me to the Philippines in the first place.

I was back on a plane from Japan to Clark Air Force Base. Then, the "plan" was to put me on an Air Force bus to Manila. After a couple of days hanging around Clark, word came that the ship would NOT be going to Manila! What now?

I would be flown out to the carrier on the next COD (Carrier Onboard Delivery) flight, that is, with the mail. I packed up my seabag and headed for the airfield. On arrival, a C-1A was sitting there waiting for me. I was the only passenger.

I strapped in, facing the rear of the plane. The engines revved up, and we began to taxi. I was very apprehensive about this trip. I was being flown out over the ocean to land on a moving target—a huge target, to be sure—but it would not be like landing at O'Hare Airport! Soon, we were well up over the Philippine countryside, heading toward the South China Sea, where the ship was currently in the midst of air operations.

It was June 17th, 1964, and I had been trying to get to this new duty station for six days. As we flew over the sea, I thought about what it would be like to be stationed on board a ship for a couple of years. I had forgotten all of the recruit training about life aboard ship. Now, I would relearn it all on the job, whatever that might be.

It was an hour or more before the ship came into view. It looked tinier than any toy boats I had as a kid. We were circling overhead. We had to wait for all the ship's planes to land before approaching. As we circled, we flew lower and lower. The ship began to look a little bigger with each pass. Then, the ship disappeared from my view. We were on final approach... I hoped.

As I looked out the small window, it seemed like we were only a few feet above the water. I had no way of knowing how close we were to landing or to slamming into the stern of the ship. Suddenly, I felt the bounce and jolt of hitting the deck and being stopped by the arresting cable. I was slammed into the back of my seat, and I realized why I was facing to the rear.

I grabbed my gear. The hatch opened, and suddenly, there was noise, heat, and the smell of aviation fuel. A Chief Petty Officer awaited me as I stepped off the plane. He shouted directions at me due to all the noise of a busy flight deck. He pointed out the yellow footprints on the deck and told me to follow them and him very closely. These make sure that no one stepped into a propeller or got sucked into a jet intake. As the Chief guided me toward the superstructure, I tried to keep from looking around to avoid making any wrong moves.

The next surprise was—an escalator! This was totally unexpected



The wedding. The guys in suits (except for two brothers in law on the far left) are all fellow CTs who were warned by officers not to attend. The three women on the right were waitresses with Hui-fang. Joe's mother in law is sitting next to Hui-fang.

on what was a World War II-era warship. I was guided through a confusing set of hatches and passageways until we reached the Personnel Office.

The Personnel Officer checked me in. We discussed where I might be placed in the ship's workforce. Since I had no security clearance, I could not work with any classified material, even to the lowest level of "Confidential." Where could I work, as most offices dealt with classified material?

For nearly a week, I had no official duties. I was assigned a bunk in one of the busiest passageways, where people rushed back and forth at all hours, kicking up dust and dirt. My bunk was only a few inches above the deck and always covered with dirt. I thought this was a severe departure from my two previous duty stations—welcome to the "real" Navy.

The ship's Weapons Officer, Commander Parkinson, came to the rescue. He had been bugging the Personnel Officer about getting a trained Yeoman for his office. He was willing to take responsibility for my working with classified materials without a clearance. Department heads carried a lot of weight on a ship. In particular, the Weapons Department was responsible for deck crews (the real grunts on any ship), gun batteries, guided missiles, and so-called "Special Weapons" (think nukes). I could see why people usually jumped when the Weapons Officer spoke.

I finally had a job and was assigned to bunk with the Guided Missile (GM) Division in their air-conditioned quarters. I was now the Weapons Department office's senior enlisted man (E-4), working with three E-3s.

The next month and a half was relatively calm as I learned my new duties and my way around the ship. Of course, I missed Hui-fang. We wrote to each other regularly, and I received mail from my friends who were helping her with the visa process. During this period, the ship visited various ports in the Western Pacific, including Sasebo, Beppu, and Yokosuka in Japan and Subic Bay in the Philippines.

Things changed radically around mid-July. Another carrier was to relieve us from line duty, but a serious boiler issue put them in dry dock in Yokosuka. We had to stay on the line off the coast of Vietnam for another month. In early August, things got "interesting."

We, the enlisted men who worked in the Weapons Office, did not know all the particulars at the time. On the afternoon of August 2nd, 1964, the USS Maddox (DD-731) reported an attack by North Vietnamese PT boats and called for air support. Fighter planes from our ship were already in the air, and they were dispatched to defend the Maddox. The North Vietnamese boats were chased away,

and that was that—or so we thought.

Two nights later, our ship received reports of a second attack, this time against both the Maddox and a second destroyer, the USS Turner Joy (DD-951). Again, planes were sent from our ship and the USS Constellation (CVA-64) in the dark of night to defend them. At the time, we all thought this second attack was real. President Johnson took advantage of this to launch an attack on North Vietnam and get Congress to pass the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

For us on the scene, the Weapons Office was jumping; we were typing up requisitions left and right, more rockets and missiles, more this and that. The "attacks" and the official response seemed to release the pent-up frustrations from our long at-sea period.

Days after the August 5th attacks on North Vietnam, our ship had to refuel the Maddox. As the senior Weapons Department Yeoman, one of my duties was to be topside during refueling operations to time the process. As I looked at the Maddox, I noticed a small group of sailors waving their hats and yelling across the perhaps sixty or so feet separating our ships. I realized they were yelling my name!

I recognized at least two of the sailors were fellow CTs from the Shu Lin Kou base on Taiwan. Then I realized what the Maddox had been doing off the coast of Vietnam: a Desoto Patrol! That's what the attack on August 2nd was all about. This was not just a routine patrol in international waters. These patrols were sent along the Chinese and Vietnamese coastlines to gather electronic voice and signals intelligence from "enemy" facilities on land. They were intentionally provocative. This time, the Maddox got more than they expected. (See Klar below)

Real questions began to rise in my mind. The lies about the Tonkin Gulf opened the way for even greater US involvement in Vietnam. I had to find out more about this.

For the next year and a half, I read everything I could find about the history of Vietnam and our involvement. By late 1965, I was against the war. How could I negotiate those feelings when I had three more years to serve and a young family to support? I had no answers at that time.

See Norman Klar, "How to help start a war" in *Naval History*, Volume 16, Number 4, August 2002. Klar was responsible for getting the Maddox ready for the patrol.



JOE MILLER IS A BOARD MEMBER OF
VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



Pic from the cruise book of the day the Maddox came alongside and Joe's friends called out to him.

How I Joined VVAW

RG CANTALUPO

(Haiphong Harbor Blockade Protest, May 8th, 1971)

I don't like being followed. And I don't like anyone listening to my conversations.

But this is the FBI, and I'm a terrorist. No, that's too strong. I'm just an angry Vietnam vet.

Yesterday, my photograph was on the front page of the Monterey Herald. I was holding a billy club poised to smash down on the head of the police officer lying in a crumpled heap at my feet.

That's when a reporter snapped my picture; the rest is history.

So be it. I am who I am. Or who I came to be.

Yesterday, I was a wounded war hero.

Today, I am a danger to society.

Two years ago, I was flying home in a wheelchair from a war I didn't want to fight, flying home to see my wife and mother, who I couldn't remember.

Such was the result of the shrapnel that was extracted from my brain.

Such is who and what I am.

I loved Janice.

Her image kept me alive through the hard days of humping the jungle—her image and "the world" I imagined I would come home to after serving my tour.

Imagining her while the rat-tat-tat of M-16s punctuated the dark and flares lit up firefights three clicks away helped me to survive.

But coming home was different.

I wasn't who she remembered; I wasn't who I was; I couldn't remember who I was.

I was lost in a world of night terrors and night sweats. I would wake up shaking from a recurring dream of walking into an L-shaped ambush

the night Lonny and I ran back to the perimeter, dodging fire both from our own company and the VC chasing us.

Fucking Listening Posts. LPs.

Suicide missions to lure the Viet Cong out in the open. Bait. Chum. To keep the rest of the company safe. Some general's strategy was to put LP's all around the firebase so the battalion was protected from an enemy surprise attack.

Except you never knew what you would encounter.

It could be an NVA regiment out there, and no one would know till some two-man LP blew their claymores and flares, and hundreds of VC would appear low-crawling over rice paddy dikes in the dark.

Grey-green shadows in the starlight scope crawling toward you like ghosts.

I still have nightmares.

Recurring over and over, like reliving your death night after night.

Dreamt, but not dreamt.

Relived.

Real. Real real.

The night Lonny got shot and bled to death in my arms—that night.

I couldn't help him. I couldn't stop the bleeding.

Neck wound. Nothing I could do. Put pressure on with my palms. Stop the bleeding.

But I couldn't stop the bleeding, and we couldn't stay where we were. VC coming to get us. Crawling over the rice paddy dikes.

So I quick-released my radio and threw Lonny over my back, carrying him as I ran to the perimeter, screaming, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot. Friendlies. Don't shoot."

And then I dropped on my belly into the mud as arms came to carry us, drag us back inside.

Home. I'm rolling down the ramp

in my wheelchair at Travis Air Force Base. I'm holding Janice, kissing, and trying to love again.

Hugging my mother.

We reunited for an hour, and then it was time to leave, time for me to go onto another C-130 to take me to San Diego Naval Hospital, my new home, till the doctors deemed it was safe for me to leave.

I didn't know when that would be—when the headaches would stop, when there was no more fear of seizures, when my right leg could be walked on, or when the wound on my left arm closed completely so no blood or pus oozed out.

No, that's an exaggeration.

My left arm no longer oozed pus and blood.

But it was still useless. I couldn't bend it. I couldn't stretch it straight out. I could barely lift it, eat with it, or write my name.

And now I have to go.

We say goodbye.

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

"Bye."

They visit me in the hospital. In San Diego. They drive down on Sundays. Stay all afternoon. We go outside. Sit at a picnic table. I sit with my back facing the hospital wall. In a defensive position. A grass clearing in front of me.

We talk.

No, that's not right. They talk. I listen. I focus all my attention on being here.

But I'm not here. I'm not here, so I don't know how to answer.

I'm home, but I'm not.

I hear their voices from a distance, from the other side of a rice paddy, through the blades of a medivac. I'm hovering above them, and they're waving at me and calling

my name. I'm listening to them through the static of a PRC-25, the squelch, and the absence of sound.

Something always takes me away: some movement out of the corner of my eye, a bird fluttering, a grasshopper jumping, a car crossing my plane of sight in the distance, someone walking, someone talking, something.

They don't know how to deal with me. I don't know how to deal with myself.

They come. They visit. They go. Hello. Goodbye. We'll see you next week.

Yeah. Yeah.

And then I'm alone with my half-thoughts and my half-memories. With my recurring terror dreams.

But San Diego gives me a lot of time to think.

I couldn't justify what I'd done in the war.

I couldn't justify the deaths of my friends nor the deaths of the Vietnamese I killed.

I couldn't justify the many lives ruined by the war.

So I became a radical, an anti-war protester, a member of VVAW, and I left my wife.

And that's where I was when my photograph was published, and the FBI started listening to my phone conversations and following me.

Before I spent the next four years underground.



RG CANTALUPO (ROSS CANTON) WAS AN RTO (RADIO OPERATOR) FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 1968-69. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR FOR COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

"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

A Vietnam War Memoir

"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*

STEER
FORTH
PRESS



Nam

RG CANTALUPO (REVIEWER)

Nam
by Bruce Hanson
(self-published, 2019)

Over the years, I have read many Vietnam memoirs or creative non-fiction novels written by some of the best authors of our time: Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carry*, John Ketwig's *...and a hard rain fell*, W.D. Ehrhart's *Passing Time*. Whether personal memoirs, creative nonfiction, fiction, personal essays, or some other genre, these books have in common the veracity and truth that they were written by someone who participated in or witnessed being in the war. For me, that is essential.

Because the Vietnam War narrative has been so often co-opted by the US Government, historians, propagandists, war hawks, and others to sell a story about how we could've "won," or how brave we were, or how we were naïve and didn't know any better, these stories gravitate toward a narrative "where boy meets Vietnam, Vietnam is ugly, it stinks, the people he came to save don't like him, and he goes home disillusioned, etc. etc." The true horror of war is often expressed in the context of a large battle: Khe San, Tet, etc., and not about the reality (for most of us) of surviving firefight by firefight, day by day until our tour was up, and we could go back to "The World" where we would face our PTSD and drug addiction, or alcoholism alone, and with little hope.

Nam, using the slang name combat veterans often use when referring to the Vietnam War, with front and back covers framed with photos of gritty combat veterans, is none of that. It is not sympathetic to VVAW members who came back angry and

ashamed and were the vanguard of the anti-war movement. Those of us who burned our uniforms and threw our medals back at military installations were motivated by the anger we felt about what the military did in our name. (And, when I hear someone use "Nam" to refer to our Vietnam experience, I want to scream because I feel that using our combat-adopted slang in titles should be reserved for real combat veterans)

This is a harsh and perhaps unwarranted criticism. However, it's the result of our "true" narrative being co-opted and twisted by so many authors and governmental voices since the war (to make it less horrific and acceptable than it was.) And, unfortunately, this *Nam* is seemingly written by another armchair warrior who apparently "heard" stories by veterans about the war. It's an "unbelievable" novel about imagined characters—college students who enlisted to go to war or were drafted, not the heartbreaking reality of what it was like to be 18 or 19 between 1967 and 1971.

So many details make it a false narrative, and I don't know where to begin. First, all combatants wore jungle boots, not black leather boots from circa 1966. Combat soldiers didn't eat in "mess halls" or live in "barracks" unless they were on R&R, at Ton Son Khut Airbase, or some large base camp far from the war. And no three-day passes were given after a few months in the field. Not in the 25th Infantry Division anyway, and not given to anyone I knew.

Granted, most of Hanson's Vietnam is in the Mekong Delta, an area I was unfamiliar with. But the many conversations between the soldiers didn't ring true for me. When

you read a book like *Dispatches* or *The Things They Carry*, there's a sense of urgency and a nervous hypersensitivity about the danger around you. The fear of getting wasted is pervasive and ominous. At any moment, a firefight may consume you. Nam (the Nam I knew) was a brutal, grave place where, at any moment, you might die or be wounded by a sniper, a mortar, a rocket, an RPG, or some other nefarious weapon. We lived in bunkers, not barracks, when we were back in a firebase. And we were only in the firebase for a week before we went out in the bush for three weeks or more at a time, on search and destroy patrols or on some larger mission among companies or battalions.

The other thing about the novel that bothers me is that it is not really about Nam. About two-thirds of the novel is about protests and being a college student in the late sixties. There are some good descriptions of the Democratic Convention in 1968 and the various protest marches and how most young people felt during that time—albeit from the upper-middle class, not from the "draftee class"—and a fair telling of the differences between young people and their parents and the generational gap about the war.

Again, none of these are very enlightening or "radical." It's what we all know and experienced. True, sad, deeply concerning, but not revelatory. Simply a retelling of our history and experiences. Conversations debating the rightness or wrongness of the American War in Vietnam, but nothing new, just a retelling of the conversations we all remember.

Hanson seems to want to give us a cross section of the time, with characters of different ethnicities and

class or social strata. But he forgot that the war was fought mainly by the young men from the lower strata of society, young people who enlisted because they didn't have many economic or social opportunities or merely got drafted. And the lack of choices made a lot of us desperate, crazy, and scared. Hanson's narrative doesn't portray or describe that desperation.

On the first page, we learn that Tom, one of the main protagonists, is trying to figure out where to go to college: "For Tom, the choice of a college was pretty easy." I can't say that was where my head was at in 1968. My best friend Wayne was drafted four months before me and was already in Vietnam by the time I got drafted. I was married and in college full-time, but my 2-S deferment didn't get processed till I was already humping up and down Highway 1. Such was the demand for recruits after Tet, 1968.

Reading *Nam* sparked all my negative feelings about how the war has often been portrayed. At 75, I feel many of the same feelings I did when I read W. D. Ehrhart's *What We Can and Can't Afford*; we're too old, and there are too few of us to change much. Narratives about us and our war are generally false and perpetuate more lies or justifications to invoke military interventions. We should've learned, but we didn't, and it's so much easier to justify our actions—past and present—with ignorance.



RG CANTALUPO (ROSS CANTON) WAS AN RTO (RADIO OPERATOR) FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 1968-69. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR FOR COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

The Brotherhood of the Sea

GEORGE CRITCH

It is impossible to look at a picture that I was a part of and imagine what I was thinking at the time of the scene.

I am one of the barebacked kids, uppermost in this shot. I have borrowed some words from my favorite author, Conrad:

"For there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence."

"I do not know whether I have been a good seaman, but I know I have been a very faithful one."

But try as I did, I can only use my perspective of today to think as an 18-year-old from the city streets of Camden, NJ, with a 50-year-long view of a life lived; I am one of the bare-backed kids looking down upon the vessel that had been drawn closely alongside us for boarding and inspection. What I do remember were the smells, the human smells of bodies living in cramped quarters mixed with the ever-present odor of rancid fish and rotting wood rising from the sweating deck under the intense heat of the sun and the damp, and tattered canvas sails in need of repair.

The sailing trawler and its family of inhabitants on this inspection were not especially memorable, but today, I can only reflect upon the scene knowing how my life has evolved; the picture shows me gazing down upon the vessel, and with today's eyes, I see not simple seaman but highly skilled fearless people of the sea. Mother Ocean provided them with much, and with what little they possessed They harvested her offering despite nature's many hazards. They ably sustained themselves and others of their village because of their courage and conviction. When I say hazards, I think back upon the many swim-calls taken in the intensely briny opaque mixture of monsoonal runoff. My

hesitant participation in swim-call stopped entirely after a day in the delta anchored up close under the jungle canopy; the land breeze was pulling the intense jungle smell toward us. We had some Navy Seals berthing with us, and we were offering support for their operation, so we were manned and at the ready.

Watching artillery under guidance from Army spotter planes, I stood at my station dragging on a Marlboro as the sulphuric-laden layer of air drifted down the deck mixed with the jungle fog.

Across the headset, I heard a lookout report of something in the water port side. I peeked out from behind the 50 and saw something resembling a snake. Now I'm from the city; I never saw a snake in the wild, but in the water? Never! I didn't realize snakes lived in the ocean. Or that there was such a monster. Next over the headset, I hear, "Number two 50 get me a sea snake!" Our CO wanted us to kill it! We put the 50 on single shot, took aim at 20 yards, and put one through the snake. Up and out of the water, it writhed skyward, and you could see the sky through the perfectly round wound; the snake had to be as big around as my thigh and twelve feet long! So I never responded to swim-call again. The CO Insisted we paint a sea snake on the boat as a sign of a "kill."

I remember the fishing trawler people as seaman because at the present period of my life, I know the sea!

After working all of my life on the water, it is only now, as I look at this picture of me looking DOWN at these people, at that early stage of my apprenticeship to the sea; that I began my exposure and learning in the company of seaman of the world and

all aspects of the nautical discipline. I should have been looking UP at those people on the deck of the trawler because they were born to live their lives at sea. I was born to cross their path, and only now do I realize we were ALL from the BROTHERHOOD of the SEA. I hope they survived our incursion into their simple lives.

Recently, a conversation about money was going around the table, and my casual approach was criticized. It was said that I had grown up "poor" and should have more respect for money!

As a kid from a large family in Camden, New Jersey city streets "I should know poverty". I was quick to defend myself because as a seaman I had traveled and seen poverty; but I was never "poor" compared to some of the places I had visited such as Vietnam. I realized that poor and poverty are constructs that are used as a SCALE by the "ACQUISITOR class" of the materialistic world. Only now do I understand how rich those subsistence fishermen were. I am jealous when I think of laying on deck staring up at the dark canopy of starry patterns while "Mother Ocean offered her gentle pulsating rocking rise and fall motion as if her heave was like her breath as she mimicked the process of aspiration."

As the years and miles accumulate, we can only hope that our horizons expand along the way to encompass a more insightful view of our fellow humans and their individual experiences and struggles. This analogy of shared lives on the sea as a bond transcending the more artificial cultural differences resonates deeply within me. We could also remark about the shared struggles with repressive governments. People worldwide have modest but non-negotiable needs: the freedom to form a family, the



economic freedom to provide for them, and the freedom of association with like-minded individuals pursuing similar goals. Sail On, mates!

"I do not know whether I have been a good seaman, but I know I have been a very faithful one." —Conrad

P.S.

I recently have been reading a book of Vietnamese poetry called *Poems From Captured Documents*, which reveals these ancient people's quality and depth of character.



GEORGE CRITCH SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD FROM 1967-1971. HE WAS BM3 USCG BOAT COXSWAIN 30' & 40' RESCUE CRAFT AND A SEAMAN ON OCEAN STATION WEATHER CUTTER AND SERVICE IN VIETNAM. HE RETIRED AS A MERCHANT SEAMAN (TUGBOAT CAPTAIN). HE RESIDES WITH HIS FAMILY IN OCEAN CITY, NEW JERSEY.

The Brothers

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War

by Stephen Kinzer

(St. Martin's Griffin, 2013)

In 2016, I reviewed a book titled *The Devil's Chessboard* by David Talbot. A biography of Allen Dulles, that book shined a bright and powerful light on America's foreign policies and history since the end of World War II. I wrote that that book was "a dark and troubling history of America's post-World War II subtle and insidious turn away from Democracy and the concept of one man/one vote to a secretive and deadly environment of manipulations and assassinations that became the Cold War, and perhaps even more." Former VVAW member and author of an array of books about that era, the late John Prados, told me *The Brothers* was an even better book, as the Dulles brothers worked together to steer America's foreign policies away from any cooperation with communists, leftists, or progressives anywhere in the world. To a considerable degree, the Dulles brothers were the architects of the Cold War and were instrumental in directing the focus of America's foreign policy away from peaceful pursuits.

The brothers grew up near Watertown, a small city at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, not far from the Adirondacks. Their father was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and their mother had grown up the daughter of a diplomat amidst all European and Latin society balls and dashing aristocrats. The boys were raised in an environment of rigid religion but also enjoyed swimming, sailing, hunting, and fishing. Their maternal grandfather had lived a colorful life of adventures "out west" and became Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison. Later, he invented a new profession, becoming a broker for corporations seeking preferential treatment from the federal government. It was an era of wealth and privilege, and the companies wanted easier access to overseas markets and natural resources. John Watson Foster was comfortably involved in a muscular, assertive foreign policy that forced weaker countries to trade with Americans on terms especially beneficial to American interests. He had a network of friends and business contacts, and he was increasingly successful in shaping American foreign policy to benefit his well-paying clients.

"Grandfather Foster" had no children and took a particular interest in developing John Foster and Allen Dulles. He brought them to Washington, where they lived amid exotic art objects from China, studied under private tutors, and attended by a liveried servant staff. They regularly sat at elaborate dinners where they met and listened to a dazzling array of America's most powerful political and business leaders.

John Foster Dulles had a harsh, solemn, reserved, and self-righteous personality and maintained those qualities throughout his life. A hardworking man, he was socially inept and prone to explosions of temper. He never complained but disdained those who fell short of his rigid standards. Foster used his connections to secure a job at Sullivan and Cromwell, a prestigious law firm specializing in new enterprise, guiding investors and entrepreneurs into relationships that became giant corporations. Foster's merging of rigid Christianity with ruthless capitalism brought him great success within Washington's power structure, and his influence enabled him to be successful at the point where politics intersected

with global business.

Younger brother Allen, on the other hand, enjoyed a colorful world of clubs, parties, and women. He dressed in the latest fashions and found his way into the upper levels of New York and Washington society. Like his brother, he developed strong ideas that the military and government existed for the good of business. Allen was assigned to Switzerland and encouraged to report on the activities of the many spies. He had found his niche and quickly became a master of spycraft and intelligence gathering. His evenings were devoted to women and parties, and his charm made him a favorite in the most powerful diplomatic circles. Toward the end of World War II, he helped Nazi business associates hide their stolen wealth. When the war was over, he helped a colorful assortment of them emigrate to America or be assigned government positions due to their "experience."

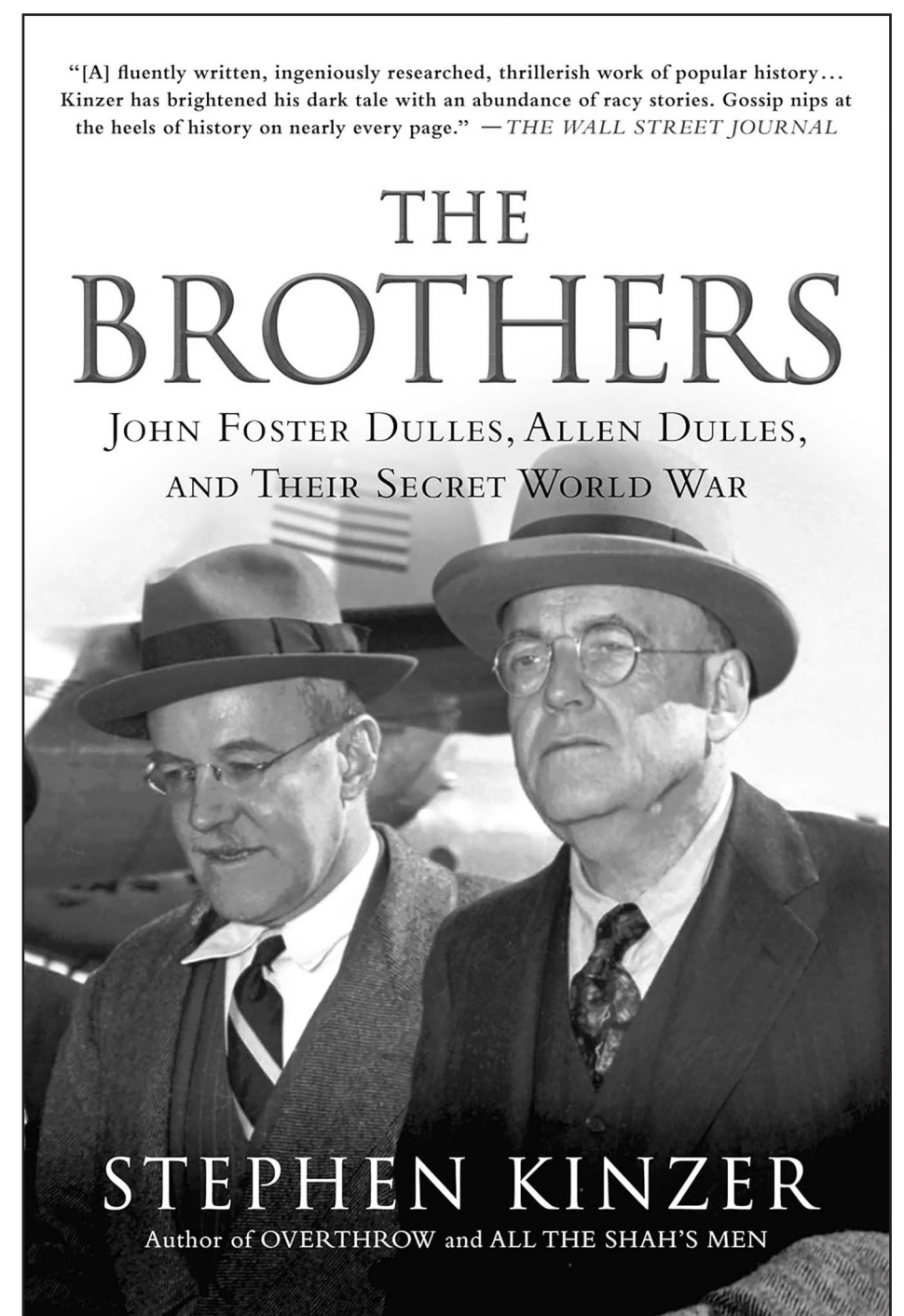
The brothers began their rise to power before WWII, running a legal firm that helped American companies deal with the growing Fascist movements in Germany and Italy and vice versa. When the war broke out, Allen opened an office in Switzerland. The brothers enjoyed enormous financial and political rewards for laundering assets seized by the Nazis and discreetly finding buyers for the vast treasures seized by the Axis forces. As the war wound down, Allen was particularly effective in helping a number of his contacts, Nazi officials responsible for the Holocaust and many other atrocities, to escape prosecution and find post-war employment in positions of responsibility throughout Europe and, yes, in the US. Had FDR lived to see the end of the war, Allen Dulles would likely have been charged with treason as he worked to shield his Nazi friends from prosecution.

President Truman realized he was

Amazingly, so much evil, manipulation, disinformation, ideological murder, international intrigue, and raw treachery could be accomplished by two zealot brothers . . .

in over his head as the Soviet Union and China emerged from World War II as world powers, and he allowed the Dulles brothers, along with several other anti-Communist ideologues, to orchestrate a great East vs. West struggle that would become the Cold War. It was their life's work to eradicate Communism and to fight it to the death wherever it might be suspected, much less found. John Foster Dulles became President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, and Allen became head of the new Central Intelligence Agency soon after President Truman created it from the old OSS.

Allen Dulles delighted in mixing with the rich and powerful, dressing extravagantly, playing with the ladies, and conducting the risky undercover business of international espionage. He was highly respected for his clandestine abilities and daring but also feared. He seemed to find mortal enemies everywhere under the category of Communism, but he swore no real allegiance to any country, political party, or government. Dulles was a technician, a zealot focused on the international destruction of an ideology he despised, and his attention changed regularly. He organized the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh



in Iran and the youthful and charismatic Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, and he played a crucial part in organizing an unsuccessful coup attempt by the French military against President Charles DeGaulle. The CIA was deeply involved in the overthrow and assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, a campaign that was directly opposed to the wishes of President Kennedy. Dulles recognized no limits to his mission to safeguard America's national security. He allowed the CIA to create a vast scientific study into "deprogramming"

Kennedy allowed the CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff to continue planning the invasion. Still, he refused to allow any American air cover or "boots on the ground" military involvement. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a disaster, and Kennedy soon recognized that the CIA's bold strategy had been intended to force him to yield and allow air support when things began to go wrong. No one had expected Kennedy to resist, and Dulles and many of his cohorts labeled the new President a "Communist." JFK resisted their urgent pleas to nuke Havana, then Laos, Berlin, Peking, and even Moscow. Ultimately, the President fired Allen Dulles and his top lieutenants from the CIA, but Dulles maintained a powerful group of associates and dedicated anti-Communists. Things were heating up in Southeast Asia, especially as the CIA became involved in refining and transporting opium and heroin to the world's markets.

Soon after, Kennedy broke with all Cold War precedents and announced that the US would seek opportunities for peace and freedom worldwide. He fired Allen Dulles and other top CIA officials. He was assassinated. President Johnson named Allen Dulles to the Warren Commission to investigate and report on the assassination.

The Brothers is a frightening and shocking book you won't put down. Amazingly, so much evil, manipulation, disinformation, ideological murder, international intrigue, and raw treachery could be accomplished by two zealot brothers working within the US Government. When the late John Prados read my review of *The Devil's Chessboard* a few years ago, he recommended I read *The Brothers*. It remained in my stack of books waiting to be read, and now that I have accomplished that task, I highly recommend the book to anyone who wonders how the United States has changed so drastically in our lifetimes.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...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.

After he was elected, President

Arab-Israeli Unity

ED NIZALOWSKI

In this time of celebrations, joy, glad tidings, and "Peace on Earth," there are two parts of the world where the horrors of conflict, hate, and mind-numbing catastrophe are overwhelming any efforts by those who hope for better days. One place, of course, is Ukraine, where a war of nearly two years has fallen into a stalemate resembling the Western front of World War I.

And the other place is Israel. On October 7, Hamas, which had gained control of Gaza (with the help of the Israeli government, it should be noted), attacked Israel, starting with the launch of 3,000 rockets. The incursion into Israeli territory resulted in 1,139 deaths and the taking of approximately 250 hostages, including 30 children. There were reports of rape and sexual assault, which Hamas has denied.

Israel established a War Cabinet on October 12 and launched a large-scale invasion on October 27. A complete blockage of Gaza was implemented, which immediately caused a shortage of fuel, food, medical supplies, water, and electricity. There are widespread outbreaks of disease. Bombardments have caused catastrophic damage to Gaza's infrastructure, with a death toll that now surpasses 22,000. Of this toll, approximately 70% are women and children.

Will this turn into another type of "stalemate" with mounting death tolls fueling hatred and animosity to Biblical proportions? Is it too late to maintain communication and cooperation in the hope of a peaceful outcome? There have been numerous outbreaks of war and periods of violent instability since the creation of Israel in 1948. Still, the efforts to bring about some resolution and understanding have also been there for decades and deserve greater public knowledge.

One such group is the Arab-Jewish Partnership Guard. "We are trying to send a message—not just to the local community but to the whole world—that there are people who want to come together and reject the violence that we are seeing," said Amir Badran, who is Arab. Standing Together is another grassroots movement of Israelis and Arabs: "The future that we want—Peace and independence for Israelis and Palestinians, full equality for all citizens, and true social, economic, and environmental justice—is possible. Because where there is struggle, there is hope."

A particular group is called Rabbis for Human Rights. It was formed in 1988 in response to the contraventions of human rights in the Occupied Territories. Their reading of Judaism compels them "to defend the weak and the downtrodden in society regardless of race, religion, affiliation or orientation. We strive to live in an Israel true to the call of the prophets of old and the spirit of Israel's Declaration of Independence." A very recent effort saw a group of rabbis form a human shield to protect the Palestinian olive groves from the incursions of West Bank settlers. Yesh Din (Volunteers for Human Rights) was established in 2005. Its purpose is "to protect the human rights of Palestinians living under Israeli armed forces' occupation. We view the occupation as a main source of the violation of human rights and therefore seek to end it."

Machsom Watch, formed in 2001, documents abuses of Palestinian civil rights in the West Bank: "We have all experienced the rounds of violence. Time and time again, it is evident that there is no military solution to this conflict, nor can there ever be one. The only way to stop

the bloodshed is through a political agreement that guarantees both nations security, justice, and freedom. There are no winners in war. Only Peace will bring security."

On March 16, 2003, a 23-year-old activist by the name of Rachel Corrie was crushed to death in Gaza trying to prevent the demolition of a Palestinian home in Rafah. Rachel's journals and emails from her time in Palestine are available in various forms. Craig and Cindy Corrie, Rachel's parents, have been instrumental in creating a foundation in her name based in Olympia, WA. Some of their efforts involve creating a lifeline for Palestinian students in the US and sponsoring several Arab Festivals. One of the more inspiring projects was the creation of a Unity Field not far from the place where Rachel was killed, where a Ramadan football tournament has been established. The tournament organizers have also worked to create a Tournament for Athletes With Disabilities. A Palestinian Cultural Palace was also constructed, although this was bombed by an Israeli missile attack in 2018.

Parents Circle Family Forum is made up of individuals who have lost a loved one in the various conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis. Pax Christi International has awarded this group the Pax Christi International Peace Award this year. Women in Black is an anti-war movement started in Jerusalem in 1988, which began in response to what they considered serious human rights violations by Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories.

Yesh Gvul (translated as "There is a limit" or "Enough is enough") was founded by combat veterans in 1982 who refused to fight in the Lebanon war. They also oppose military service in the Occupied Territories. Shared Society in Israel has been in existence for over 25 years. To build a shared society, "the Foundation primarily focuses on the development of integrated, bilingual public education for Jewish and Arab children in Israel."

The Wikipedia entry for "Arab-Israeli Peace Projects" is an incredible resource that lists close to 40 projects or initiatives of one type or another to foster cooperation and understanding in this part of the world. The creativity and scope of many of these projects are absolutely astounding.

Economic efforts include Joint Industrial Parks, the Valley of Peace Initiative, the Red-Dead Project (aimed to address the shortage of fresh water in Jordan), and the Israeli-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce. Policy groups include the Alliance for Middle East Peace, EcoPeace Middle East (the focus is the environment), and the Peres Center for Peace.

In the category of "Co-existence Foundations" (once again from Wikipedia), there are these groups: "Ali Abu Awwad is a Palestinian activist and pacifist. He is the founder of Al Tariq (The Way) and a member of the Bereaved Families Forum, and he tours the world together with Robi Damelin, a Jewish woman whose son was killed by a Palestinian sniper. They hope to encourage dialogue and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. Their life and work have been featured in two award-winning films, *Encounter Point* and *Forbidden Childhood*. Another such group is Seeds of Peace, founded in 1993, which runs a Peace Camp in Otisfield, Maine. The camp brings together emerging young leaders and educators from Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt. Another such group with a similar mission is a UK-based group called Children of Peace.

Scientists have a specific group entitled the Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization. NeuroBridges started in 2014 and is specifically for neuroscientists from Israel and Palestine. A musical effort is worth noting: the West-Eastern Divan, founded in 1998 by Israeli-Argentinian pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim and Palestinian-American author Edward Said. The principal activity is an orchestra composed primarily of young Israeli and Arab musicians. They have performed all over the world. You're mistaken if you think there is no room for comedy. Comedy for Peace is the brainchild of Ray Hanania, a Palestinian-American standup comic married to a Jewish woman.

Both the US and Israel are nations in the throes of political turmoil. As tumultuous as our presidential elections promise to be, the legislative turmoil of the newly formed government under Netanyahu last December sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. Facing a judicial reckoning for corruption, Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu formed a coalition government with two right-wing extremist parties in the Knesset. Relations with Arabs and Palestinians living within the confines of the Israeli state, which had been getting more and more fraught, kept sinking even further into a potential explosion. By the summer of this year, the American government was remarking that a "vacuum of extremism" was being created in the Occupied Territories. In July, departing US Ambassador Thomas Nides feared that the Israeli government was "going off the rails," especially with the judicial overhaul being implemented by the newly formed government. This judicial overhaul brought thousands of Israeli citizens out in the street for weeks on end.

One of these parties is Otzma Yehudit, "Jewish Power," whose leading figure, Itamar Ben Gvir, was given significant authority in the new government as head of the newly created National Security Ministry. He has faced charges of hate speech against Arabs and of supporting several Jewish terrorist organizations. He has called for the expulsion of Arab citizens of Israel who are not loyal to Israel. Israeli sociologist Eva Illouz has said Ben Gvir represents "Jewish fascism."

Bezalel Smotrich, of the Religious Zionist Party, has become Finance minister. According to Wikipedia, "he is a supporter of expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank, opposes Palestinian statehood, and denies the existence of the Palestinian people." He has recently advocated for the resettlement of Gaza by Israelis.

Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu is the one who suggested that a nuclear bomb might be one way to end the war in Gaza. [At least Israel's possession of nuclear weapons is no longer a guarded secret.] Netanyahu suspended him "indefinitely" from cabinet meetings, but he could still participate remotely. He has called for the execution of Palestinian prisoners and that Israel should take complete control of the Gaza Strip. He has stated that the Gazans can go to Ireland or deserts, a remark that did not sit well with the Irish. Regarding his opposition to humanitarian aid going to Gaza, he remarked, "You would not send such aid to the Nazis, would you?"

Numerous questions need to be answered regarding what has happened in Israel over the last year, especially since the October 7 attack by Hamas. How has Israel ended up with such an extremist government?

Will Netanyahu ever be forced to stand trial for breach of trust, fraud, and bribery? If the government of Israel knew of plans by Hamas to launch a major attack, why were these reports dismissed? Why were the Israeli defense forces in such a state of chaos on October 7? Did Hamas launch its attacks to thwart normalized relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia? Will the elimination of Hamas really take months? When Hamas is eliminated, what is the future of Gaza? Why does antisemitism only refer to Jews? [Semites refer to anyone speaking a Semitic language, which includes Jews and Arabs]. Why has the number of journalists killed in Gaza gone up to 68? Are the claims of genocide regarding Israeli treatment of the Palestinians legitimate? (South Africa has brought this claim to the World Court) Did Israel use white phosphorus in its shelling of Southern Lebanon contrary to international law? After supplying Israel with \$136 billion in foreign aid (primarily for defense), is Israel that much safer and secure? (Israel is the largest recipient of foreign aid from the US) Is this foreign aid another subsidy for the military-industrial complex? How did Biden bypass Congress to supply more military aid to Israel but couldn't do this for Ukraine? Should this aid come with any conditions?

Perhaps a more important existential question is taken from the 1948 Israeli Declaration of Independence. After stating that the State of Israel will be open to all Jews worldwide, there is this: "It will be based on the ideas of liberty, justice, and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets. It will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed, or sex. It will guarantee full freedom of worship, education, and culture." Would the extreme elements of the Knesset please explain how this ideal is being applied to the Palestinians?

Since the article was written, the war on Gaza has continued unabated. Death statistics as of March 5, 2024 included 30,228 Palestinians, 1,410 Israelis, 94 journalists and 136 UNRWA aid workers. A wide variety of rallies and demonstrations around the world have promoted the cause of Palestine and others have promoted the actions of Israel. There have been 100 cities in the US that have passed resolutions for an immediate cease fire and on March 26 there were over 70 rallies in support of the BDS Movement. Several State Department officials have resigned in protest and on February 25, 2024, Aaron Bushnell, a 25-year-old Air Force serviceman set himself on fire in front of the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC and died. The rift between the Biden administration and that of Netanyahu is now out in the open although military aide to Israel continues. On March 25 the US abstained from a Security Council vote which allowed the UN to call openly for a ceasefire.



ED NIZALOWSKI IS A RESIDENT OF NEWARK VALLEY, NY. HE IS A GRADUATE OF SUC POTSDAM AND SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY. HE WAS THE LIBRARIAN AT THE NEWARK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL FROM 1985 TO 2010 (NOW RETIRED). ED HAS BEEN AN ACTIVIST FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE DOING WHAT HE CAN TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH BROOME COUNTY PEACE ACTION AND VETERANS FOR PEACE CHAPTER 80 IN BINGHAMTON, NY.

Save-A-Life Lite-A-Bike in Vietnam

DAVID CLARK

A man never stands so tall as when he bends down to help a child.

Nighttime reflective values on bicycles are minimal to nonexistent in the Frontier Area of Vietnam. Bicycles usually come with a small red plastic reflector that inevitably is broken and missing. Roads in the Frontier Area are very narrow and have no street lights. There are many incidents involving bicycles at night on these small, unlit roads, sometimes with fatal results. Proper reflective enhancements on bicycles greatly reduce these incidents.

Children in the Frontier Area of Vietnam who live over three miles from school and do not have a bicycle are unable to attend school. We target these poor children and provide them with a bike. We have received thank-you letters saying that, unlike their parents or grandparents, they now have an opportunity to learn to read and write. Bicycles give these

children not only life-enhancing but also life-changing opportunities.

Effective reflective enhancements on each bicycle cost about \$6.00; a new bicycle delivered with proper reflective value is about \$125.00. All donations go directly to the program; volunteers donate all expenses and administrative costs.

Tax-deductible donations may be made at www.vfp160.org/donate/ Make checks out to Veterans for Peace Chapter #69. Be sure to write; "Bicycles Vietnam" on the memo line.

Mail to:

Veterans for Peace Chapter #69
attn: Bicycles Vietnam
401 Van Ness Room 213C
San Francisco, CA 94102



DAVID CLARK IS A VIETNAM WAR VETERAN AND SECRETARY/TREASURER OF THE VFP, VIETNAM CH. 160.



Rain, Rain, Rain

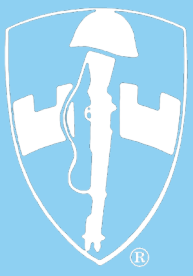
The Monsoons are here
Not a dry spot on our gear
Ponchos so thin and wet
Keeps us awake to fret

The coolness of the night
Makes you shiver a night
Temperature really drops
The rains soak the rice crops

It rains so hard and for so long
Don't see much of the Viet Cong
Thank God for the Monsoons
Finally here and none too soon

No beating the bush in the heat
Glad to be down and off our feet
No fighting, dying, or in pain
Bring it on...rain, rain, rain.

—Paul Cameron



The Women

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Women
by Kristin Hannah
(St. Martin's Press, 2024)

A while back, I submitted a review of *The Great Alone*, a novel about a family's struggle with a Vietnam veteran's PTSD. Kristin Hannah is a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author with over twenty novels to her credit. I mainly read nonfiction, but I was intrigued by that book and admitted that it was "one of those books you can't put down, and I have become a Kristin Hannah fan." When I learned that Kristin Hannah had a new novel about the women nurses in Vietnam and their readjustment struggles after returning from the war, I had to read it. I can assure you, this is another book you can't put down, and I am even more of a fan of this author.

Frances "Frankie" McGrath is a privileged young woman living with her parents on Coronado Island in San Diego. The story begins in 1966. Frankie's brother, Finley, has graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, and there is a swanky, upscale celebration party underway in the backyard of McGrath's luxurious home. Frankie and Finley have always been close, enjoying surfing, swimming, and the southern California climate. Finley is getting all the attention of the party guests, and Frankie feels a little left out. She slips into her father's office, a formal room dominated by a wall devoted to the family's military history, photos and mementos, medals, and awards arranged as a shrine. Frankie knows her father was never in the military due to a medical deferment, but that family wall is a centerpiece of the family home. Rye, Finley's close friend, ducks into the office to sneak a cigarette, stands before the wall, and asks, "How come there are no pictures of women up here, except for the wedding pictures?"

"It's a heroes wall," Frankie answers, "to honor the sacrifices our family has made in service of our country."

Rye responds, "Women can be heroes." Frankie laughs, but that sentence will haunt her far into the future. She grew up in a very structured family environment, and she is expected to be a model, well-bred young lady who is smiling and serene. Home, church, and St. Bernadette's Academy for Girls had instilled a rigorous sense of propriety. The unrest going on across the country these days, on city streets and college campuses, was a distant and alien world to her, as incomprehensible as the conflict in faraway Vietnam. Despite the party atmosphere, Frankie knows that Finley has volunteered to go to that conflict, and she detects an undercurrent of fear and concern.

In the strict upscale California neighborhood, a young lady has only three careers: secretary, teacher, or nurse. Frankie chooses to be a nurse and graduates as an RN. Finley is in Vietnam, and she wants to help. She tries the Navy, as her family has a long Navy history, but they require nurses to work two years in a hospital before they will be considered for Vietnam. The Air Force has the same requirement, but the Army signs her up and swears her in. She thinks her parents will be proud, but they are terribly negative. "Good Lord, what will we tell people?" her mother exclaims. During that conversation, the doorbell rings. Two officers have come to

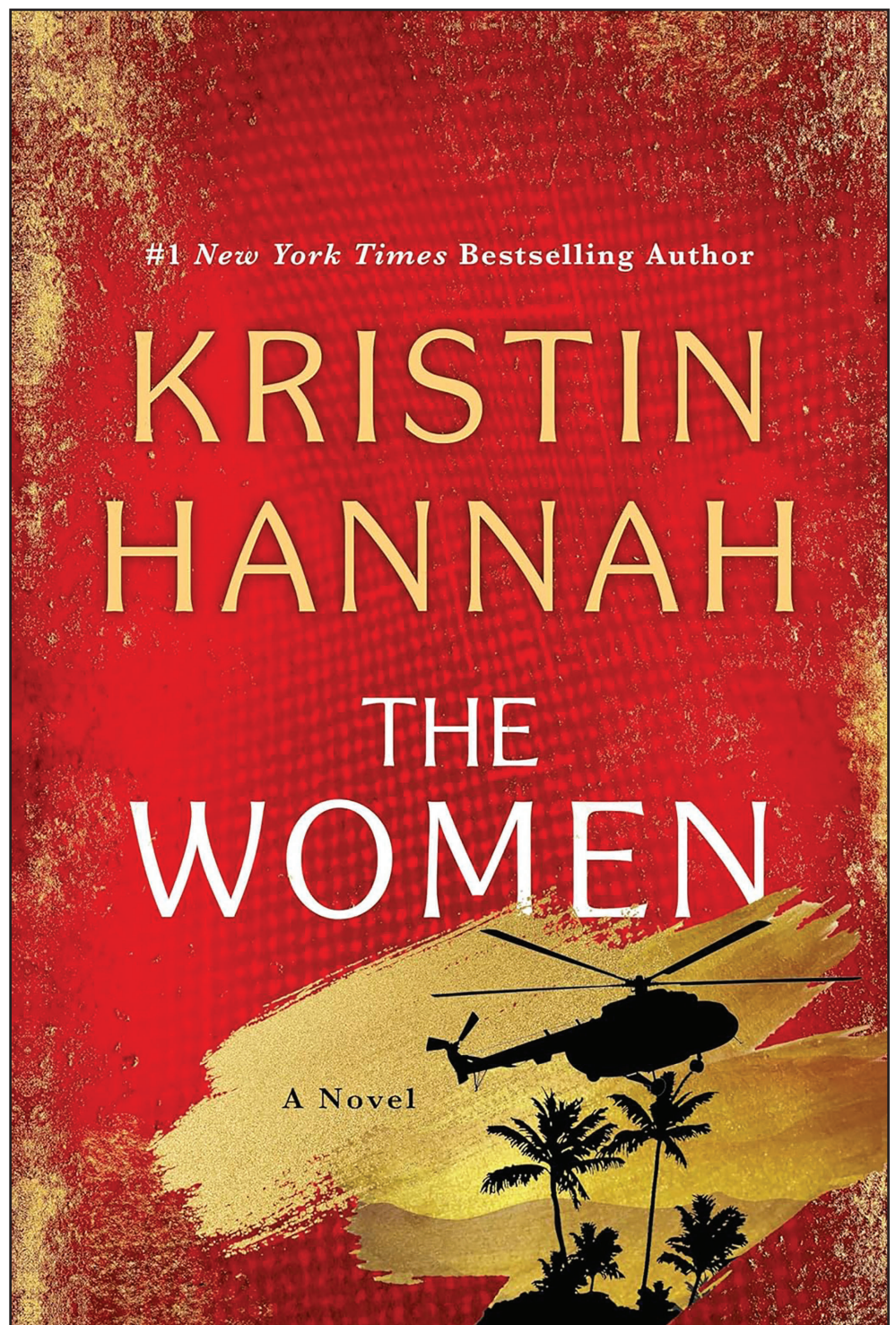
inform the McGraths that Finley has been killed in Vietnam. Devastated, Frankie arrives in Vietnam soon after.

Of course, a book about the horrors a nurse experiences in the Vietnam War has to describe an assortment of gory, gut-wrenching wounds, long hours, and shortages of supplies. In addition to soldiers, they treat wounded Vietnamese, too. Frankie has never seen or imagined such trauma, but she works hard and becomes a valued combat nurse. The helicopters come in waves, bringing casualties from a major battle at a small hamlet called Dak To. Mass casualties are called MASCAL, and Frankie thinks she has made a mistake. Of course, some of the other nurses are supportive and helpful. They work as long as it takes, exhausting hours filled with bloody tragedies and young American soldiers wounded far from home. The doctors are men who cannot keep up with the demands. Frankie learns to stitch up wounds after surgeries and many other skills that allow the docs to do more. One doc in particular, Jamie, becomes a romantic interest, but as he is flying out to go home, his chopper is shot down, and he is terribly wounded and brought to Frankie's hospital. The docs say he can't be saved.

Frankie is transferred to the 71st hospital in Pleiku when she gets good at being a trauma nurse. "Rocket City," they call it. She looks down on her new home from the helicopter, and her description of Pleiku does not bear the slightest resemblance to the place that was my home for a year. It doesn't matter, more than half a century later. The hospital's interior is just as bloody and traumatic as it could be. But Frankie has matured and gained a valuable set of skills. She knows she is helping wounded American guys. She is saving lives, and she is focused on that. She can't imagine going home and re-ups for a second tour. Her mother is incredulous, but Frankie needs to do what must be done. She runs into Rye, her brother Finley's best friend, now an army officer, and they become romantically involved.

But I am reviewing this book for Vietnam Veterans Against the War because it deserves to be read by every Vietnam vet and every American who experienced those passionate, desperate, important times.

Finally, it is time for her to go home. She discovers her parents have told their friends that she was studying in Florence, Italy. They are ashamed of her! Her father will not put her picture on his "Wall of Heroes." Seeking help, she goes to a veterans PTSD rap group but is not allowed to sit in because the (male) vets insist "there were no women in Vietnam." Two of her friends, fellow nurses from Vietnam, support and encourage her throughout the story, especially now. Frankie bounces like a marble in a pinball machine. She aligns herself with VVAW and is there in Washington for Dewey Canyon when VVAW vets throw their medals back onto the steps of the Capitol. Later, with her latest romantic interest, Henry, she travels to Miami for the 1972 Republican National Convention and acknowl-



edges spokesperson Ron Kovic. Back in California, she falls in with the League of Families, wives of POWs demanding the US government do more to bring their husbands home. She discovers she is pregnant, and her parents are horrified, but Henry wants to marry her, and a wedding date is set. The war finally ends, the POWs return home, and Rye is among them. Frankie has never really been in love with Henry, and she rushes to the San Diego airport to see Rye get off the plane. Her euphoria evaporates when Rye goes directly to his wife and child. He lied to Frankie long ago in Vietnam. She loses her baby and breaks off her

number one contributor to legislator's campaign funds, surpassing even the "defense" contractors, so any thought of offering free medical coverage is considered too costly.

The Women is currently the number one best-selling hardcover novel. Kristin Hannah is respected, and her latest novels always seem to jump to the top of the list. Okay, I get it. But I am reviewing this book for Vietnam Veterans Against the War because it deserves to be read by every Vietnam vet and every American who experienced those passionate, desperate, important times. *The Women* is one helluva story, a realistic picture of the era and what the war did to our generation. The book ends with the dedication of The Wall in Washington, DC: "And there it was: remembrance mattered. She knew that now; there was no looking away from war or from the past, no soldiering on through pain." The facing page is a photograph of the Vietnam Women's Memorial. It is a fitting end for a story that will strangle your heart and keep you turning pages from the first page to the last. Kristin Hannah made the effort to investigate the Vietnam era and the generation most affected by the war. *The Women* is an amazing, realistic portrait that deserves to be read by every vet, every spouse, surviving parent, our children, and grandchildren. It's not a women's book. Men, especially veterans, will love it! It should be the number one best-seller far into the future. *The Women* has been optioned by Warner Brothers to become a movie. At long last, the truth is coming out!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...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.

engagement.

I don't want to be a spoiler. This is a terrific book, 465 pages, and you will turn them one after the other until late at night. Kristin Hannah is an outstanding writer. *The Women* is intended to honor the women who went to Vietnam, and she includes ample mention of Donut Dollies. As this is written, on March 15th, today's newspaper tells us Congress has authorized the creation of a gold medal to be awarded to the women who were Donut Dollies. Of course, they were ineligible for VA medical coverage or other benefits all these years, and many are no longer with us. Perhaps today's congresspeople need to appreciate the message behind Dewey Canyon and all those medals discarded upon the capitol steps. The pharmaceutical industry is now the

An Honorable Exit

DEWITT CLINTON (REVIEWER)

An Honorable Exit

by Eric Vuillard, translated by Mark Polizzotti

(Other Press, 2023)

Fifty or more years after leaving a 105mm howitzer firebase in Central (what once was South) Vietnam, and despite carefully abandoning any memory of what American firepower can do to a former French colony and its citizens, I'm now reading a new and fascinating history of the French occupation leading up to the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. Eric Vuillard's history, *An Honorable Exit* (2022), is just now available to non-French speaking readers. It has taken me back to Vietnam, not to my own experiences, but to the nightmare of the French-Indochina war that later led to the US involvement allegedly ensuring that a tottering democratic country in South East Asia would never fall to Communism.

What makes Eric Vuillard's study so provocative, engaging, and mesmerizing is his deep sarcasm when describing the manner of the central players (politicians) in the 1950s French government. Though the first 60 pages of his short study are both humorous and astonishing, the *Meet the Press* interview sheds such insight into the time before Americans had ever heard of Vietnam: (Martha Rountree asks a simple question to the visiting French general: "Can you tell us now what the importance of Indochina is to us, to Americans?" The general replies with a comparison of the current French crisis in Vietnam to the American experience in Korea, and from that point on in the interview, everyone seems to be sweating

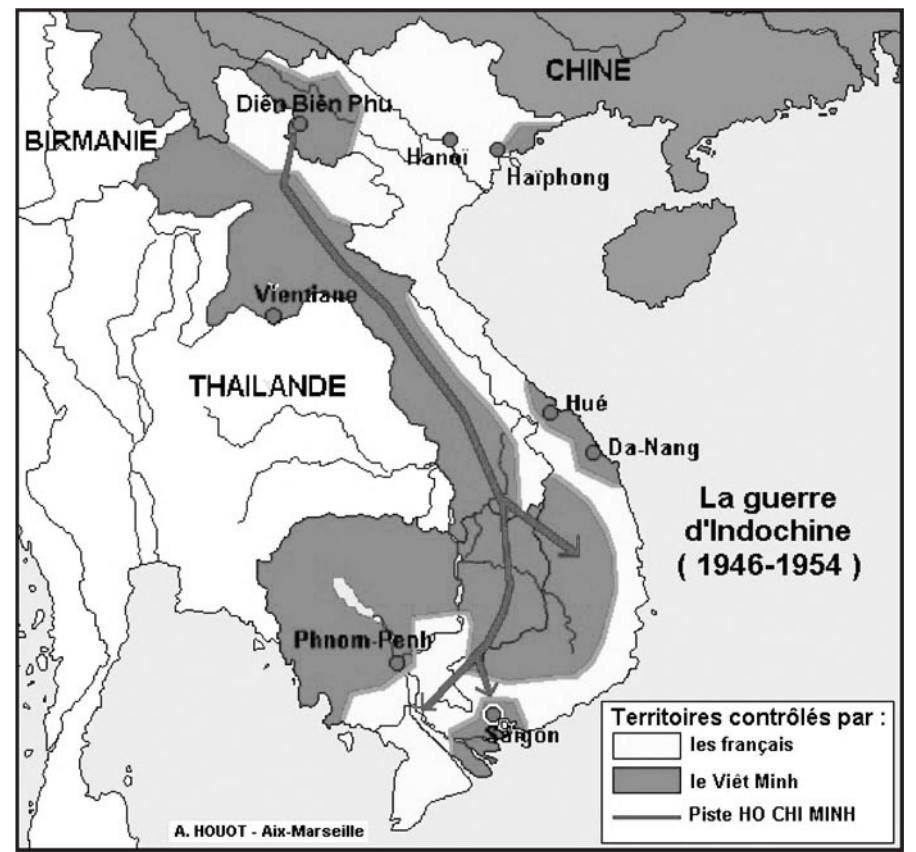
excessively under the hot *Meet the Press* television lights.

What makes Vuillard's study so fascinating is that he does not draw out a long historical narrative of the French colonization in Indochina but instead creates sharp, poignant, sarcastic scenes depicting everything that has gone wrong for the French and the Americans.

As a non-historian but one keenly interested in narrative, I'd have to say this 150-page commentary does not read like most histories but is, instead, a fascinating interpretation of what led to the defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and what led President Eisenhower, and later, President Kennedy, to see if they could accomplish what the French could not.

One wonders how an author can create a riveting narrative about Dien Bien Phu's fall and the French's exodus from Vietnam. But as Vuillard's narrative concentrates more on the French building a military base to challenge the Viet Minh, the chapters are shorter, the sentences more terse, and for some readers like myself, the pages turn faster and faster. The narrative now focuses on how quickly the command post was constructed. We're caught up in the anticipation of this quick construction without knowing precisely the longitude and latitude. Still, the outpost is near the Laotian border, where the Viet Minh gathers troops for an invasion.

They dug shelters, traced out trenches, and unspooled huge rolls of barbed wire to surround it all. Ten thousand men already lived here. And every day, they delivered tanks, jeeps, trucks,



advance surgical units, copies of *Playboy*, and dumpster loads of canned food. (81).

This very rare study of the end of French colonialism ends with a similar fall, the fall of Saigon; of course, a reader can see the parallels between these horrific moments. Vuillard's study is also an insight into how the French legislators, diplomats, and military leaders waded into this terrible end of another French colony. His ability to draw a reader into a scene with sarcastic detail is quite enjoyable.

My experience in Vietnam was, of course, nothing like the soldiers who defended and then were defeated at Dien Bien Phu. But I still recall the night in June of 1969 when the firebase I was on was overrun by North Vietnamese Army soldiers, including one who carried and fired

a flame thrower onto many of the American soldiers. The firefight made front page news in the Army's *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. I no longer watch movies based on the Vietnam War, and if I do, I'm usually a basket case for the next few days. Still, I will admit that *An Honorable Exit* has become one of the most engaging, if not the most insightful, studies on the French and American debacle in Vietnam. I haven't mentioned what John Foster Dulles offered the French as a weapon to defeat the Viet Minh in Vietnam. You'll have to discover that on your own.



DEWITT CLINTON IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, WHITEWATER, AND LIVES IN THE VILLAGE OF SHOREWOOD, WISCONSIN.

Genocidal Conscription

GERALD R. GIOGLIO (REVIEWER)

Genocidal Conscription: Drafting Victims and Perpetrators Under the Guise of War

by Christopher Harrison

(Lexington Books, 2023)

Author Christopher Harrison is a scholar, and *Genocidal Conscription* is an academic piece. Harrison is among a cadre of academicians who study the "functions of military service as a factor of planned destruction" among both conscripted soldiers and minority populations. He is an expert on the Twentieth Century history of genocidal states, including crimes like the use of sterilization during the Holocaust.

Genocidal Conscription, though geared to an academic audience, is refreshingly readable. The book is neatly packaged at 185 pages with footnotes after each of the seven chapters and includes a comprehensive bibliography.

The book is presented much like a college class, and like a college class, readers can expect the most prescient arguments to appear quite frequently throughout the narrative. The author sets the table in the first three chapters. He discusses the historical developments of eugenics and modern conscripted warfare while promising a deep dive into two nations that targeted and conscripted minority populations ultimately deemed "life unworthy of life." That is, groups identified by nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion. These draftees, conscripted under the guise of performing "mandatory military service," were actually "labor slaves," ostensibly rounded up to support a war effort. Frequently abused and often worked to death, many survivors were eventually slaughtered. Meanwhile, totalitarian and genocidal states hid this mass carnage by counting these victims as "casualties of war."

Harrison drills down further in chapters four and five. He concentrates on two modern nations guilty of these crimes, the Ottoman Empire in World War I and Axis-Era Hungary during World War II. In the final chapters, he summarizes the material and discusses contemporary concerns while presenting a detailed analysis of his findings.

Harrison begins his analysis by presenting the perspective of military strategist Carl von Clausewitz, who reminds us that "the impulse to destroy the enemy"—broadly defined—is "central to the very idea of war" and suggests that some wars are fundamentally connected to certain genocides.

The author states that certain nations used conscription to purge convicts and "undesirable" members of societies by killing them off; their deaths hidden among the actions of modern warfare. He cites examples of conscripted labor brigades being forced to clear paths through minefields, being sent into combat unarmed, and often killed in massacres by conscripted soldiers ordered to finish off the survivors.

Harrison argues that the modern era's two World Wars "provided for and resulted in new modes of genocide" that policymakers sanctioned and committed. Both the Ottoman Empire and Axis-Era Hungary explicitly used their drafts during wartime to eliminate minority groups, thereby changing the characteristics of their country's populations. These countries deliberately used tactics that resulted in the "wastage" of conscripted penal populations and other targeted minority groups. The author suggests such tactics were used to punish and kill those deemed as expendable and worth less than regular infantry recruits or conscripts. This butchery

was done in five stages, isolating target populations, subordinating them by conscription, forcing them into work brigades, and to final destruction by sending them to war zones.

In the case of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey enslaved Armenian, Assyrian, Greek, and Jewish men who had previously been stripped of their political, civil, and economic rights, sending them to work and die in war zones. Harrison then illustrates the ways that many of these victims succumbed to starvation, exposure, and disease while others were simply killed.

The author documents how, during the early years of World War II, Hungarian fascists "used selective conscription to discriminate against, capture, and conscript into labor battalions" the Jewish, Jehovah's Witness, Communist, and Roma Hungarian populations. Here, too, tens of thousands died as victims of multiple genocides through wastage and massacre.

Harrison firmly insists that Hungary conducted this genocide while an unoccupied ally of Germany. Then in 1944, when Germany took over the country, Hungary became the "last major international program of extermination perpetrated by the Nazis." Once again, the author cites examples of military perpetrators killing off their targets so that the "names of these victims could go into the record as casualties of war." The scale of death is documented with two helpful tables appearing in chapter 6.

In addition, the author discusses selective mandatory conscription in some nations. Here, he traces strategies used to target and draft specific populations of working-class men considered "relatively less crucial to the overall economic and military strength of the country."

In the final chapter, he examines data on conscription policies used by free and authoritarian regimes today and tries to identify groups at potential risk. He finds that Asia has the highest number of places of concern, followed by Africa and other hotspots like Afghanistan, Russia, and Syria. These data are presented in several useful tables identifying various "Disempowered Groups" at risk.

Like any scholar worth his salt, Christopher Harrison calls for additional work to be done to understand further and prevent current and future cases of genocidal conscription. For example, he calls on authoritarian states to end conscription in any form, to adopt all-volunteer military forces, and significantly to change policies that prevent civilian populations from being forced into any national service that puts them in danger.

Genocidal Conscription may not resonate with every reader. Yet, this is a well-written polemic with important historical detail for those seeking to understand the use of warfare to mask the criminal aspirations of authoritarian regimes. It is especially relevant to those who are working for peace and for ending all forms of involuntary servitude and conscription. So, get your library to order a copy and check it out.



GERALD R. GIOGLIO IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF MARCHING TO A SILENT TUNE: A JOURNEY FROM WE SHALL TO HELL NO. PUBLISHED BY ACTA PUBLICATIONS.

After the Apocalypse

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

After the Apocalypse
by Andrew Bacevich
(Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and
Company, 2021)

Andrew Bacevich is a graduate of West Point and retired from the army, a Vietnam veteran at the rank of Colonel. He received his Ph.D. in American Diplomatic History from Princeton, taught at West Point and Johns Hopkins, and then at Boston University, where he is a Professor Emeritus of International Relations and History. He is the author of more than a dozen books, including *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country* (2013); *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008); *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (2005); and *Paths of Dissent: Soldiers Speak Out Against America's Forever Wars* (2022). His essays and op-ed articles have appeared in *The Nation*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Los Angeles Times*. He is a regular contributor to Tom Dispatches. Bacevich is the president and co-founder of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank that advocates for a more peaceful and non-interventionist US foreign policy. In May of 2007, his son, 1st Lt. Andrew Bacevich, age 27, was killed in Iraq. I have met Bacevich and heard him speak at the Vietnam Peace Commemoration reunion conference held in Washington, DC, in 2023 to contradict the pro-war stance of the federal government and Pentagon's 50th-anniversary "Commemoration of the Vietnam War," a heavily-funded event lasting from May 28, 2012, to November 11, 2025, that carefully and systematically ignored any reference to the peace movement. I can tell you that Bacevich's ability to make a presentation to a large audience is as effective as his writing, and off-stage, he is wonderfully articulate and a very nice guy.

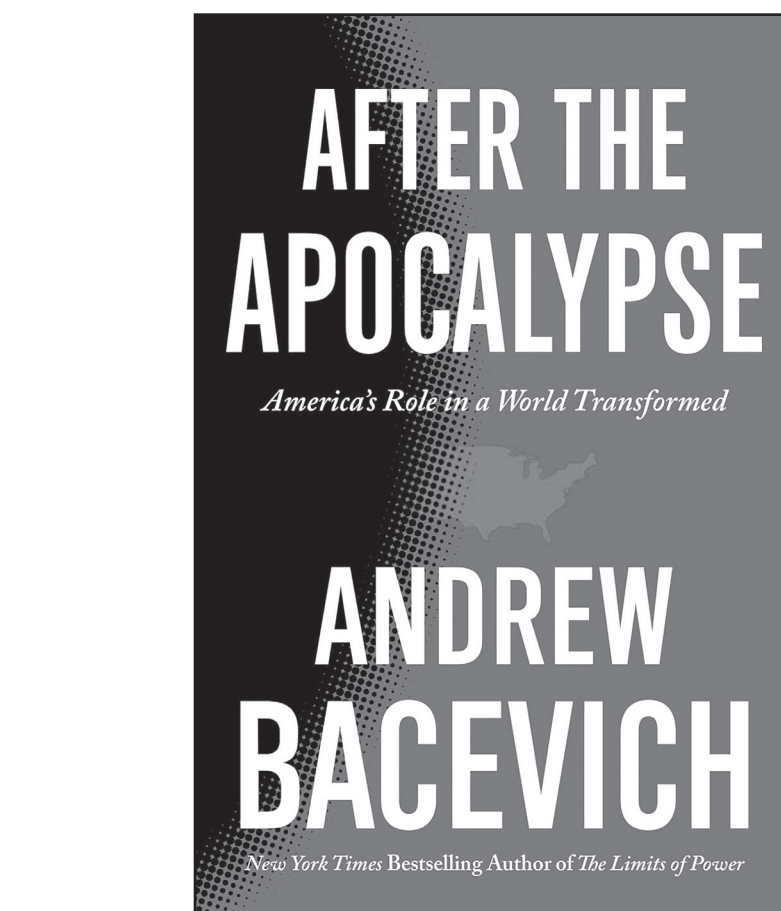
Okay, enough of all that. The book I'm reviewing, *After the Apocalypse*, was published in 2021, and he has released more since then. Why did I choose to draw attention to this one? Well, it is a relatively small book, 172 pages of text and 21 pages of footnotes, but it offers a very realistic and sobering examination of our

American society, foreign policy, and our "distinctively American attributes."

At the end of World War II, Bacevich writes, much of Europe and Asia were rubble, but America emerged "undamaged and all but self-sufficient." America's economic and technological superiority was indisputable. We were the only nation with nuclear weapons. "The shattered and demoralized nations of Western Europe desperately needed American aid and protection. Even the former Axis powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan, looked to Washington for assistance." China was weak and on the brink of civil war. Only the Soviet Union resisted, "intent on exporting an ideological alternative" to American preeminence, capitalism, and democracy. By 1989, all that reliance upon the US had changed. Still, American business and political leaders, and the American people in general, continued to believe that America was "exceptional" and that assertive global leadership was inevitable, even God's will.

By 1989, and the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, it was apparent that American exceptionalism was "running on fumes." The evidence was everywhere—in appalling economic inequality, seemingly intractable racism, social disintegration, mushrooming personal indebtedness, budget deficits, trade imbalances, and above all a loss of faith in the American system." As the world's leading military power, vast sums of money were funneled to the Pentagon and the intelligence community, but the results achieved around the globe were ineffective and morally bankrupt. "Washington remained in deep denial." By 2020, after four years under Trump, neither candidate for president nor the political party machines behind them could offer any realistic vision of America's future role as leader of the free world. Perhaps as a symbol of America's "exceptionalism," the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every facet of American life and international commerce.

America's imperialism treats the people of the world as inferior, while Americans are "doing God's service when it is violating all His laws." We are led to believe, despite the abundant truth of history, that our interventions into the politics and business of other countries are



benevolent and ultimately intent upon improving the circumstances of the people of those countries. "But," Bacevich suggests, "the presumed beneficiaries of US ministrations, be they Native Americans, Mexicans, Cubans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, or, in more recent days, Iraqis and Afghans, have never been fooled. Nor should we fool ourselves." Note that *After the Apocalypse* was published in 2021, the people of Ukraine are not included in the list taken from the book, but one can only imagine that they would be included today.

I will suggest that "Winter Soldier" events by VVAW and, later, by Iraq Veterans Against the War (now known as About Face) are gut-wrenching evidence of the barbaric cruelty and racism that inspires the American way of waging war. Bacevich points out that "US forces did enjoy a clear-cut technological edge, but technology did not produce victory. Put to the test, the Pentagon's vision flopped."

"Ground combat in Afghanistan and Iraq yielded an altogether different lexicon that reeducated Americans regarding the enduring reality of war. Operative terms included IED, TBI, and PTSD. An enemy skilled in employing improvised explosive devices killed or maimed unsuspecting GIs. One result was a spike in traumatic brain injuries, which numbered among the factors contributing to an epidemic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The Pentagon's Joint Vision had neither anticipated nor prepared for any of these, along with a host of other

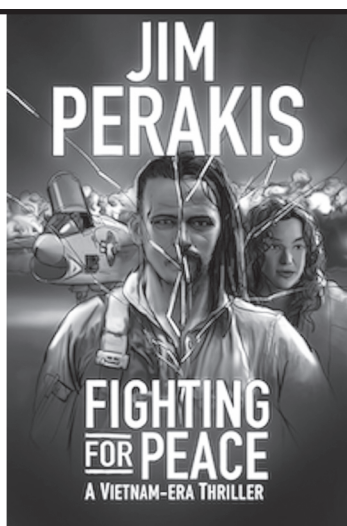
surprises encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq." As I am writing this, an article in today's *Roanoke Times* reports that more than 30,000 suicides have occurred among the soldiers/veterans of those wars. As Vietnam veterans, I think we all wonder just what the Pentagon anticipated or prepared for. And when will Congress and the President insist that these terrible statistics are unacceptable?

Bacevich writes: "Present-day military leaders have neither any desire nor any intention to learn from the painful experiences of the post-9/11 wars. They have already moved on, busily cultivating an imaginary future more to their liking." These are just a snippet of the observations and recommendations found in *After the Apocalypse*.

It is a relatively small book but filled with insights and clear thinking. I am an Andrew Bacevich fan. I wrote to him when Joe Biden was elected president, suggesting Andrew Bacevich for Secretary of Defense. At the very least, he would call the boss and report when hospitalized! I heartily recommend *After the Apocalypse*.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...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.



Tom, a Vietnam fighter pilot, falls for Kate, an anti-war protestor. At a non-violent demonstration, a beating by police fuels his obsession to end the war and drives him to leave Kate and run a bomb cell in NYC.

As he struggles to stop a mass murder planned by the leader of his movement, he is forced into hiding. Tom runs a path from patriot to terrorist and back again.

Can he avoid prison? Will he find his way back to Kate? How can he stop the senseless loss of American lives and end the war?

Does a veteran's voice make a difference?

Fighting for Peace is offered on Amazon as an eBook - \$4.99 and paperback - \$14.99

<https://www.jimperakis.com>

VVAW members can purchase the paperback and receive \$5.00 cash back by sending a receipt to: jimperakis@me.com

The Girl from Tam Hiep A Novel from the War

The Disillusioned THE "NAM"...FROM BOTH SIDES

The Embedded Ones From Viet Nam to Afghanistan

by:

John W. Conroy
Viet Nam Vet and War reporter

Available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble,
Books-a-Million and INGRAM

Screenplays available
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Vietnam - Iraq - Afghanistan

JOHN W. CONROY

I first went to Vietnam in November of 1966, previously having a farm deferment. Between chores during those prewar years my one saving grace was that I was a reader. My sister had gone off to school and left behind a subscription to *The Saturday Review* which was edited by Norman Cousins. He was vehemently anti Vietnam war and backed up his position over the years with concrete facts. Most everything he wrote made sense and most other mainstream publications did not, at least to me.

At any rate I eventually ended up in Long Binh with the 185th Maint. Battalion where I never quite fit in, and consequently ended up an odd jobber. Ration man, Saigon driver for the radio shop, jeep driver for the captain, etc. Quite often there were night ambush positions including various patrols surrounding the Long Binh Ammo Dump, which I might add blew twice when I was there. These explosions were so large that they broke windows in Saigon and produced a mushroom cloud that resembled a nuclear explosion. What did I know? I would add that night patrols picked up enormously after those explosions.

What bothered me right off was the attitude of many GIs toward the Vietnamese civilians; those that worked for the army on post, and those in the surrounding countryside. The Gook Syndrome was everywhere. At work or at play. A common opinion was "they're all VC." I think much of that came from fathers and brothers who had been in WW 2 or Korea—and of course the movies. You know, that old draft dodger John Wayne. Probably much of it was a clash of cultures. Most GIs hadn't been anywhere and neither had the Vietnamese. At any rate it was a sad situation and certainly didn't help the so called war effort—as if we ever had a chance.

I was fortunate to have a friend in Saigon who was stationed with the 1st MI Battalion on Chi Lang St. and was able a number of times to hitch hike down to Saigon on the highway or by helicopter. The II Field Force chopper pad was nearby, and it was fairly easy to hitch a ride most anywhere. A number of times while on the highway either jets or gunships would be bombing houses not far from the road and I doubt like hell they had any idea who was inside. And let's face it, we were an occupation army as well as a military opponent. When you added it all up success did not look very probable.

Of course we were not just taking on the people. We were destroying the country. Using the pad at II Field

Forces I was able to fly around much of III Corps when I could skip out which was fairly often. Even back then in '66 and '67 the countryside was nearly covered with bomb craters. The C-123s were out spraying Agent Orange any number of places. I was sprayed twice on the outskirts of the Ammo Dump while they were trying to clear the outlying countryside to deny saboteurs any cover while approaching the wire at night to lay more charges. All it took was a small charge and a wristwatch timer to blow it to hell.

I spent a lot of time in the nearby off limits village of Tam Hiep which obviously was not heavily populated with GIs. There were girls and beer and dope as you would expect, but the interesting thing was that this town was a supposed VC haven. And quite frankly it appeared to be, but I never saw any violence between us and them. Most able bodied male residents were in one army or the other, so it was just old men, women, and kids. There were times when we were warned by the girls to stay away. Don't come here for three days or whatever. and I for one never did. Later on, it appeared that the reason for that was that the "boys" were visiting family and friends. Obviously the "boys" were not regulars in the army of the Republic of Vietnam. No need for trouble. I was definitely anti-war at that point. After all, wars begin because of a breakdown or absence of diplomacy and are eventually settled with diplomacy, so why not skip the war.

I returned home thinking I'd get back perhaps as a photojournalist or some kind of war reporter. My great uncle Mark Watson had been a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist for the *Baltimore Sun* during WWII and Korea, and I figured it would be great to follow in his footsteps. It was '89 before I did return, but as a lowly tourist, not a reporter. I've been back dozens of times since, sometimes pursuing various business possibilities but eventually many times visiting my brother Mark who was the director of The East Meets West Foundation. He ran the farm during the war but eventually lived 23 years in Da Nang while in that position. My other brother Ralph was with the 1st Cav in 68 and 69 and fought in the A Shau Valley which isn't so far from Da Nang. His stories helped me in writing *The Disillusioned*, much of which takes place in the Da Nang area. I'd written a few articles on Vietnam for the local paper during those years so when Iraq and Afghanistan rolled along it got me thinking.

I was a bit long in the tooth for war reporting but eventually got myself

embedded with the 25th Infantry that was based outside of Tikrit, Iraq. There was an airfield within their compound and apart from securing it, I wasn't quite able to figure their mission out. Perhaps Command and Control of a certain area. At any rate I was shortly flown up to Kirkuk in a Chinook, one of a number of Vietnam era pieces of equipment that were still at work for the US Military. The policy in Iraq and also Afghanistan was to always have at least two choppers on a mission in case one had trouble. I never experienced that in Vietnam. I liked flying around because they always stayed at a low altitude, perhaps a few hundred feet, which gave a great view of the countryside.

Kirkuk was much more interesting mainly because I was able to get "outside the wire" so to speak. But there was no free access as in Vietnam. It always required a convoy with the men, and women, wrapped in full combat armor to venture forth. This city was a mess as far as trash went. Paper, plastic and junk of all kinds were everywhere which was like much of the country actually. Part of the time there was spent with a team that was attempting to set up or organize some kind of democratic government, but they weren't making much headway. Kirkuk is heavily Kurdish so there were difficulties working together with Arab Iraqis. I was with a company that did some patrolling along the streets but there was not much chance of communicating with any of the locals. Preventing any American casualties seemed to be the main mission.

I flew a great Chinook flight leaving there. It was up to Mosul, then back through Tikrit, Taji, the home base Camp Victory, where I was sent to the 10th Mountain Division. Their mission was to pacify the area South and SE of Bagdad as far as the Euphrates River. I returned to this unit five more times, one reason being that they were near my home, and it gave me another paper to submit articles. On my second trip in May of 2007 this same unit had had an outpost attacked with the loss of a number of soldiers, with four taken prisoner. None were found alive when all was said and done but I returned there two more times until that unit left. It was the 2nd Combat Brigade commanded by Col. Michael Kershaw. He was one of the few military men that I met who was interested in Vietnam. Most were not into it. Some were defensive as if I were trying to top their stories. But certainly, this was no war like Vietnam. I'd have termed it "Military Occupation" but who knows. Another odd thing I thought was that there was not much pro-war or anti-war conversation. They were just there. The whole experience left me more anti-war more than ever. Another country being destroyed, with large numbers of civilians being killed. So, with a little twisting, I made my way to Afghanistan.

Transport to Bagram was from the American staging airfield in Kuwait, as was travel to Baghdad International Airport. This time C-17s were used rather than Vietnam era C-130s, that ordinarily flew the route to Baghdad. I ran into Les Neuhaus, a reporter for *Stars and Stripes* on arrival where we were met by a young lady from the Public Affairs office. I'll stop here to say that I met a number of females in the US Military which was unexpected. They held every kind of job including door gunner on Blackhawks. Quite something, and I would also add that they were more professional than the males—in my opinion.

At any rate in no time we were

in a Blackhawk heading to Jalalabad on the way to the mountains above the Pech Valley to hook up with troopers from the 173rd Airborne. Like with the 25th I'd gone on patrols with them securing the Ammo Dump in Long Binh. The 173rd was embarking on Operation Rock Avalanche which was meant to clear out the Taliban from three mountain valleys in the Pech area, including the Korangal Valley of Restrepo fame. In fact Les and I ran into Tim Hetherington who was filming material for his documentary at that time. In my eleven embeds I ran into one outpost that resembled Vietnam. That was Able Main which had sand bags, concertina wire, and even latrines with cut off oil drums. It felt like home.

The Company I was with did not run into anything resembling armed combat. I missed the Company that did, and it so happened that one of their soldiers, Staff Sgt. Sal Giunta, won the Medal of Honor. I would add that two or three years later all US military were pulled out of these valleys. It was decided that all these people wanted was to be left alone. Too bad the US can never figure that out ahead of time. One thing also, a couple of years later Tim Hetherington was killed on the job in Benghazi, Libya.

Kandahar was something else. The press people were housed near the PA office at Kandahar Airfield (KAF) the main site of US military in South Afghanistan. I was sent off to a number of outposts, none of which were that interesting. Once again, not much anti-war, or pro-war conversation. People going with the program, putting in their time. And once again not much interest in talking with a Vietnam Vet which always surprised me.

Whatever. Once there I was beaten out on a chopper ride out in the field by the *NY Times* people, Carlotta Gal and Jao Silva the south African photographer. Unfortunately, Silva stepped on a mine and lost his legs, a bad trip for him and a common injury for American soldiers. I also got to know Marie Colvin who reported for a London paper. She wore an eyepatch covering an injury received in Sri Lanka and unfortunately was killed while reporting from Syria.

Looking back on eleven embeds I'd say that the Military Ops in both Iraq and Afghanistan were so mechanized and computerized that there wasn't much person to person contact in the killing. All transportation outside of the wire is by convoy and few local civilians, except for interpreters, work inside. And like Vietnam where "they're all VC," locals were felt to be Taliban or Al-Qaeda in Iraq. I don't know the fix, but to be diplomats rather than warriors would be a good start. The three wars I've been to were sad, unnecessary and failures, with three countries destroyed and millions of casualties.

All three of my books, *The Girl from Tam Hiep*, *The Disillusioned* and *The Embedded Ones*, I think would be termed anti-war. I certainly am.



JOHN W. CONROY IS 80 YEARS OLD, MARRIED WITH FOUR KIDS. HE WAS EMBEDDED WITH THE US ARMY SIX TIMES IN IRAQ AND FIVE TIMES IN AFGHANISTAN. HE WAS A SOLDIER IN VIETNAM IN 1966 AND 1967. SINCE RETURNING TO VIETNAM IN 1989, HE HAS WRITTEN NUMEROUS ARTICLES CONCERNING THE COUNTRY, AND SOME FOCUSED ON VETERANS OF THE CONFLICT. HIS PUBLISHED NOVEL IS THE GIRL FROM TAM HIEP. THE EMBEDDED ONES AND THE DISILLUSIONED ARE IN PROGRESS.



Detroit VA demo for decent benefits for Ali Hussin, July 1977.

Excavations Update: LZ Ranch / Patrol Base Frontier City

MARC LEVY

As noted previously, former Cobra pilot and civilian medical evac pilot Richard Magner and former Delta 1/12 Cav grunt Bob March are collaborating with their colleagues in Vietnam to locate American-dug NVA mass graves. In Vietnamese culture, the spirit will not rest until the body is properly buried. Here is Richard's December 2023 update:

The initial excavation work on LZ Ranch—one summer night in Cambodia, while Delta 1/7 Cav had perimeter guard, Ranch was overrun—continues.

Based on aerial and terrain map analysis and interviews with American vets (Richard Magner spoke with Medic, Delta 1/7 Cav Mike Derrig, and Bravo 1/7 Cav Robert Kon. Bob March interviewed 1st/21st FA Martin Corcoran and Delta 1/7 Cav Carl Lee), Nguyen Xuan Thang in Vietnam assembled aerial overlays of LZ Ranch that suggest at least two mass grave sites on LZ Ranch.

The first, formed by a bulldozer in the northwest sector, may hold 12 to 15 remains. The second, a bomb crater in the southeast sector, may hold four to five remains. In the 2024 dry season, the excavation crews will explore other areas on or around LZ Ranch.

The 1969 battle at Frontier City was fought by Charlie 4/9 25th Infantry against the NVA's 1st Regiment of the 9th Infantry. In December, Nguyen Xuan Thang attended an NVA mass graves excavation seminar in Tay Ninh. He wrote on Christmas Day, 2023, "It's hard to express how grateful I am. Four years ago, on the anniversary of the battle at Patrol Base Frontier City, we went to Patrol Base Frontier City to search for our uncles. Then, in 2021, as we offered a little ceremony to our ancestors, the authorities found a collective grave of 213 people who died during the

battle. They were soldiers of E1 F9 and support units. After many delays, authorities will hold a conference concluding the six-year search and excavation process."

According to Thang, the participants included the leader of Tay Ninh province, the political commissar of Tay Ninh military province, the head of military politics of Tay Ninh province, a representative of the NVA 9th Infantry, several online 9th Infantry vets, several local witnesses, and representatives of relevant authorities.

After presentations and discussions, the workshop determined the following:

The battle at PB Frontier City occurred on the night of April 25 and the morning of April 26, 1969. The after-action reports of the US and Vietnamese forces match entirely. The 1st Regiment of the 9th Infantry was the main assault unit at Frontier City, supported by mortars, bazookas, anti-aircraft weaponry, medical and logistical teams, and Viet Cong.

The first efforts to contact American and Vietnamese veterans to help locate mass graves on Patrol Base Frontier City began in September 2019. In the summer of 2021, based on those interviews, aerial map analysis, and scraps of torn clothes, rubber sandals, spent bullets, and severely decomposed remains, Vietnamese authorities located an area at the base likely to be a mass grave. In 2023, team K71 discovered and excavated approximately 200 bodies from Platoon 1, 9th Infantry Regiment, and supporting units. The original tally of 213 NVA KIA is supported by a 1st Regiment operations officer present at the battle. He stated the unit consisted of 300 soldiers before the assault. About 100 soldiers survived the attack.

American accounts of a skirmish on the night of April 24 west of Frontier



Family members offering prayers and incense to a loved one lost at Patrol Base Frontier City

City are consistent with Vietnamese recollections of the event. A witness recalled that a VC POW, placed on a helicopter, called on his comrades to oppose the war.

A casualty roster compiled by the Vietnamese identified the remains of 60 individuals. The authorities will continue archival searches to update the list.

Ms. Hiep, a VC who participated in the battle, stated that on the morning of April 26, 1969, when observing from afar, she saw the American troops search for and collect VC KIA. Many of the corpses at the fence [concertina wire] were dragged by ropes to mass graves.

According to Ms. Hiep, there may be two or possibly three mass graves. Because she cannot read maps, the authorities will accompany her to the field and work out the coordinates. Comparing her data with satellite images will determine whether or not to pursue further excavations in the area.

The conference thanked everyone who contributed valuable information and wished everyone a happy and

healthy New Year. Nguyen Xuan Thang forwarded the witnesses' names to the military command of Tay Ninh province so they could be acknowledged and honored.

On behalf of the victims' families and relatives, the symposium thanked Bob Connor for contacting witnesses who provided initial information. Thanks were also extended to Richard Magner for his technical expertise, Mr. Tuan, Mr. Phuong, and Mr. Lam, who participated in numerous search surveys, and the American vets who shared information on the battle and its aftermath, especially the Manchus (Charlie and Alpha Company, 4/9 25th Infantry), and in particular Greg Lederer and the late Randy Pullman.



MARC LEVY WAS A MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 CAV IN VIETNAM/CAMBODIA IN '70. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME.COM. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE THE BEST OF MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME, AND DREAMS, VIETNAM. EMAIL: SILVERSPARTAN@GMAIL.COM. RICHARD MAGNER'S WEBSITE IS CATTRACKINDIA.COM.

Letter to the Editor

A recent edition of *The Veteran* (Fall 2023 - ed.) featured a long and positive review of George Black's 2023 book, *The Long Reckoning: A Story Of War, Peace, And Redemption In Vietnam*. This piece followed a lengthy and equally laudatory review in the April 9, 2023, *New York Times* book review of *The Long Reckoning* (named the "Editors' Choice"), written by Elizabeth D. Samet, a professor of English at the West Point Military Academy.

Ms. Samet's extensive review ends by relating a very moving quote from Black's book (pages 110 and 111):

"In his fascinating description of life on the perilous Ho Chi Minh Trail, Black includes a vignette about a North Vietnamese porter. The unnamed man fortified his

spirit against hunger, brutal labor, poison clouds of defoliant sprayed from C-123s, and napalm bombs by reciting poems from a volume of Walt Whitman he carried in his rucksack. When his unit captured an American soldier, the porter eagerly sought out the prisoner's thoughts about *Song of Myself*... But there's a twist to Black's story. The Vietnamese porter seeks the GI's opinion in vain: The man had never heard of Whitman."

That's certainly a powerful narrative, but the problem is that it's not Black's story. He stole it from my 1993 poetry and photograph anthology *Voices From The Ho Chi Minh Trail: Poetry of America and Vietnam, 1965-1993*. Black did not ask or even inform me that he was using my true account (collected during 19 post-war trips to Vietnam); instead,

he insisted—as noted by Samet—that the story was his.

And if that egregious act of plagiarism isn't bad enough, in *The Long Reckoning* (page 110), Black steals yet another of my personal narratives:

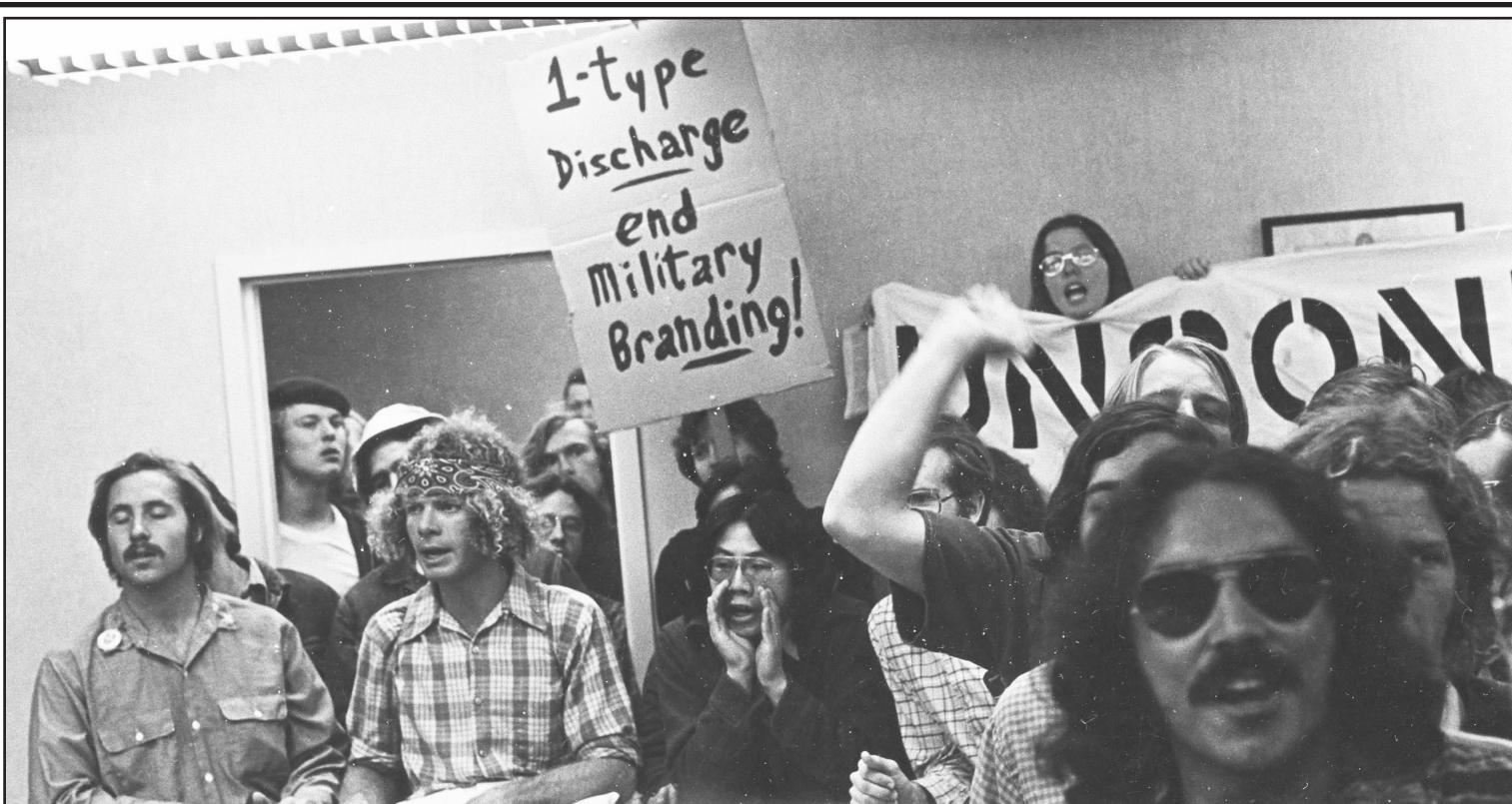
"One man who spent twelve years on the trail and was wounded four times taught himself to whistle hundreds of birdsongs, a substitute for those who had been silenced by the bombing and spraying."

I am a Vietnam veteran, and the author of these two true stories, and Black's blatant theft of my material is unforgivable. I contacted him, and he refuses to remove his lies from future printings or to admit his plagiarism. Samet has declined my request for an apology and that she publicly corrects her fraudulent review. The

New York Times book review says Black's obvious plagiarism isn't its responsibility. And all of these self-proclaimed "professionals" are perfectly happy to actively participate in the exploitation of a decorated former soldier. No wonder that many of the various "true accounts of the Vietnam War" contain errors and lies.

This isn't the first time I've had some of my 59 years of literary work stolen, and it probably won't be the last. And it greatly angers and profoundly saddens me that fellow Americans like George Black—who I went to war and suffered wounds to protect—would stoop so low as to profit from my sacrifice. Shame on them.

—Larry Rottmann



VA Takeover, Chicago, 1975.

JFK's War With the National Security Establishment

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

JFK's War With the National Security Establishment: Why Kennedy was Assassinated

by Douglas P. Horne

(Future of Freedom Foundation, 2014)

JFK Revisited: Through the Looking Glass

by James DiEugenio

(Skyhorse Publishing, 2022)

Sometimes, when you order something from *Amazon.com*, a message suggests products "you might also like." That is when I became aware of the Horne book and bought it. I'm happy I did. I try to stay current on what is known about the assassination of JFK and also the murders of his brother, Robert F. Kennedy, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and John Lennon. Those assassinations reveal the extent of corruption throughout our government around the time of the war in Vietnam. The JFK assassination was a coup d'etat, and the other killings were enabled by the success of the coverup that ensued. The results were more than 50,000 Americans dead, along with approximately 3.5 to 5 million Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians. The assassination of President Kennedy focused our nation on a foreign policy of world domination or empire-building at the point of a gun. The destruction of bombing, and militarism has been the basis of America's interaction with the world ever since.

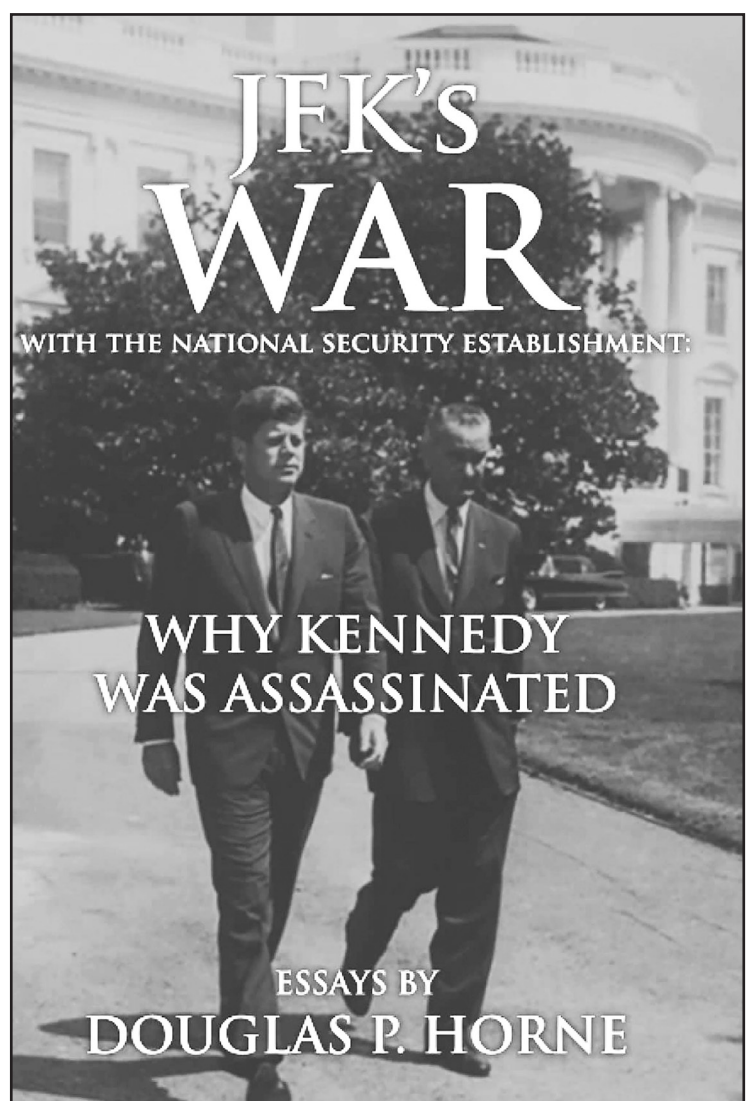
The assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy on November 22nd, 1963, was literally "the crime of the 20th century." I was in a high school chemistry lab when the loudspeaker informed us that the president had been shot, and school was immediately dismissed. By the time we arrived home, the president was dead. Lyndon Johnson (LBJ) was sworn in as president, and Lee Harvey Oswald was in police custody an hour after the assassination and "suspected" of shooting both JFK and a Dallas policeman, J.D. Tippet. That evening, FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover instructed his people that the assassin had been arrested and no further investigation was needed.

LBJ set up a Commission headed

by Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren to investigate the assassination and report their findings to the American people. One member of the commission was Allen Dulles, former head of the CIA, whom Kennedy had fired after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. LBJ probably shared Dulles's extreme dislike for John Kennedy and his younger brother, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. The commission was instructed to reassure the American people that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone. They carefully avoided interviewing a surprising number of critical witnesses, assembled an unbelievable story that ignored a broad spectrum of facts, and finally released an 888-page report that was immediately questioned. The questions bubbled beneath the surface for years, but in 1991, Hollywood film director Oliver Stone, a Vietnam veteran, released the movie *JFK*, and a storm of factual controversies erupted. Stone's sources were all insiders, and the film strongly suggested that factions within the government, the military, the FBI, and the CIA had plotted the elimination of the president and then methodically covered up the facts. Why? These two books explain that in great detail, and both are fully documented.

They are disturbing. Lee Harvey Oswald appears to have been entirely innocent of the crime, but he was shot to death in the Dallas Police building by Jack Ruby, a lower-level mafia gangster with secret ties to the FBI. Oswald, by the way, was a CIA operative, carefully groomed for the part he would play and viewed as expendable.

The movie *JFK* created an uproar among the American public, our members of Congress and senators, and the media. All of the inaccuracies and questionable omissions from the Warren Commission began to be examined in detail by the public, and the public didn't hesitate to say they (we!) could plainly see that the truth about the assassination had been covered up. So strong was the public's response that in 1992, President Clinton set up an Assassination Records Review Board to investigate the history and the facts of the case. This was, of course,



almost thirty years after the event. One of the first responsibilities of the new Board was to review the millions of documents stored in the National Archives and make as many available to the public as possible. Douglas Horne was a Chief Analyst for Military Records for the ARRB. He has authored a five-volume set of "The US Government's final attempt to reconcile the conflicting medical evidence," focused upon the autopsy of JFK's body in Bethesda, Maryland, and the obvious divergences from the observations of the medical staff at Parkland Hospital in Dallas.

Oliver Stone has produced two movies after *JFK*, *JFK Revisited: Through the Looking Glass* and *JFK: Destiny Betrayed*. The DiEugenio book offers screenplays of those two movies paragraph by paragraph, with documentation, transcripts, and interviews inserted between every one of the paragraphs. Both of these works make one fact unmistakably clear: President Kennedy was in the process of pulling us out of Vietnam by the end of 1965. He was fully aware that forces within the military-industrial complex (that President Eisenhower had warned us about

just before JFK's inauguration) might overthrow him. Kennedy died due to his efforts to create peace, and today's military, with their nearly trillion-dollar annual budget and lack of any real success since World War II, are clear indications of how correct the two presidents were.

Sixty years after JFK was silenced, the truth is slowly being exposed. Millions of pages have been released from the National Archives, and knowledgeable investigators like Douglas Horne, James DiEugenio, and Oliver Stone have examined them earnestly. These two books make their findings available to us all. As Vietnam veterans, the events in Dallas that November day in 1963 and the subsequent coverup played a very major role in our lives. I highly recommend that you read one or both of these books.



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

Charlie 1/5 Cav

AL WELLMAN (REVIEWER)

Charlie 1/5 Cav: An Airmobile Infantry Company's 67 Months in Vietnam

by Steve Hassett

(Deeds Publishing, 2022)

The airmobile 1st Cavalry Division was explicitly organized for combat in Vietnam with tactics emphasizing missions by observation, transport, and gunship helicopters. Author Steve Hassett was an infantryman with Charlie Company of the 5th Regiment from September 1966 to August 1967. In the years following that experience, he researched the history of Charlie Company from its arrival in Vietnam in August 1965 until it departed in April 1971.

In this book, Hassett uses a chronological historical framework as the setting for perceptions of the men serving with Charlie Company in Vietnam. The book includes recollections from postwar reunions, letters written by men at the time, and excerpts from other published accounts, including websites like the "Vietnam Wall of Faces." Charlie Company was in the Central Highlands from August 1965 until moving to I Corps in January 1968.

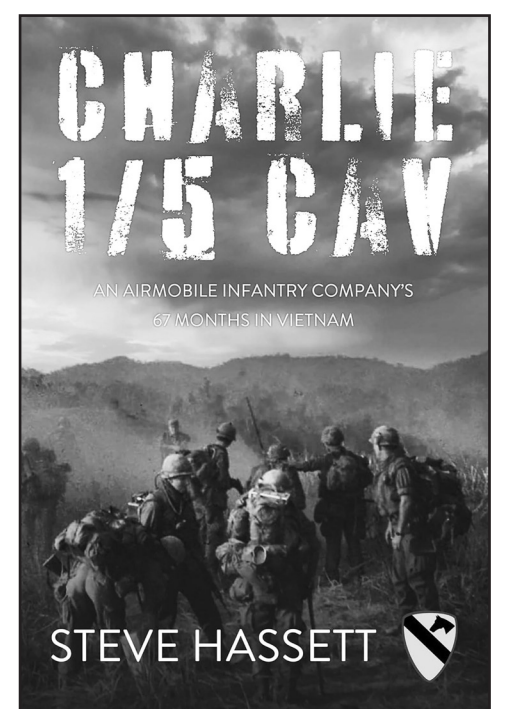
In November 1968, Charlie Company moved again to the Cambodian border to defend Saigon until it returned to the United States in April 1971. For readers unfamiliar with the locations of landing zones or operation code names, the book includes an appendix providing map coordinates for battles and incidents through a website maintained by the University of Texas Tech.

Hassett describes the topography and vegetation of landing zones and battlegrounds. He and others recall individual experiences from the monotony of packaged combat rations and foul-tasting water through an occasional hot meal, cold beverage, or visit to An Khe's "Sin City" brothel. Accounts emphasize the seemingly endless hot, humid days wearing dirty, perspiration-drenched uniforms while carrying heavy equipment up steep hills through mud and impenetrable vegetation infested with leeches, biting insects, and snakes. Focus is on the unforgettably terrifying moments of booby traps, ambushes, mortar and rocket barrages, or friendly fire confusion.

Recollections of seeing friends dismembered, hearing their bodies

absorb bullets, or feeling life leave their bodies while trying to carry them to safety may be disturbing to veterans trying to forget similar experiences. One hopes that including the names, ages, and hometowns of those killed in these accounts may dissuade inexperienced readers from embarking on similar adventures. There are several accounts of the deadly frustration experienced by men carrying early M16 rifles, designed with metallurgical improvements to reduce cleaning requirements, but firing ammunition loaded with a new type of gunpowder leaving residue, causing the rifle self-loading mechanism to malfunction and sometimes leaving an empty cartridge case stuck in the barrel during combat crises. There is an appropriate emphasis on the military policies of burning villages, destroying food crops, and declaring free fire zones, which eliminated any possibility of "winning the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people.

This book deserves popularity, encouraging a second edition. Subsequent editions might benefit from including an appendix of acronym definitions. As familiar as



those terms may be to those reporting their experiences, they will be confusing to later generations hoping to learn from those experiences.



AL WELLMAN IS AN AMATEUR HISTORIAN WITH COMBAT EXPERIENCE OFF THE COAST OF NORTH VIETNAM DURING THE WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES MILITARY PERSONNEL.

Merle Ratner - ¡Presente!

NADYA WILLIAMS

For an American to be honored upon passing with an official memorial is quite rare in Vietnam. However, both respect and love were well-earned by Merle Ratner's life-long devotion to the victims of the American War. She was only 13 in 1970 when she was first arrested in her native New York City for protesting the war. Unlike most Americans who demonstrated until the war's end in April 1975—then dropped out—Merle's commitment did not stop or waiver.

Had her death at 67 on Monday, February 5th, been a peaceful and natural one, there would surely have been sad remembrances in Ha Noi among the organizations she so faithfully supported. But death came suddenly and violently as she was walking in the early evening across an intersection near her home in lower Manhattan, bringing food to an elderly friend. She died instantly, struck by a large truck making a rapid turn. Her husband of 44 years, Ngo Thanh Nhan, was just a few blocks away in their apartment, awaiting her return.

The February 16th online memorial in Vietnam's capital of Ha Noi was beautifully organized, principally by the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations—VUFO, and by VAVA—the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin. Merle Ratner's global reach was such that within a few days, the link to attend the moving tribute to her virtually circled the globe. A large solemn room was filled with official representatives, with a raised platform at one end holding a large photo of her surrounded by flowers. Going to the podium on the side, each speaker bowed deeply in front of her

shrine before and after delivering their eulogy. All Vietnamese spoke in English, and all were men, except for one woman who spoke close to tears. Her husband Nhan was the last to talk via Zoom from their home in New York. Speaking only in Vietnamese, his voice breaking, this writer felt and, strangely, "understood" every heart-rending word he uttered.

We in San Francisco's Veterans For Peace chapter had met Merle and Nhan several times, starting in 2005 as they escorted small groups of Vietnamese whose lives had been severely damaged by Agent Orange/Dioxin. These delegations toured the country, stopped in Washington, DC, for meetings, and ended up in New York City to coincide with a 2004 lawsuit against the manufacturers and users of the deadly weapon of war.

Merle co-founded the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign, which fought to make both the US government and chemical corporations compensate people in Vietnam for the legacy of congenital disabilities and cancers caused by the toxic chemicals the US military used during the war. Not surprisingly, the suit was rejected in the New York Circuit Court, and an appeal to the Supreme Court was not accepted for a hearing. This spring, a major lawsuit against Monsanto, Dow, and others is on appeal in Paris, France. An estimated three million suffer today as gene-warping Dioxin continues to cause severe congenital disabilities in the Fourth Generation since the war. After many years of struggle, many American veterans now receive some compensation but nothing for their affected children or grandchildren.



More recently, Merle supported the development of a new generation of Vietnamese leftists in the US, organizing study groups, making trips to Vietnam, and developing strategies through VietLeft Power. Merle had served on the Brecht Forum/Marxist School board, a movement education center. She was most recently a board member of the Laundry Workers Center, a project that advocates on behalf of low-wage laundry and food service workers. Before her death, Merle was working as a New York City public school substitute teacher and was finishing up a master's program in labor studies. "She loved her kids, the job, and the challenge," Nhan said. "I'm greatly affected by this loss," he

added. "She helped me understand American politics and the lives of poor people." So many owe a huge debt of gratitude to Merle Ratner. She was the last person that should have left us so soon.

Only three days before her death, the Vietnam News Agency published an interview with Merle: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/us-activist-cpv-stands-as-linchpin-behind-every-vietnams-success/279202.vnp>



NADYA WILLIAMS IS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VFP, SAN FRANCISCO CH. 69 AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION.

The Fifth Special Forces

AL WELLMAN (REVIEWER)

The Fifth Special Forces in the Valleys of Vietnam, 1967: An Insider's Account
by Douglas Coulter
(McFarland & Company, Inc., 2023)

This book is an autobiography of Douglas Coulter, focused on his time in Vietnam, with summaries of earlier and later experiences. The story begins with an academically gifted student distracted from college studies by a desire to travel. While traveling, he meets men whose Second World War experiences inspire him to join the United States Army. After completing officer candidate school in August 1965, Coulter spent a year with the 10th Special Forces Group in Europe with the Green Berets' original Cold War mission of preparing to conduct sabotage and guerilla operations behind enemy lines following the anticipated Soviet invasion of western Europe. As America escalated military operations in Vietnam, Coulter requested a combat assignment with the 5th Special Forces Group at Nha Trang, where his training for long-range reconnaissance Project Delta began in September 1966.

Coulter led reconnaissance patrols from An Lao in the early spring of 1967 and similar patrols in the A Shau Valley later that spring before spending the summer in Nha Trang and returning to college in the United States as a civilian in the fall. These five or six-man patrols by two or three Americans and three Vietnamese began with selecting a location for clandestine insertion by helicopter, followed by immediate movement away from the landing zone by evasive routing to minimize chances of being followed if enemy forces observed arrival. The jungle environment prioritized observation by sound above sight. Men on patrol moved quietly through the jungle,

leaving no footprints or damaged vegetation. Men spoke only in whispers and only when necessary. At night they slept touching each other to avoid misidentification if enemy soldiers came near. Night combat discouraged the use of firearms whose muzzle flash would reveal the location and destroy night vision. Patrols were extracted by helicopter when detected or threatened and sometimes engaged or captured a few soldiers, called in artillery, air strikes, or helicopter reinforcements when more significant numbers of soldiers were observed. Some of these extractions were complicated when helicopters were damaged by enemy ground fire. Whispered radio communication was otherwise limited to dawn, noon, and dusk and kept as short as possible to minimize opportunities for location by triangulation.

Men of elite fighting units like the Special Forces were trained to believe they were more intelligent, stronger, better, and more capable than their adversaries. Without that belief, they would be unwilling to undertake such dangerous missions, but that perception of individual superiority created competition among unit members about who would lead the first patrol, most distant patrol, or most successful patrol. That competition limited cooperation within the unit and increased "who knows best" disagreements between junior officers and senior enlisted personnel. Green Berets' perception of superiority damaged their ability to cooperate with other military units who referred to them as "special feces." Coulter describes a similarly narcissistic perception of superiority among Americans who believe American cultural norms and armed forces are the best on earth. Coulter suggests that American military forces and the American public were equally

surprised to discover Vietnamese communists were as dedicated and capable as they proved to be and have been similarly surprised by Afghan resistance to American lifestyles.

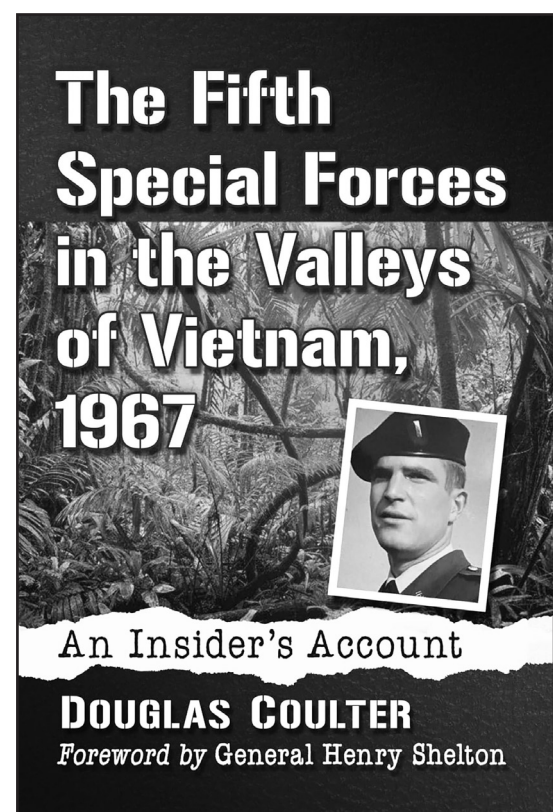
Coulter's description of short-term relationships between American soldiers and Vietnamese women reveals a significantly counterproductive aspect of United States overseas military operations. While Americans often misinterpreted translation difficulties with Vietnamese units with preconceptions that their allies were lazy and cowardly, Coulter's earlier travels through former French colonies enabled him to establish a better professional relationship with the Vietnamese soldiers who accompanied him on patrols. Coulter may have intentionally delayed the publication of this book until after his death in 2022 to avoid retaliation for identifying military personnel illustrating widespread problems with the conduct of the Vietnam War, including the frequency with which career military officers prioritized opportunities for their promotion to

higher ranks above the achievement of national objectives.

After obtaining advanced degrees from INSEAD and Harvard, Coulter worked for McGovern's unsuccessful 1972 and Carter's 1976 presidential campaigns. Carter then appointed Coulter to the Copyright Royalty Tribunal, where he served for seven years before teaching at Harvard, Moscow State University, and Peking University's Guanghua School of Management. In this book's Afterword, Coulter recognizes the importance of the draft in convincing American voters to end the Vietnam War, and he suggests America's later military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan would have been sooner recognized as counterproductive with ground forces of draftees rather than volunteers.



AL WELLMAN IS AN AMATEUR HISTORIAN WITH COMBAT EXPERIENCE OFF THE COAST OF NORTH VIETNAM DURING THE WITHDRAWAL OF UNITED STATES MILITARY PERSONNEL.



Blood Brothers

ROGER QUINDEL

I had just spent 3½ months in the field—most of the time along the Cambodian border and the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was a bloody ordeal as we saw so many deaths—both ours and theirs—and gruesome injuries. Finally, I left with just one artillery battery—we had been stationed with as many as ten—and the three of us radio teletype operators. We are now in our second week at an ARVN—our South Vietnamese allies—military compound at Hoc Mon—seven miles from Saigon. It was like heaven: no guard duty, no listening post duty, and no humping 100-pound artillery shells. And ARVN soldiers lived with their families. When we weren't doing our 8-hour communication shifts, we could play soccer or other games with the ARVN kids. We got invited to their homes for a meal. It was like heaven to us after what we had just been through. But our bunker wasn't secure—too small for the three of us and extremely hot—because it was only dug 18 inches deep. Our regular bunkers had been about five feet deep and provided both safety and were much cooler in the near 100-degree temperature of the Vietnam dry season.

A few days after we arrived, a visiting Colonel saw my buddy Richard and me teaching the five soldiers in our unit who were functionally illiterate how to read and write. We had been reading and writing their letters for several months. "What are you doing?" "Teaching them to read and write sir." "Stop this nonsense," he screamed. "Do

something useful like wiping the dust off your truck!" he ordered. "Yes sir." The dust was all back in fifteen minutes.

I was on the second shift that week and remember nothing of this day. I had just received a message when I heard a deafening noise. It felt like I had been hit in the head with a baseball bat. I looked outside the communication rig and saw that my close buddy Richard—the Iowa farm boy—had been hit. I put on my flak jacket and helmet and crawled to the nearby bunker of our medic.

"Rich needs help." He sent someone to Rich while he tended to me. I was bleeding profusely, but I didn't realize it. He bandages me. A medevac chopper is called. It will arrive in 20 minutes from the base camp at Cu Chi. I was feeling woozy as we waited. The medic was holding my hand. Later, I realized he probably thought I was dying. At some point, I say something like, "I wish people back in the States could see us now. They would realize that we are all in this together." Many soldiers in Vietnam really hated all the racial tension back in the US. I wanted help. I sure didn't care about the fact that he was black.

The chopper finally arrives. Rich and I are placed on it and arrive in Cu Chi. "He's KIA"—killed in action—says the chopper medic after we land. I am loaded into an ambulance. "He's dead, He's actually dead," I cry.

I'm taken to the surgery area and put on a gurney. "I feel sick," I say weakly. They bring a bucket. I throw

up blood. Not once, but twice. They get another clean bucket, and I do it again. I am the "Exorcist"—but this is not a movie.

I learned that a second rocket into Hoc Mon incredibly hit the mouth of a bunker, and all eight ARVN soldiers inside were killed instantly. The rockets were fired from 22 miles away. This is the total randomness between living and dying.

I am now in the 25th Infantry Division Hospital at Cu Chi. The nurses and doctors were heroic. They labored under brutal conditions, and the Hospital got mortared at least twice in my 5-6 day stay there. I also had a few visitors. I had been in the field for 4½ months, so I knew no one in Cu Chi. So, who were these visitors? They were black medics who were friends of the medic who had kept me from bleeding to death. Our friendship and my comment about "we are all in this together" had touched him deeply. His medic friends all gave me the same valuable advice. "Get off the morphine as soon as you can or you will get addicted." Or, "as soon as it doesn't last for 4 hours, you have to get off."

Given the extent of my injuries and the multiple surgeries I had, the pain was excruciating. One moment, you are in agony. Then, the nurse arrives. You feel the cold rush as the morphine moves up your arm. Agony to ecstasy in a minute. The pain disappears, and you float in pleasure. But it doesn't take long before the four-hour wait between shots is too long. The morphine effect becomes shorter and shorter. When that happened, I

decided it was time to heed the advice of the Black Strangers, who were my Black Medic's friends, and get off morphine. Without this repeated advice, I may have continued chasing the illusion that morphine could keep me from pain and suffering.

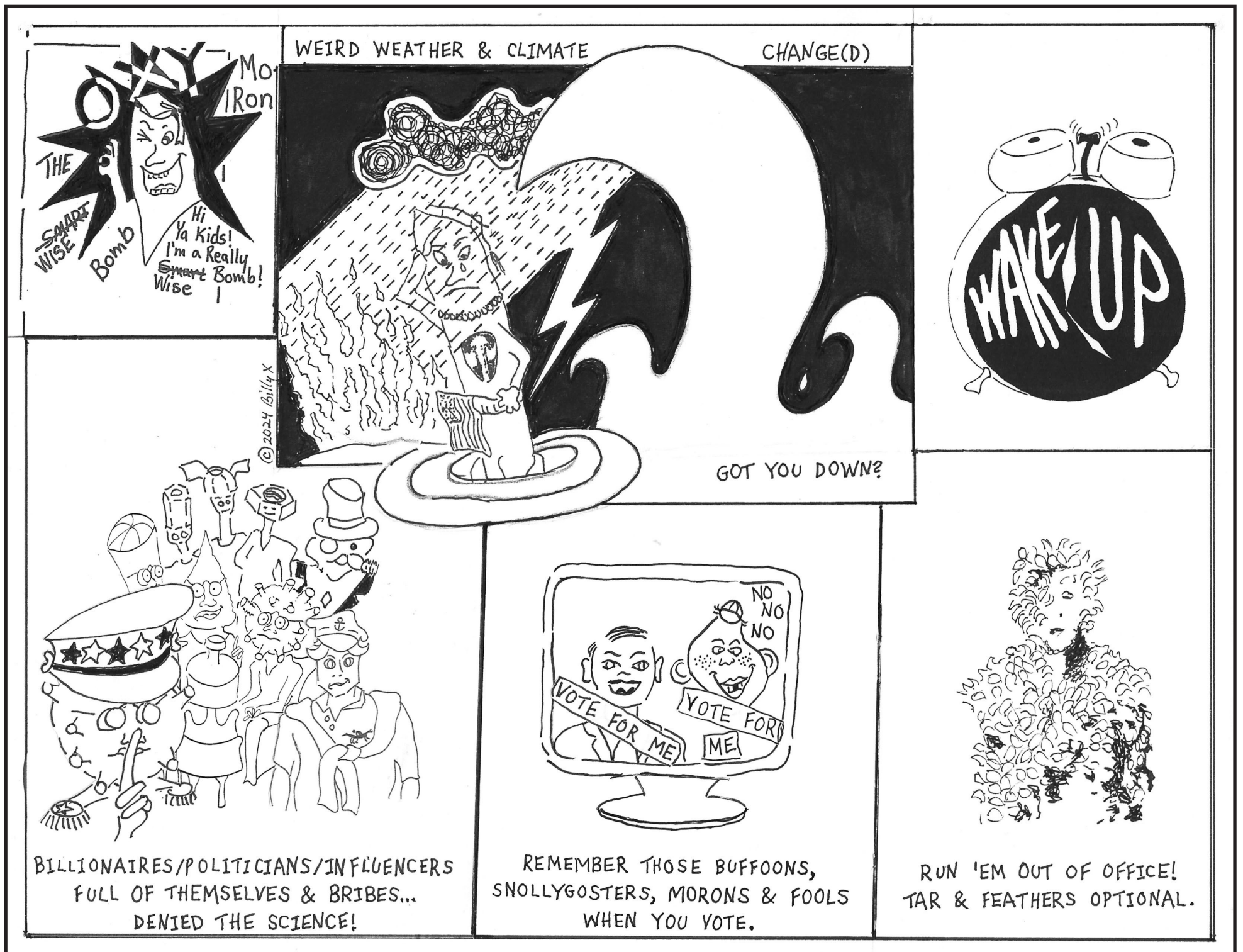
Eventually, the pain diminished. I was healing, and I had no drug addiction problems. Many other wounded soldiers weren't so lucky, as addiction became a significant problem for those who served in Vietnam, especially the wounded and those traumatized by the constant deaths and injuries. I will always be thankful to my Blood Brothers, who saved me from that fate.

Postscript: The Colonel who screamed at us for running a literacy class and didn't care about our inadequate bunkers also didn't bother to tell us that the very worst incident in the entire Vietnam War took place on the Hoc Mon Bridge—less than a mile from us. It happened on March 2, 1968 about a week before we arrived in Hoc Mon. Ninety-one US soldiers were attacked from both sides of the bridge. In eight minutes, 49 US soldiers were dead, and 29 more were wounded.

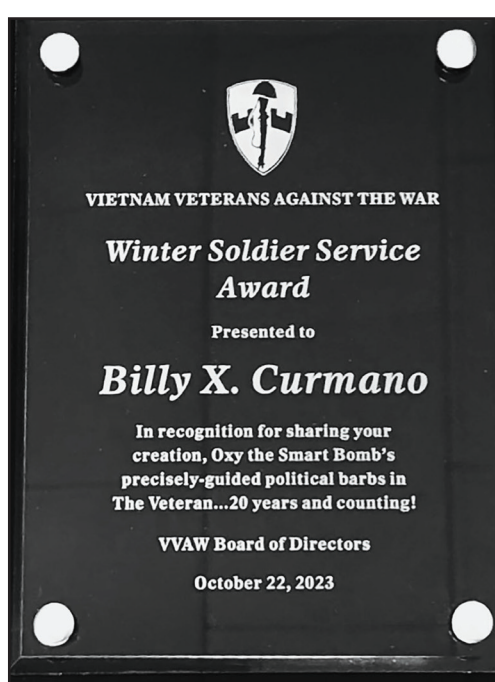
Not such a safe place, was it?

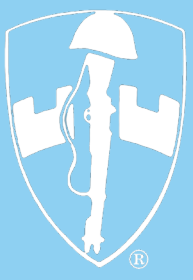


ROGER QUINDEL WAS A RADIO-TELETYPE OPERATOR WITH C BATTERY OF THE 3RD/13TH ARTILLERY UNIT OCTOBER 1967-68. HE MARCHED WITH, AND HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, DC IN 1971.



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





THE VETERAN

SECTION D

Volume 54, Number 1

Spring 2024

Ben Chitty - ¡Presente!

PRISCILLA MUROLO

Priscilla Murolo's tribute at Ben Chitty's memorial

Ben Chitty knew a lot about pain and how to make it a force for good in the world.

Below you can see Ben before he had learned much on either subject. He did know discontent. He had inherited an enticingly comfortable spot in a very small world and yearned for something more. He didn't yet know that the something more can hurt like hell. This Ben Chitty had his picture taken in San Diego in 1966, right before he went to Vietnam for the first time. He was eighteen years old. A few months earlier, when he had visited me in Connecticut, my sixteen-year-old eyes had seen him as a man of the world. He was scarcely more than a child.

Now, consider Ben Chitty, the scholar of medieval studies, upon his graduation from Swarthmore in 1972. That man, age twenty-four, had more than a passing acquaintance with pain. A knee he had injured in high school had been re-injured, much more seriously, in Vietnam when an explosion caused a large radio to fall on him. For the rest of his life, he would walk with a cane and ache to the point where he needed aspirin or some other analgesic at least twice a day. The war had marked him in other ways, too. He was less self-assured than that smooth-faced kid of eighteen and now sought to withdraw from the world beyond his little corner. When I asked him some years later what had attracted him to the life



Ben Chitty and Dayl Wise, anti-Bush Demo in New York, 2006.

of a medievalist, he spoke about his experience as a petty officer during his second tour in Vietnam and how bad it had felt to go back to that war, this time guiding others into the fire. As a medievalist, he'd never again have to do such a thing, and maybe he'd even forget he'd done it in the past. But, of course, that memory refused to go away.

Ben was thirty-seven and already an experienced labor activist before he figured out how to transform his

pain from Vietnam into a lasting good. Max and Tony had nudged him in that direction by hanging onto his every word about matters of war and peace; they badly wanted to learn from his experience. But the main impetus to make good out of pain came from a different quarter—Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which Ben had joined shortly after his discharge from the Navy and then, somehow, let slip away. It re-entered his life in the spring of 1985. I was writing an article about how Americans remember the Vietnam War, so I made a date to get together with two VVAW members who did counter-recruitment, going into high schools to share their first-hand knowledge of the war and refuting the false promises of military recruiters. Ben accompanied me to that get-together, and it very quickly became clear that the guys we were talking to—Clarence Fitch and Dave Cline—cared a lot more about mobilizing Ben than about talking to me. When we got home, Ben went into our bedroom with a bottle of whiskey and stayed there for at least 18 hours, thinking through what he had for so long sought not to remember. Within days, he had re-joined VVAW and signed up for duty as a counter-recruiter, and he would later take on

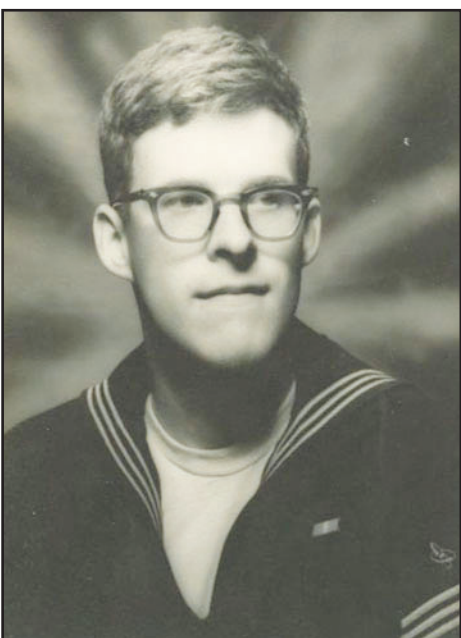
many, many other missions under the auspices of VVAW, Veterans for Peace, and a slew of ad hoc peace projects.

This takes us to the photo of Ben above, where he's standing next to fellow Vietnam vet Dayl Wise at a rally to protest George W. Bush's speech at the United Nations in September 2006. Ben, who has just turned fifty-nine, looks like the happiest guy in the world—as he did every time he mustered (his word) with the veterans' peace movement. Very seldom did he invite me to come along; that movement was his thing, not our thing. I learned a lot from watching him, however. Not least, I learned to convert my own demons into generosity to young people encountered over the course of a long teaching career. And Ben supported that without reservation, even when it required significant sacrifices on his part. As he knew—as he taught me, as his smile in this photograph attests—in such things, there is not only salvation but also a great deal of joy.

You're about to view a film clip of VVAW's counter-recruitment work in a Bronx high school in the late 1980s. In addition to Ben, you'll see the guys who pulled him back into VVAW—Clarence Fitch and Dave Cline—plus their comrade Greg Payton. Especially when Ben is speaking, the process by which pain becomes a force for good is so obvious on the screen that I needn't explain. But, before we move on to the film, I want to say one last thing, directed in particular to Ben's brothers and sisters in the veterans' peace movement. Thank you for making my husband's face beam and for making his life matter in ways that could never have happened without you. Should you ever need anything from me, just ask.



PRISCILLA MUROLO FIRST MET BEN CHITTY IN 1962. THEY MARRIED IN 1994. SHE AND BEN CO-AUTHORED FROM THE FOLKS WHO BROUGHT YOU THE WEEKEND: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES.



Per Odman and Ben Chitty at Vets Day Parade in Manhattan, November 11, 2008.

Memories of Ben Chitty

2024-01-26

Hello Jeff,

My condition has worsened of late. Here is my suggestion for an obit.

Send out a call for 1-2-3 sentence tributes, roll up the replies into a single document, and use that, either for a general announcement or for *The Veteran*.

Ben Chitty

1947-2024

USN 1965-9 VN 1966-7, 1968

Life Member VVAW

June Svetlovsky

Anyone that met Ben Chitty knew that he was truly dedicated to the Clarence Fitch chapter of VVAW and to promoting its message of veteran's rights and peace with justice.

I worked with him doing layout on some of the literature he wrote for handouts or announcements. When Ben looked over a printout, he'd send back a page or two of rewordings (substitute Voters demand... with The American people demand...). Not being overly finicky, just untiring in his effort to say exactly what needed to be said.

But at the end of that list he invariably added "That being said, this thing just needs to be put to bed." I always felt the underlying message was let's get this done and move on to the next. Not surprising that Ben kept holding off retirement. There was always something else out there that had to be put to bed.

I shall miss you Ben. Rest in peace.

Greg Payton

I just renewed my membership in VVAW, this morning. My next call was to be to Ben to catch-up.

To receive this email was shocking.

Steady Ben, always presenting outlooks and situations that made me ponder. A real Patriot he will leave a gap.

Jerry Lembecke

It was always a treat to see Ben at VVAW events. Often sitting quietly at a literature table aside the mainstream of political and social activity, Ben's presence invited thoughtful engagement on the issues of war and peace, and veterans affairs.

My best to Ben and his friends,

Steve Geiger

My brief thoughts: "Truly, One of the tall timbers has fallen." Ben along,

with the other founders, spoke truth to power and provided sustenance to those of us who knew the war was wrong; they led and succeeded in shedding light on the US gov't's continuing lies that promoted an immoral and corrupt war. He always presented a cogent, intelligent and quotable rebuttal to the lies being spouted from the right. We are all indebted to his leadership and courage.

PRESENTE

Marc Levy

I met Ben through Mike Gillen. Ben was one of the most fiercely sincere and knowledgeable anti-war Vietnam vets I've ever know.

Patrick McCann

Long live the memory and spirit of Ben Chitty for living a life of service to the people.

I will never forget his graciousness and courage. Thank you, Ben for being you, and carrying on the tradition of the Clarence Fitch chapter of VVAW. Blessed are those who dedicate their lives to serving the people and striving for peace and justice.

Lorraine Cohen

Ben, such a steadfast presence. He is a caring committed labor and peace activist, respected by all with whom he was associated. He deserves another 20 years.

Terrible news. He is so unique, totally committed to peace, and the rights of workers. I and so many others will miss him. My condolences go out to his family, colleagues, and friends.

Edward Laurson

We are all getting older and we never know how much more time that we will have. It's hard to think about our final years or solutions for others in the same situation. I keep looking forward and hope for the best for all of our brothers who have fought the good fight. Ben Chitty was on our side and we surely hope for a peaceful transition and his efforts will be remembered.

Peace and love to you Ben.

Joe Miller

So very sorry to learn this... Ben was one of my first contacts when we began to set up a VVAW email list back in 1995.

Tim Walsh

A really great guy. A shame to lose Ben, so soon after Mike Gold passed on.



Ben Chitty at VVAW's 25th Anniversary in New York, May 31, 1992.

Bob Siegel

I am very sorry to learn of Ben's passing.

As a fellow member of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of VVAW since the late 1980s, I had the opportunity and good fortune to get to know Ben fairly well. Ben was a man of uncommon intelligence, thoughtfulness, and decency.

I will miss him.

RIP, Ben.

Nadya Williams

A Good Man indeed.

Joe Bello

Very sad news! Ben was a man of conscience and conviction and was instrumental in putting together many events around peace & justice. Queens College has services for its student veterans because of Ben. My condolences to his family and all who knew him. I will miss you Ben and hope Dave Cline & Mike Gold were there to welcome you.

Tom Wetzler

R.I.P. Brother Ben.

Danielle Zora

Came to TN when I was very sick and brought myself and my dog, Lambchop back to NY-Nice man.

Nada Khader

WESPAC deeply appreciated working with Ben Chitty as a Veteran for Peace and VVAW. He had moral courage and rightful determination to work for a beautiful world where all people have the right and ability to live in peace, freedom and dignity.

John Crandell

Surely, I never knew you Ben Chitty, but your's has been one hell of a familiar name to us all.

Ed Damato

I mourn the death of Ben. He was a long time member of VVAW, committed to fighting for peace and justice and made all of us proud of him.

Tom Gery

I don't know my comrade-in-arms but two characteristics emerge from his message: As a life long VVAW member he understood the horrible reality of the Vietnam War and he is demonstrating a certain courage as he moves toward his death. Such a man will be missed.

Thomas Manthe

We plan on offering tobacco during the up coming full Moon to send Ben on his final journey. RIP Brother.



Per Odman, Michael Hayes, Ben Chitty at Veteran's Day in New York City, 2011.

Arthur "Ben" Chitty, 1947-2024

Arthur Benjamin Chitty, III, "Ben," died February 11, 2024, at Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, New York. Born August 28, 1947, in Sewanee, Tennessee, Ben was the first of four children born to Arthur Benjamin Chitty, Jr. and Mary Elizabeth Nickinson Chitty. He attended Sewanee Public School and with his brother John became an Eagle Scout, like their father. Attending Indian Springs School near Birmingham, Alabama, he skipped his senior year and in 1964 entered the University of the South, where he became a member of the Sigma Nu fraternity.

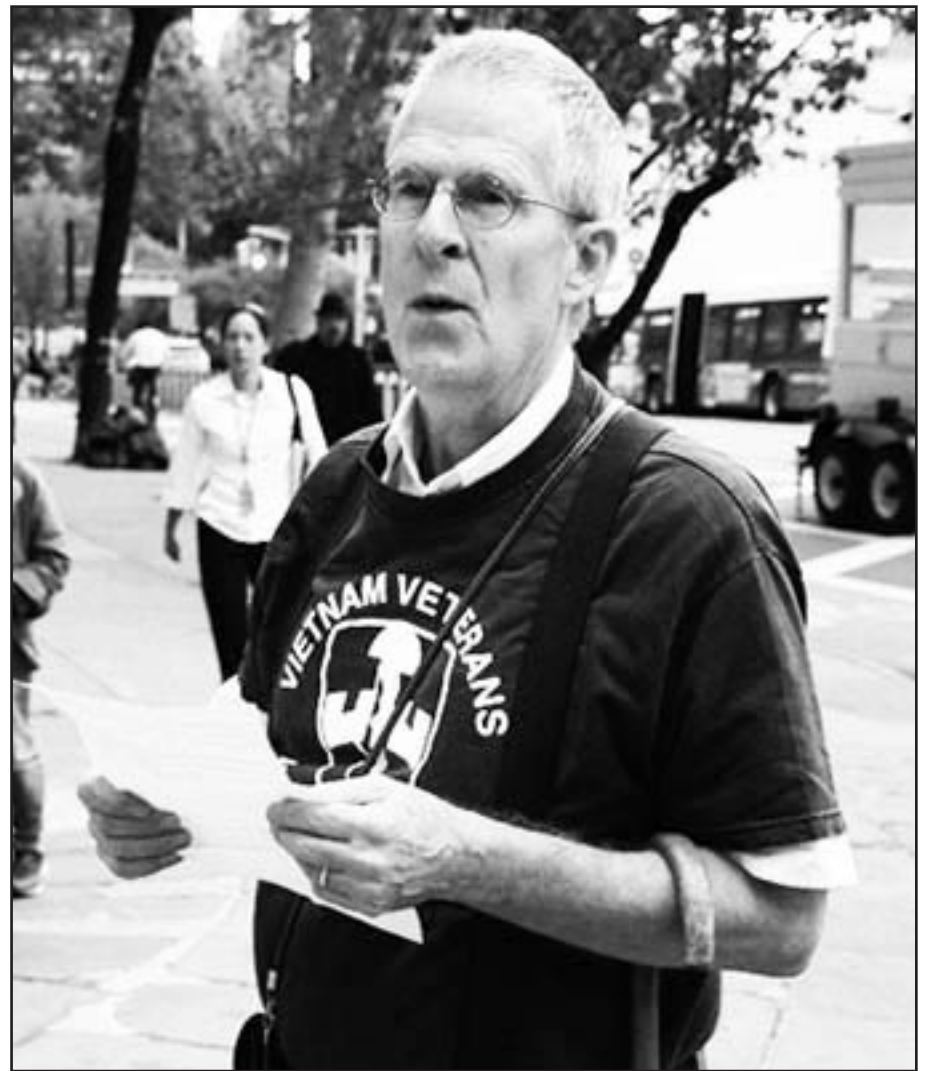
In 1965, defying his father's cautionary pleas, he took part in the March from Selma to Montgomery led by Dr. Martin Luther King. The same year, he was drafted and enlisted in the US Navy, eventually serving two tours in Vietnam as an electronics technician aboard the Richmond K. Turner. After his service, he graduated from Swarthmore College (1972), then earned a BA (later an MA) from Keble College of Oxford University in 1974, followed in 1978 by an ABD in English and an MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1980 he became the computer systems librarian at the main branch of the Hamden Public Library in Hamden, CT, was quickly elected president of the library's chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and soon after became an AFSCME representative on

Greater New Haven's Central Labor Council. In 1984 he joined the staff at Queens College of the City University of New York (CUNY), as an assistant professor and later taught at the college's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies. With the opening of the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library in 1988, he transitioned to an administrative role as the library's computer systems officer, where he remained until his retirement in 2023.

At Queens College, he also became active in his union, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), taking on many grassroots leadership roles over the years. His proudest achievement was pulling together the Queens College Unions Joint Committee on Quality of Work Life, the sole multi-union committee in CUNY, which has convened monthly since 2006. For his work on this front, Ben was honored by the PSC's parent union, NY State United Teachers, which gave him its "Unsung Hero" award in March 2011.

Working with his wife, Priscilla Murolo, Ben co-authored a widely read and praised survey of US labor history, *From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend: An Illustrated History of Labor in the United States* (2001; rev. 2018).

He was a leader in the anti-war movement as a member of both Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace and published numerous articles in



VVAW's newspaper, *The Veteran*. He attended Christ Church Bronxville. He is predeceased by his parents and his younger brother, John Abercrombie Merritt Chitty, and is survived by Priscilla, his stepsons Max and Tony Schultz, his sister and brother, Em Turner Chitty and Nathan Harsh Brown Chitty, and their families. His ashes will be interred in his birthplace, Sewanee, Tennessee, along with those

of his brother and parents.

Very near the end of his life, Ben signed up for a lifetime membership in VVAW, as a statement of enduring solidarity. There's a full video of Ben's memorial at www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NuRiyUJXtM.

Memorial donations may be made to Vietnam Veterans Against the War.



Back Home Connections

There was Little Jimmy, fourth in line
Waiting to get up to my window, in the APO at Enari, south of Pleiku
He my onetime patrol leader - Back in the US of A
Who'd once tossed rocks at me, but now a squad leader out in the bush
Tension remained, as he stood in front of me, eight years later
Big Mike, his brother then flying off an aircraft carrier - the one reason
I'd taken a hike, said fuck that Catholic Troop number 5
Purchase refused due to strict regs
He didn't have his MACV card. Our issues yet unresolved.
I'd gone elsewhere, said hello to Lutheran Scout Troop 11
Returning to the world, Little Jimmy began to carry the mail

But on March 1st 1970, the 4th Division would pick up and move east
up and over storied Mang Yang

Outside the APO at Radcliff, east of An Khe
A DeucenHalf began to shake and rattle as I passed by
Out popped another member of said Troop number 5
Blonde and six foot Grab Ass, yelling at me a mile a minute
A future brother in law no less, driving his rig out of Qui Nhon

Fast forward to 1983, Northridge California
For a lunchtime break at an industrial park
I jump over the back corner fence and head towards Crown Books
Passing by the Target loading dock thereby, Grab Ass yells once more
Divorce had intervened, not seen him since '75
Talking through chain link he tells me -
That if he had it all to do over again
That he would have made it a career in the Army
That's when I replied, that if I ever wake up one morning
and were to think the same thing, that I hoped
That I would blow my brains out!
End of encounter. Never saw Grab Ass again
I'd come the closest to ever getting killed by head-on
In the month previous, other side of that book store.
The Earth broke open, ten miles directly below, ten years hence

—John Crandell

Bitter Smoke of Auschwitz Drifts Over Gaza Tonight

over five hundred times
in the first month of the crime
two thousand pound
American-supplied Mark 84 bombs
dropped from high above

created an overpressure effect over
two hundred pounds per square inch
(55 psi causes 99% fatalities)
blasting the people and
the atmosphere outward
followed by powerful inflow
to fill the vacuum created

twenty five thousand bodies spread
from the river to the sea
shredded
covered by the gray
and white falling rubble
a grave marker made of their home

body bits red and pink
small pieces of small skulls
with strands of fine black hair
seven mile per hour wind scatters
fine concrete powder over
the world's largest open air prison
under clear skies

—Larry Kerschner



Peace with Honor

BEN CHITTY

This talk was delivered on April 30, 2000, at the celebration of the 25th anniversary of peace in Vietnam at the Simon Wise Free Synagogue in New York City.

www.vvaw.org/commentary/?id=1

It was bittersweet to me when the war ended 25 years ago—I got drunk as a skunk somewhere in North Carolina. The war had finally ended, but I wanted more; I wanted "Peace with Honor." Honor is not so mysterious—it means being honest, accepting responsibility, and making amends for injuries. I wanted official apologies, reparations, technical assistance for Vietnam, and a change in the government, a whole new government, here at home.

Instead, we got new fronts in a never-ending war. Counter-insurgency operations, "low-intensity conflict," and police actions abroad—Afghanistan, Lebanon, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo, looks like the next stop is Colombia. Censorship and repression at home, orchestrated by the military-industrial complex and the national security state and their allies and agents: look at what happened to the Sanctuary movement, the South African solidarity movement, and militant environmentalists; look at the new federal anti-terrorism measures.

Somewhere along the line, the Soviet Union disintegrated, but not the subversion of democracy. No repudiation of the policies which created such destruction. No resolution of the prolonged crisis of legitimacy. The system still isn't working for most people; it's still killing people at home and abroad.

So, some kind of peace came to Vietnam 25 years ago, but not to me.

For one thing, we were changed. The war was unwinnable long before most of us got to it, but no one told us (or we didn't listen)—we found it out for ourselves. It was an experience that could raise your consciousness.

We learned a new American history: the US is not a democracy but an empire, not an especially benign empire. It was founded on genocide and slavery, expanded on commercial interest and chauvinism, and wrapped in a missionary spirit.

A new military history: most US wars have been wars first of conquest, then of intervention—sending soldiers somewhere to fight with the people who live there about how they can live or which government they can have. Even the details look different. The US military learned to practice total war, wars on entire populations, and "modern" wars. We fought the native Americans for centuries, killed or relocated them and took their land. We took "Indian fighting" to the Philippines, then found "gooks" to fight in Mexico, Haiti and Nicaragua. We refined our technology of death, machine-gunning Moros on Mount Dajo in 1906, fire-bombing caco bands in the Haitian boondocks in 1919, strafing Sandinista villages in 1929, and finally incinerating Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

We refine it still—in the Gulf, we proved the futility of opposing US interests with fuel-air bombs on the Highway of Death; according to one report, that videotape persuaded Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw from Kosovo. It makes Nogun Ri in Korea, My Lai in Vietnam, and the firefight in Mogadishu—look like trivial excesses, lapses of discipline. After all, most of the people we killed in Vietnam were non-combatants, and we killed them at a distance with explosive and incendiary devices.

Even a new veteran's history: our government has rarely kept faith with its veterans. From the Revolutionary

War vet cheated out of his bonds to the Civil War veterans defrauded by lawyers in cahoots with corrupt Veterans Administration officials, to the World War I Bonus March vets dispersed by bayonet from their nation's capital, the Korean War POWs accused of disloyalty, and the atomic vets of the Cold War dying of cancer by friendly fire.

For another thing, we had problems of our own. We had to help heal ourselves—we formed rap groups to deal with alienation (the original "Vietnam syndrome") and post-traumatic stress; we started going back to Vietnam to help rebuild what we had helped to destroy; we even built our own memorial—the Wall in Washington, now so popular with tourists that we forget how bitter was the opposition to its design.

We had to deal with the POW-MIA legend, a story started by the Nixon administration to rally support for his secret plan to end the war, then fostered by anti-communist fanatics (and more than a few crooks and charlatans) inside the government and out.

We tried to force recognition of dioxin poisoning from Agent Orange exposure—the government began to give us that finally, just as it began sending half a million men and women into the Persian Gulf, where the Pentagon poisoned them with depleted uranium, nerve toxins, and experimental vaccines the same way it had done to us with defoliants.

... I'm still a Vietnam veteran, still against the war. And I'm still looking for peace with honor. But I'll tell you what—I'll settle for peace with justice.

We watched as the major legislative reforms of the Vietnam era—the War Powers Act and the Independent Counsel statute—were ignored, disregarded, or perverted in an orgy of partisan bickering and then abandoned.

We saw another "reform"—the all-volunteer army—racked by everyday and deadly oppressions of our society—race and class, which loaded up the military with minorities, poor people, and immigrants; gender, which left women subject to sexual harassment at every level; sexual identity, where "don't ask" gave the green light to witch hunts and finally murder.

We learned of the environmental costs—the toxic wastes abandoned in the Philippines and Panama, as well as Kaho'olawe, Eglin Air Force Base, Cape Cod, Fort Drum, and Fort Dix. Diamond Shamrock's production of Agent Orange in the Ironbound community in Newark left a "superfund" site so toxic that today it's capped and fenced and under guard 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

We saw how the "lessons" of our experience became military control of the media and minimum American casualties—which turned into unreported deaths and hidden injuries. How many Panamanians died in Operation Just Cause? No one counted. How many Allied soldiers were injured in the Persian Gulf? That count is still coming in.

These events have some things in common. The real lessons of our experience have been ignored or corrupted by the same folks who sent us to Vietnam (and their political heirs). The machinery of death is more efficient, certainly more expensive and profitable—indeed, it may be politically dangerous to risk a soldier's

life in responding to ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, but it's okay to send nineteen Marines to their deaths in a flawed and unnecessary but very expensive airplane like the Osprey.

Well, it's enough to make you crazy. So, how crazy are we? People say we could have won the war—we know we could not. People say the anti-war movement harassed and betrayed the soldiers—we remember that the government drafted and enlisted us, lied to us, and let us die. By giving me something constructive to do, the anti-war movement saved my sanity, maybe saved my life. People say the anti-war movement lost the



militant resistance.

Here's an example. On the island of Vieques off Puerto Rico, several dozen people practicing non-violent civil disobedience have stopped the US Navy from bombing their island for more than a year—the largest and longest civil disobedience campaign in recent US history. We know Puerto Rico is a colony in the US Empire. We know the Pentagon has told lies and broken promises and the Navy's national security claims are bogus. We understand what's going on in Vieques and why it's important: if—when—the people of Vieques chase the Navy off their island, it will be our victory, too.

Now, even in VVAW's glory days—defying the Attorney General and the Supreme Court at Dewey Canyon III in Washington, disrupting the Miami conventions, seizing the Statue of Liberty, walking out of the Gainesville courthouse acquitted on all counts—VVAW was more than just an organization. "Vietnam Veterans Against the War" (VVAW) was a state of mind. VVAW turned up in many places: Black Veterans for Social Justice, Veterans for Peace, Project Hearts and Minds, and the Veterans Vietnam Reconstruction Project. What we bring to the movement—besides passion and credibility—is this. We have learned something about just and unjust wars. We know that this never-ending war of ours, the real war, the civil war in the heart of the empire, the belly of the beast, is a war of self-defense. We know the system can waste you in a heartbeat. Walk around the protest camps in the live-fire zone on Vieques—you'll meet veterans.

Just one more example. I'm a Vietnam veteran—I'm alienated, maybe even a little grumpy; I don't like the way things are; I don't trust the government. Barry McCaffrey also served in Vietnam—he thinks we can cure the pestilence of drugs in our communities by locking up a lot of people here at home and by arming a brutal and corrupt military and its paramilitary allies who use terror to keep the rich rich and the poor poor in Colombia, a country fully integrated into the freest of global markets, the international drug trade. Which one of us is nuts?

So, 25 years after the fall of Saigon, I'm still a Vietnam veteran, still against the war. And I'm still looking for peace with honor. But I'll tell you what—I'll settle for peace with justice.



BEN CHITTY SERVED IN THE US NAVY 1965-9 AND DEPLOYED TWICE TO VIETNAM (1966-7 AND 1968). HE WAS A CO-COORDINATOR OF THE CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR IN THE NEW YORK METRO AREA.

war—wait a minute, let me get that straight—I get sent to a war I can't win, and I should not be fighting; I come back and say this has to stop, so now it's my fault?

Of course, this revisionist obsession with alternative fiction is not really about strategy or tactics, geopolitical constraints, or even the various and notorious "betrayals"—the liberal media, Walter Cronkite, Robert McNamara, and even Jane Fonda. It's about you and me—the people who told the truth about the war. If we were right, then the people who supported the war, the folks who favored intervention, the people who sent us crusading against communism—they betrayed us, their sons and daughters. Anti-war veterans are the witnesses against them—we had been through the meat grinder, we saw the system was not working, and we knew the war had to stop.

And we're still here. We know Operation Just Cause was little more than a badly bungled arrest. We know we went to war in the Persian Gulf to return the Emir of Kuwait to his golden throne. We know that the Sudan missile strike was a clear case of homicide by depraved indifference. We know the Balkan bombing campaign—a "perfect war" with no American casualties (so they say)—failed to bring peace to the Kosovars, whether Albanian, Roma, or Serbian.

How many of these Panamanian, Iraqi-Kuwaiti, Sudanese, and Kosovar people are better off for American intervention?

We know more. We know the question concerns democracy, political power, and accountability. We see the problem is not bad people—though I've met some—but a bad system. We know the answer will be based on mass mobilization and

Lyndon: In a Winter of Our Discontent

JOHN CRANDELL

PART 3: (The third of a three-part dissection of LBJ)

Ol' Hang Dog, it was who sent us halfway around the world to kill or be killed in the jungle. Some made money off the black market at base camp; back home in Texas, others made a boatload of money off of Vietnam Inc. Ten years earlier, scriptwriter Bud Schulberg and director Elia Kazan had visited Capitol Hill in an effort to discern human nature. They interviewed Lyndon Johnson in the Old Senate Office Building. Johnson admitted guilelessly, "That TV camera is right in your face... If you don't hold your eyes steady, people will say 'he's shifty'." Nine years onward, sixty-seven days before the August 2nd, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident, Johnson put in a call to Richard Russell, his senatorial confidant in discrimination and disenfranchisement of yesteryear.

We have long been told that LBJ was vexed over the prospect of war in Vietnam. He elicited Russell's opinion and then chuckled just as the senator replied, "It's a damn worse mess I ever saw," in declining to advise any such foreign involvement. Was it Russell's no-nonsense reply that sparked Johnson's mirth or a frank acknowledgment of a false narrative in progress? Was it his purpose to create a sympathetic construct? He said to Russell right out of the gate: "What do you think about this Vietnam thing? I'd like to hear your talk a little bit." "I don't know what to do for the past six months." Capitol Hill's magister contracting profiteer of the Roosevelt-Truman-Eisenhower years readily said he'd felt the same way—when reliable evidence sourced in 1996 by future DNS H.R. McMaster indicates otherwise. He intended to get into, resolve a foreign conflict, and quickly get out, and if anything were to go wrong, he'd need reference material for an excuse. And it all proved so wrong that no sympathetic references could ever furnish anyone with an excuse for the human atrocity our involvement became.

It seems that the new president only became confused in the hours after JFK died. At a meeting the next day in his office at the Executive Office Building, he countermanded Kennedy's NSAM for withdrawal from Vietnam. The confusion seems apparent here: he directed McNamara to begin reducing and streamlining the Defense Department budget. Or was it a double deal? Mac was happy enough, wagged his tail in agreement—until Johnson woke up to reality a few weeks later and realized what a position he could put himself in Texas' political spectrum if he were to go forward with cutting Defense. His new direction for South Vietnam remained the same, however. His direction regarding the Pentagon changed polarity, and none of the Chiefs or his advisers questioned the

sensibility of propping up a weak and corrupt government on the other side of the globe. In the meeting in the EOB, Johnson said, "We'll stand by our word, but I have misgivings. I feel like a fish that just grabbed a worm with a big hook in the middle of it."

Conversely, he directed Ambassador Lodge to tell Big Minh that he "can count on us" and that he was "not going to be the president who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went." Such an ability to defuse and pour in every direction had been gained in a lengthy, storied, and infamous career on Capitol Hill. The era of guns, butter, and misdirection had arrived.

LBJ would be vexed in coming years, but only to a point. All of the grocery sacks and suitcases that John Connally and mega-contractor George Brown had carried to Washington on flights from Texas, all of those bundled Franklins served up for Johnson's cash cow operation in the Senate were pure leverage. Now they seem to have served to spawn his commitment to violence abroad. No matter that Connally had lost a bag worth \$40,000 that was never recovered and no matter the tragic cost to a younger generation, Johnson would have to placate the Lone Star establishment that'd gotten him his career, perhaps even his job in the Oval Office. Readers can research and judge whether LBJ, while president, masterminded the extraction of all or a majority of a Spanish-era bounty of

We have long been told that LBJ was vexed over the prospect of war in Vietnam. He elicited Russell's opinion and then chuckled just as the senator replied, "It's a damn worse mess I ever saw," . . .

gold bars from Victorio Peak on the White Sands Missile Range. Such was LBJ's position that Baker was recorded as saying that the Chinese leader: "Chiang Kai-shek probably sent more cash to senators than anybody in history." It's interesting to note that Brown and his brother Herman had committed their firm to engineer and construct an all-weather highway through the Thai jungle so that the CIA could oversee the transport of opium conscripted by Chiang's continental forces in the wake of Mao's victory. This episode occurred well over a decade into Johnson's career in Washington.

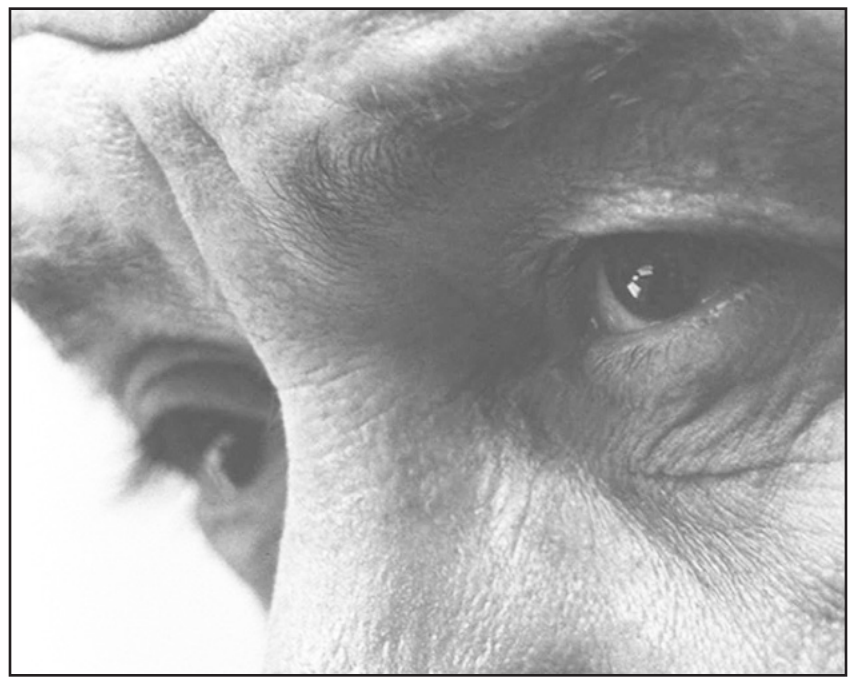
An article on politico.com reveals that nearly a year after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, "Administration hawks, led by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, urged Johnson to give the public all the facts, ask Congress

to raise taxes, mobilize the reserves and declare a national emergency." From the State Department, George Ball urged LBJ to stage a "tactical withdrawal" to avert a catastrophe. The undersecretary warned that draftees were ill-suited to fight a jungle war; that backing for the war would implode as casualties rose and that, in the end, the United States would lose." He'd earlier warned JFK of the disaster that could result, and the hero of PT-109 then said he was crazy. Ball, a veteran of the Second World War, had participated in a strategic bombing survey that evaluated the US and RAF bombing of Germany. The lengthy memo from State to Johnson of October 5th, 1964, reasoned through two factors: the tropical terrain being eyed by Strangelovians in Congress and the Pentagon and a frank appreciation

of Ho's nativist aim for a united and independent Vietnamese nation. Bill Moyers intervened and saw to it that Johnson saw the memo. MacBundy, Rusk, and McNamara had read it, and their primary concern was that the conclusions might leak. McNamara, in particular, was horrified and treated the work as if it were treasonous, "a poison snake."

It had been the Korean War that served to end the careers of Harry Truman and Douglas MacArthur. And afterward, with the collapse of France's colony in Indo-China, MacArthur warned against any US involvement there. And so there is no small irony in the fact that it had been MacArthur who alone decided to award then congressman Lyndon Johnson a Silver Star Medal for having taken a single ride aboard an Air Force bomber against the Japanese navy in World War II, simply as an observer representing Congress. No heroics had been involved; no other man aboard that flight (combat vets all) received any medal. Big Mac was just brown-nosing his superiors in the Pacific Fleet. With only six years interacting with President Roosevelt and Speaker Sam Rayburn, Johnson had already become the brownest nosed pol in the history of Washington, DC. They had that in common.

Two years before the '63 assassination, the Kennedy brothers established a covert investigation of the Civello mob of Dallas under the rubric of an Organized Crime Task Force. They knew that the destruction of Dallas' mafia would ruin LBJ. Objects of that effort may have included HL "Bunky" Hunt, Sid Richardson, Clint Murchison, and Frank Halfen.



Skip to the final edit of the investigative report by Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter William Lambert, then being formatted for *Life Magazine's* presses just as shots were fired in Dealey Plaza. The report purportedly laid out the reality that Bobby Baker's personal financial activities in his Senate position had primarily been to distribute the cash horde wrought from Texas' lawyers, industrialists, and construction contractors. The salient portion of *Life's* article was that "Baker had served as Lyndon's bluntest instrument," working in the Senate over the previous eight years. John Connally had introduced the two following Johnson's stealing the Democratic nomination to Texas' Senate seat in 1948. LBJ was unapologetic in their first talk—"Frankly, Mister Baker, I'm for nearly anything the big oil boys want because they hold the whip hand, and I represent 'em!"

All materials related to the '63 *Life* article were gathered and immediately destroyed following the news from Dallas. Baker had resigned from his senate duties a month and a half earlier. He and Johnson would remain out of contact for nearly a decade. Their only reunion would not be happy. In his dying days, the 36th president would admit to him that his "presidency had been sold out and gone sour." At the zenith of his Capitol Hill years, Baker's staff would sing the words to "Sweet Georgia Brown" whenever one or the other brother's name was mentioned. The brothers had served as CIA assets in the world war, and their company would be absorbed into Halliburton Enterprises in 1962 after Herman Brown's death.

Following Johnson's assuming the vice presidency, Baker managed to install himself as secretary to Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield; alarm bells went off at Ninth and Pennsylvania Avenues. By then, he and the new veep had attended the inauguration of Juan Bosch, the progressivist replacement for "Dracula"—Generalissimo Rafael Trujillo—the bloodiest dictator in the western Hemisphere who'd been assassinated by his own military nearly two years earlier. Baker departed Santo Domingo and flew to Miami to meet with Sam Giancana and soon became associated with Las Vegas mobster Benjamin Sigelbaum. J. Edgar had begrudgingly acceded to Bobby Kennedy's interest in tallying those Americans involved in peddling influence in Santo Domingo. Vast sums of money were being contributed to various senators and congressmen to control US sugar import quotas. Given the leniency of the Bosch administration, Baker and his acquaintances sought to establish amusement attractions (slot machines) in Hilton Hotels located in the Dominican capital and Curacao. Suddenly, Meyer Lansky became interested, and following Bosch's inaugural, Baker was frequently



LBJ about to be sworn in aboard Air Force One.

continued on page 30

Lyndon: In a Winter of Our Discontent

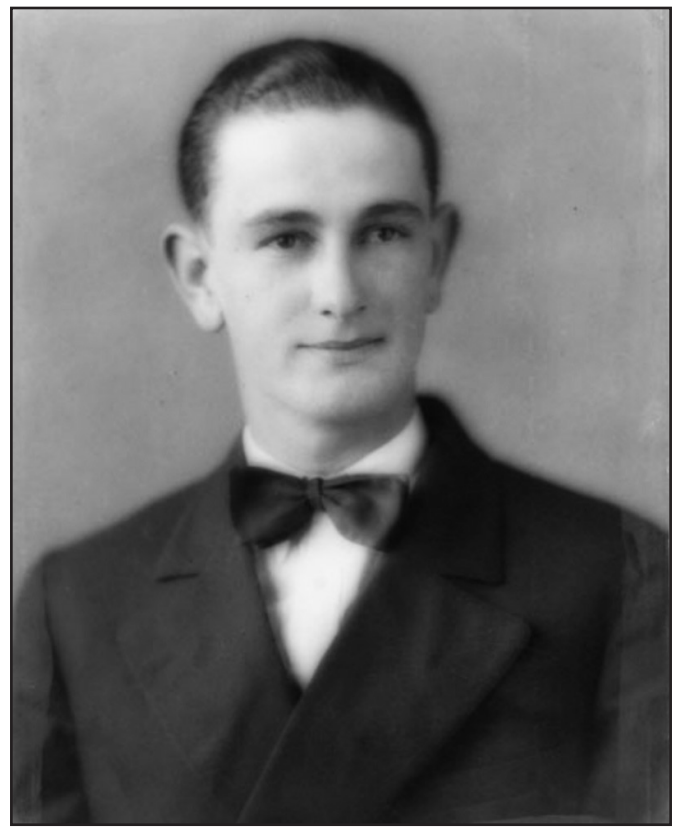
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observed entering and leaving the Santo Domingo airport. His name had appeared on Hoover's list much earlier.

Following his conviction and incarceration, Baker would relate in his memoir that "For all his strengths and talents, Lyndon Johnson was often a professional crybaby." As storm clouds were gathering in October of '63, Johnson admitted to him—"No, you don't really have any idea of how unhappy I am now,"—not after what RFK, a.k.a.—"The Rat Terrier" had done to him in the Roosevelt Room over the previous summer. When the kill shot rang out in Dealey Plaza, Bobby Baker's friend—insurance broker Don Reynolds, was being interviewed by Senator Hugh Scott and minority counsel Burkett Van Kirk (testimony soon to be disappeared). LBJ's turpitude was under examination. Van Kirk later told investigator Sy Hersch that "there's no doubt in my mind that Reynolds' testimony would have gotten Johnson out of the vice presidency." The veep and his accomplice had been attempting a kickback scheme. The doomed expose for *Life* had described Baker as "the 101st senator, Johnson's legman, mouthpiece and satrap of power." A few months before, Baker had advised LBJ that "the Washington press corps is convinced that there is a well-organized move afoot to groom Bobby Kennedy for the presidency in 1968 and shove you aside." He'd been hauling in three and a half million dollars per annum running a vending machine business away from Capitol Hill and had never earned more than

\$20,000 a year working the Senate. According to author Joan Mellen, Johnson's first call after returning to the White House from Dallas was regarding that day's testimony to Scott.

Before his father's cotton investment evaporated, his mother had outfitted him as Little Lord Fauntleroy. He never got over his dad's demise and their subsequent poverty. The nation paid a high price thereby. In December of '64, Lyndon Johnson would meet with three journalists for a three-hour background. Journalist David Wise would write of that meeting: "He likened his situation to standing on a copy of a newspaper in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean." "If I go this way," he said, tilting his head to the right, "I'll topple over, and if I go this way,"—tilted his head down to the left—"I'll topple over, and if I stay where I am, the paper will be soaked up, and I'll sink slowly to the bottom of the sea." As he said this, he lowered his head slowly to the floor." Right. It was all about Lyndon's career and paranoia of becoming a failure like his father. On the night of the second purported attack on the USS Maddox four months earlier, James Stockdale had been ordered to lead the reprisal in the first US air assault on North Vietnam. "Reprisal for what?" he asked himself. "How do I get in touch with the president?—he's going off half-cocked!" As he dropped his bombs on Vinh, he said to himself, "America has just been locked into the Vietnam War." He was captured after his craft was shot down nine months later. Years onward, after being



LBJ in 1927.

awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, he would so aptly declaim: "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

It is midwinter as I write this third installment on the 36th POTUS. The Supreme Court is to decide regarding Trump's J6 immunity and candidacy under the 14th Amendment. Who could adequately guess how the fall election will turn out following another torrid summer? Win or lose, there will likely be rioting when the fall edition of *The Veteran* hits our mailboxes. A conclusion to this series examining the

dark side of the president who sent us abroad might still be worth a try (and God help us, no matter the status of JabbaSaurus Rex).



JOHN CRANDELL, A ONE-TIME INSUBORDINATE POSTAL CLERK FOR THE 4TH US INFANTRY, IS NOW RETIRED FROM BEALE AFB, PROPAGATES LARGE-SIZED EXOTIC SUCCULENTS, AND HAS NIGHTMARES REGARDING DONALD TRUMP. HE IS A DISTANT COUSIN TO BOTH ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND JOHN WILKES BOOTH.

Letters to the Editor

I graduated from high school in Deer Lodge, Montana, in 1969. Few of my classmates went directly from high school to college. The young men were draftable. I went to the University of Washington in Seattle. Most of my friends were from Washington cities and suburbs. Most of their friends went directly to college. This was the time of campus anti-war demonstrations. When many demonstrators saw someone in uniform, they yelled epithets like "baby killer." Maybe people from affluent suburbs believed everyone who went to Vietnam wanted to go. I knew better, but I yelled epithets right along with them. I have felt terrible guilt about that. I became a lifetime member of VVAW to try to make up for it in some small way.

During the Iraq War, a Seattle newspaper ran brief stories about

young men from the Seattle area who had been killed there. Universally, they were from poor neighborhoods. Universally, they were from single-mother homes. Universally, their mothers said they joined the service to get training in a skill they could use in civilian life or to get money for college. These were not gung-ho soldiers. They were disadvantaged kids trying to find a way out of poverty. It made me sad that, once again, the burden of war fell on the least affluent.

I appreciate the opportunity to heal that VVAW gives to veterans of all wars through its publications and charity work. And also the opportunity it has given me to make amends.

Sincerely,

N. W. Barcus



From my American Heritage dictionary, the definition of GENOCIDE is "the systemic, planned annihilation of a racial, political, or cultural group." After the straightforward, impassioned statements of many Israeli leaders, can any sane observer deny this as the goal? Could such goals indeed be interpreted as defending Israel?

As a Vietnam combat veteran, I now see our participation in Vietnam as illegal and wrong-headed. However ugly our acts, they fell far short of genocide. Now, my shame is that our leaders are not only allowing these despicable actions to occur to Gazan civilians, but we actually "foot the bill" for more bombs and equipment to continue the genocidal war crimes.

Cease fire now! Please join citizens in protesting this slaughter. Call

your Representatives in Washington, and let them know that respect for us as Americans erodes every day that we continue to enable genocide, and you do not want to be a part of it!

Bill Potvin



Vet's Day, Chicago Daley Center.

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 55 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.

Speaker Johnson in a Game of Chance



Feb 20 2024 (10295)
DANZIGER
 The Rutland Herald
 Counterpoint Media Syndicate

RECOLLECTIONS

Survivors Guilt

TONY COKELY

I didn't even know him well. He was a clerk in the company office. Four weeks earlier, I had lied my way into a job in that office. It's better always to be in the rear with the gear! I had spent seven months humping the hills and paddies with two different grunt units. When the First Sergeant assembled those of us with some college, he asked if any of us could type. I said I could, and I got the job. I became the new company correspondence clerk. It was only a tiny lie; after all, he hadn't asked whether I could type fast.

I have always told the story of his death casually and as if it didn't bother me. I would say something like, "He believed he was a real Texan. He had a swagger, a drawl, and thought he was tough. The rest of us saw him as typical Rear Echelon Mother Fucker. He was a clerk, and he was a good typist."

He wanted combat duty. He wanted out of the office. After all, he was a Marine. Then, one day, it was payday. Someone had to fly out to the bush; witness the paying of the other Marines; and, then hump back in with the platoon.

It was payday, and the Lieutenant picked me to escort the paymaster, who would take the script to the Marines in the field. The Lieutenant picked me, a combat Marine with little interest in further risking my life, especially considering my fellow Marines would get their money on time, but in a place where they couldn't spend it.

There was absolutely nothing to buy in the jungles of Vietnam except whores, which were against regulations; black market goods, which were against regulations; and drugs which were even more against regulations. We were not even allowed

to give the Vietnamese the script we were paid with.

When the Marines in the bush received their pay, they were scheduled to return to the rear, where they could spend the script.

Notwithstanding, regulations said Marines were paid on a particular day. If they happened to be in the field on that day, then that is where they were paid.

He volunteered to take my place. He begged the Lieutenant to send him. I remember asking the Lieutenant, "Do you think he wants to go home without ever being in the field?" Eventually, he talked his way into escort duty. He loaded up his rifle, and he went in my place. He got on the helicopter with the paymaster and the money. He was probably having sugar plum, John Wayne visions of glory.

Marine pilots were chosen for their ability to fly without concern for the law of gravity or an enemy trying to shoot them out of the sky. This day, the pilot came in fast and banked to drop quickly to the ground. Maybe he didn't see the tree, or perhaps he just misjudged the location. He clipped the tree with the propeller, and the machine dropped straight into an inferno of its fuel and armament. My replacement died with four other Marines that day. Ten other Marines were wounded.

I didn't realize how guilty I felt about his death until I corresponded with his mom on Thanksgiving Day, 2013. After her first letter, I broke down and cried for a long time. My grief for him was unbelievably intense. The only other time I had ever cried like this had been 34 years before, on the day when my father died.

For years, I had minimized the

day my replacement died. I would say that he volunteered, and that was his problem. I didn't know how much his death bothered me until I contacted his mom. I had difficulty approaching his name on the Wall in Washington, DC. His name is carved on panel 05W, line 64.

It is funny how it is so silent there at the wall. Even the children seem to know not to run and play. It is too bad because the lost soldiers would like to hear them run and play, even if it upsets the living and what the living are feeling.

I had a friend take a picture of his name on the wall. That picture hung in front of me on my office wall for many years. He replaced me on that helicopter, and he died, and I came home. I did my best to forget those war years. I rarely would talk about it. When I did talk about it, I likely mentioned him. In the fifteen or so years that I had the photo over my desk, people would sometimes ask about it. I told the story of his death as a fork in the road. He died, and I lived.

That Thanksgiving, when I found his mom's address, I was crying in grief for him and her as I composed a message to her. I told her that I have always felt he saved my life. I pray that whatever I told her comforted her and did not reopen old wounds. I cannot imagine her pain in the loss of her child.

I told his mom that there were at least two medics on the ground where the helicopter went down. The medics said they were able to treat the wounded almost immediately. I hope that knowledge helped.

Forty-two years after he died, a sixty-five-year-old Marine sobbed like an injured child. I couldn't stop

crying. I never knew until that day the depth of guilt I felt from my living while he died.

The next day, in the shower, I was back to feeling thankful. Each day, I live where I can shower until the hot water runs out. Every morning, I am grateful for the toilet, the running water, the shower, and the clean water for brushing my teeth.

There was a time when I didn't have any of those things. I carried my belongings on my back, slept in a hole in the ground, squatted for the toilet, and dry-shaved with an old used razor blade. Oh yeah, and I tried to avoid killing people or getting killed.

On January 25, 1971, he convinced the Lieutenant to let him take my place on a helicopter that crashed, killing him and at least four others. A fine line separated me from him. I had a life after that day. His actions allowed me that life.

How blessed was I to have found his mom at Thanksgiving? How lucky to have lived to have a family, a life, this day and tomorrow? Yes, I give thanks for my family, for my grandchildren, for everything in my life, and that he got on that helicopter in my place.



TONY COKELY WAS DRAFTED INTO THE MARINE CORPS AND SERVED FROM 1969 TO 1971. HE RETIRED AFTER 29 YEARS AS A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE, UNION MEMBER, AND OFFICER. HE HAS VOLUNTEERED AS A SHUTTLE DRIVER FOR VETERANS AND HOME-BOUND SENIORS FOR MANY YEARS. HE LIVES IN THE CALIFORNIA FOOTHILLS.



A Hundred Plus Killed Waiting for Food in Gaza

