



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

VOL. 9 NO. 2

VETS OF ALL ERAS, CLOSE RANKS!

Spring '79

For Vietnam Veterans Week

VETERANS, STAND UP AND BE COUNTED



"It is important, too, that we remember those who answered their Nation's call in that war with the full measure of their valor and loyalty, that we pay full tribute at last to all Americans who served in our Armed Forces in Southeast Asia. Their courage and sacrifices in that tragic conflict were made doubly difficult by the Nation's lack of agreement as to what constituted the highest duty. Instead of glory, they were too often met with our embarrassment or ignored when they returned.

"The honor of those who died there is not tarnished by our uncertainty at the moment of their

sacrifice. To them we offer our respect and gratitude. To the loved ones they left behind, we offer our concern and understanding and our help to build new lives. To those who still bear the wounds, both physical and psychic, from all our wars, we acknowledge our continuing responsibility.

"Of all the millions of Americans who served in Southeast Asia, the majority have successfully rejoined the mainstream of American life.

"To them, and to all who served or suffered in that war, we give our solemn pledge to pursue all honorable means to

establish a just and lasting peace in the world, that no future generation need suffer in this way again." (From "A Proclamation," titled "Vietnam Veterans Week, 1979," signed by the President on March 20th, 1979)

Isn't that just lovely? A warm glow should fill the hearts and minds of all Vietnam vets--that is, until they look for something concrete or real in the proclamation. Is there a job? Is there even a crumb for the over 600,000 vets with bad discharges? Is there even a suggestion that maybe the war was unjust and we didn't belong in Vietnam in the first place?

With this proclamation and 35¢

The President has proclaimed May 28th to June 3rd as Vietnam Veterans Week. Betting odds favor the probability that the occasion will be a bust--a bust in terms of meeting any of the real needs or concerns of veterans.

Only a couple of weeks before the event, a low-level of publicity is being directed by the government, primarily toward traditional veterans organizations and toward state and local governments. The content of the publicity includes standard pap about "honoring" Vietnam vets. Standard boring crap flows through the teeth of V.A. administrators who have suddenly arrived at the conclusion that Vietnam vets may have some "minor problems" that "should" get some attention--maybe.

Carter's proclamation, filled with religious fervor, sets the tone:

"The decade now drawing to a close began in the midst of a war that was the longest and most expensive in our history, and most costly in human lives and suffering. Because it was a divisive and painful period for all Americans, we are tempted to want to put the Vietnam war out of our minds. But it is important that we remember--honestly, realistically, with humility.

or 40¢ (depending on where you go) you may be able to get a cup of coffee!

We see Carter talking about our "peace-loving nation" while the history of our involvement in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world points directly to the truth that the U.S. rulers have and will send military forces anywhere in the world in order to insure their profits and economic interests. While their money piles up, the vets who survive their bloody wars are tossed a few crumbs.

While Carter bumbles about "peace," Senator Percy, another



Vietnam Veterans Tell Their Story

RECOLLECTIONS

12 page Supplement of Real Experiences

Decent Healthcare for All Veterans

DECENT HEALTHCARE FOR ALL VETERANS! There's no way to calculate the number of vets who would rather suffer from illness of some sort rather than go to the V.A. The V.A.'s reputation as a butchershop is well deserved when a vet is faced with serious medical problems. And if the problem isn't so serious, then it's a case of wait, and wait, and wait some more while the often overworked V.A. doctors, tied up in mountains of bureaucratic red tape, have time to take care of you.

Because veterans have, historically, had particular health problems and needs, the V.A. was set up to deal with them. By today it has become the largest single hospital network in the country. But like many governmental agencies it has always lagged behind: years after the problem was clear to veterans, the V.A. took up the problems of radiation. When Vietnam vets faced problems with drug addiction, the V.A. waited years until it came up with a program to meet the problem--and then the program was at least 90% sham.

For older vets, many of whom need almost permanent healthcare, the V.A. has provided not much more than a warehouse to store them out of sight of the American people (which, to the V.A., seems to solve the problem). Even though there are thousands of dedicated and serious V.A. workers, both in the areas of healthcare and administration, the V.A. makes it as difficult as possible for these individuals to serve the veteran.

With the blatant inadequacies already evident, Carter has now proposed to cut back on the number of hospital beds and will once again give the V.A. system a shot in the ass instead of the shot in the arm that it needs. Like the rest of the American people, veterans need the healthcare that should be the right of anyone. Make the V.A. respond to the real needs of vets. DECENT HEALTHCARE FOR ALL VETERANS!



Jobs or Income Now

JOBS OR INCOME NOW! For vets this is more than a slogan--it's a critical reality. Piercing the cloud of government statistics, we find as many as 13% of Vietnam-era veterans are unemployed. Younger vets and minority vets face much higher figures. And there are no figures whatever about the vets who got the only jobs they could--as security guards or whatever at the minimum wage. This is what is known as underemployment and, while it beats nothing, isn't a hell of a lot better.

The big move by the govern-

ment to solve the unemployment problem among vets was the law which says that, after 48 months out of the service, veterans are no longer listed as Vietnam-era veterans. In the State of Texas, when that law was passed, the number of unemployed vets dropped by 2/3's--overnight!

Vets preference is under consistent attack, sometimes in strange ways. When Sears Roebuck & Co challenged the government's anti-discrimination laws, veterans were labelled

as the source of the problems of minorities who want to secure jobs. In fact, of course, the problem is the large corporations for whom it's cheaper to speed-up the workers and even pay overtime for 12 hours a day than it is to hire new workers. Millions of people, vets and non-vets, need decent jobs at union wages. We don't need to be dropped from the lists so that the government figures look better--we need action. VAW says **JOBS OR INCOME NOW!**

Extend & Expand the GI Bill

EXTEND AND EXPAND THE GI BILL! Vets in school cannot get by on the present GI Bill payments. And GI's now in service have to go through the "you contribute and then the government will toss in some bucks" process before they have any GI Bill at all--which means you can lose your money if you get a job and decide not to go to school, or means you will have nothing if, after getting out, you decide that school is for you after not con-

tributing to the plan while in the military.

The spokesmen for the government make a big thing of the percentage of vets from the Vietnam era who have used the GI Bill--72%, they say. What they don't say is that 60% of these used less than 13 months. 3.1 million vets used less than 7 months in part because of screw-ups in payments, late checks, no checks, or straight-out inability to get by on checks even when they were accurate.

And vets not only need pay-

ments we can live on; we have to be able to use the Bill when we want to, not when the government decides it would be nice. Get rid of the 10-year limit and make the Bill reflect reality--it costs more to live these days. We're already getting over 200% less (in terms of buying power) than World War II vets. We need the education and we have to be able to live while we're getting it.

EXTEND AND EXPAND THE GI BILL!

Amnesty and Discharges

What happens to the vet with the bad discharge? The question is vital to over 600,000 Vietnam-era veterans.

Part of the answer is no job! For many vets, when we can't find work, we can fall back on the GI Bill, pick up some job qualifications and subsist (at least barely) on the GI Bill while doing it. But even that option's not open to the vet with a bad discharge. V.A. care is also denied to those veterans.

Of all the leftovers from the Vietnam War, vets with bad discharges may well be the most pointed reminder of what happened during that war. Thousands of bad discharges were handed out through the military "justice" system for what were simply acts of resistance to the war.

As part of his program to "heal the wounds of Vietnam," President Carter came up with an amnesty which, as he originally presented it, would solve the problems of vets with bad discharges by providing a simplified discharge upgrading procedure. The program was a fake which did little for the vets enrolled, and which had the guts

cut out of it when veterans benefits were denied to the participating veterans. The results of the program were so bad, so few vets applied for the upgrading, that the government has never made the results public. This brilliant track record should be taken into consideration during Vietnam Veterans Week when Carter talks about "honoring" vets, particularly when any of the flunkies put in appearances around the country during the week.

There are individuals in some agencies around the country, and independently funded upgrading projects that are processing upgrade requests hand over fist with good results. We would need, however, a thousand of these projects to handle a small percentage of the upgrades. Even with an upgraded discharge in the "general to honorable" category, however, the vet finds that the federal government is holding benefits in limbo somewhere in the political system, hoping that these 600,000+ vets will go away. They won't!

Discharges and the overall

question of amnesty which is universal and unconditional get to the heart of the lessons of Vietnam--it is right to resist an unjust war and amnesty recognizes this fact. It also gets at the military's Uniform Code of Military Justice which has always been a tool for the brass to control the troops. There has never been much pretense that the UC MJ was "just." Bad discharges have been passed out for whatever the brass decided it didn't like. Black GIs got way more than their "share" of these discharges. Administrative discharges, usually "undesirable" were given out by the handful to GIs who took them rather than go through the hassle of a court martial and who just wanted out. VVAW has, for years, fought for universal and unconditional amnesty, including a retroactive single grade of discharge. We'll take what we can get; upgrading of discharges is better than nothing. But we don't intend to give up this struggle until the "bad" discharge and the problems that causes for hundreds of thousands of veterans is set aside.

SINGLE-TYPE DISCHARGE FOR ALL VETERANS; UNIVERSAL AND UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY FOR ALL RESISTERS!

Chemical Time Bomb in Vietnam Veterans

DEFOLIANT AGENT ORANGE



Veteran's Day demonstration in New York, 1978

**Continued
from p.1**

Vietnam Veterans Week

spokesman for the wealthy, says that we shouldn't let what happened in Vietnam deter us from another such war. So much for the lessons of Vietnam!

But the most outrageous of the statements in the presidential proclamation tells us that vets have joined the "mainstream" of American life. What Carter must mean by "mainstream" is high unemployment and underemployment, bogus employment schemes, an inadequate GI Bill, decaying V.A. services, and the threat of being poisoned for life as a result of Agent Orange spraying in Indochina.

The proclamation holds little hope of Vietnam Veterans Week being any more than another public relations gimmick, a little icing on a hollow shell of a cake, the kind of lip-service we've seen given to Vietnam vets many times in the past (such as Carter's decision that there should be a monument to Vietnam vets in Arlington National Cemetery which he proclaimed back on Veterans Day, 1978).

But in several cities, VVAW is working to insert some reality into the week of May 28th to June 3rd. Working with a number of veterans' groups and in a series of coalitions, VVAW is pushing four long-standing demands for the week:

*JOBS--As high as 13% of Vietnam-era vets are unemployed, despite government statistics which now decide that, af-

ter 48 months, vets are no longer classified as "Vietnam-era veterans."

*GI BILL--Still over 200% less in terms of buying power than the World War II Bill, the GI Bill is limited to 10 years after service. While a high percentage of Vietnam vets have used the Bill, a majority have used far less than the maximum. 48 months because the payments on the Bill aren't enough to survive.

*HEALTHCARE--With the V.A. services continuing to decay--for all vets, not just for Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets--Carter is now trying to cut the V.A. healthcare budget.

*AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS--We have to have an adequate program of testing and treatment for the as yet unknown number of vets affected by Agent Orange poisoning, and compensation for vets and their families. V.A. refusals to deal with this crucial problem of Vietnam vets has already gone on far too long!

At a meeting of the Michigan Association of Concerned Veterans, that organization, the National Association of Concerned Vets, and Citizen Soldier all agreed with these demands. In cities where VVAW is working in coalition with other vets' groups these basic positions have met widespread approval--they reflect many of the real concerns of veterans, far more than do proclamations, parades, expressions of "deep concern," or monuments in Arlington.

Fourteen years after World War I, 25,000 vets and their families descended on Washington, D.C. in the Bonus March; the Hoover administration had to drive them out with tanks. No politician or corporate executive wants to see that happen again. Instead, they want vets on their side, helping to build their version of "national pride" so they can recruit our kids to fight their next war. Vietnam Vets Week and talk about how vets are in the "mainstream of

American Life" are part of the bait to catch us with their line.

Lots of vets aren't about to get hooked. We say "Put up or shut up!" We remember Vietnam Veterans Day called by Nixon in 1975; the protest from vets, including VVAW, was so strong that the "Day" was never held again. We remember "Jobs Fairs" where the best they could offer was re-enlisting in the military--and vets destroyed them. Millions of us have the gut feeling that the Vietnam War was none of our business--we were used in a war that was the business of big business which wanted to insure their profits in Indochina and make a little on the side in ammo and supply sales.

We were used once and then thrown away. And we haven't forgotten the experience of Vietnam, particularly when confronted with a movie like "The Deerhunter" or slapped in the face with proclamations about Vietnam-era Veterans Week. VVAW wants to see Vietnam Veterans Week made real, but we know we can't count on the government to do it--vets will have to do that for ourselves.

VVAW is using that week and its surrounding publicity to get out some of the real problems facing vets, and not only Vietnam-era vets. We've got some solutions: FULL EMPLOYMENT! TESTING AND TREATMENT FOR AGENT ORANGE VICTIMS! EXTEND AND EXPAND THE GI BILL! DECENT HEALTHCARE FOR ALL VETS! Join with us. For more information on Vets Week Activities, call:

Bay Area VVAW:

Chicago VVAW:

(312) 651-1583

Milwaukee VVAW:

(414) 963-0398

New York VVAW:

(212) 768-6070

Twin Cities VVAW:

VVAW National Office:

(312) 651-1583.

Many of us who were in Vietnam came back home to discover we had new problems. Of course we had the problems of lousy benefits and bad head trips that came as a result of fighting a war where we shouldn't have been. At least for these things we had some idea of what the cause was.

But new problems came, and we didn't know where they came from. These were physical problems: physical problems that didn't exist before Vietnam and didn't exist among other people our age who hadn't been in Vietnam. Some Vietnam vets were finding that their kids were being born with 6 fingers or deformed feet. A woman civilian worker in Vietnam was having spontaneous abortions. Vets had skin rashes they didn't have before. Many had liver cancer; some died. Vets mysteriously were afflicted with nervousness and fatigue.

Light was shed on why these problems existed in March, 1978. A V.A. worker in Chicago, Maude De Victor, discovered that the vets she worked with, who had these problems, had something in common. While in the 'Nam they had been exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange.

Agent Orange had been used in Vietnam to clear out the jungle in order to destroy the sanctuaries of the Vietnamese liberation fighters. The defoliant was sprayed from planes, and while it hit the jungle, it also hit Vietnamese civilians, and Vietnamese and American soldiers in the area. Reports from Vietnam about the problems that Vietnamese civilians were having had long been dismissed as Communist propaganda. But it was not propaganda as many vets can attest.

Agent Orange contains the poison dioxin which is a major cause of the problem. Dioxin is the stuff that filled the air in Seveso, Italy, when a plant which manufactured the stuff exploded. Workers at the plant were killed, and workers in the clean-up crew died from their exposure. All the animal life in the area died, and now, no one is allowed in the area.

This is the stuff that Vietnam vets were exposed to. When the story broke, on a CBS Special, VVAW began a series of demonstrations demanding that the V.A. and Defense Department notify all vets who may have been exposed, provide testing,

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From the Revolutionary War To the Present

VETERANS' HISTORY: THE

In his diary, veteran Elijah Fisher wrote, "There was so many that come from the Army and the Navy that had no homes, that would work for little or nothing but their vittels, that I could find no employment.... I begun to think over how I had been in the army, what ill success I had met with there, and also how I was wronged by them I worked for at home." (some spelling and words updated by the editor). Veteran Elijah Fisher, facing the same problems as many Vietnam veterans today was mustered out of the service at the end of the Revolutionary War. His diary is dated 1783!

When VVAW talks about Dewey Canyon III in 1971, we say it was the first time veterans ever demonstrated against a war they were involved in. And that's true, but it was a long ways from the first time that veterans have been involved in direct conflict with the government that sent them off to fight and die. And the reason why the struggle of veterans dates back to the days following the Revolutionary War is, in part, captured in the diary of the veteran Elijah Fisher. To varying degrees vets have had questions about the wars that the U.S. was fighting; and almost universally, vets have had problems once they have gotten out of the service.

No jobs was only one question for the Revolutionary War veteran. A large number of the 210,000 men who served were farmers, often owning or paying on their own small plots of land. While speculators, merchants, and even some of the leaders of the Revolution were getting rich during the war, these same small farmers had to borrow like mad to keep their lands. In the prosperity immediately after the war, there was no problem, but when the inevitable recession set in, the vets were finding their land being seized by the courts, and they were being hauled off to debtors' prisons.

A group of 1500 men, mostly vets, kept courts from opening in Northampton, Massachusetts. In Groton, vets built barricades from fence-posts until the judges left the court. When the Supreme Court of Mass. tried to indict the leaders of this rebellion, 700 men marched to the courthouse and there were no indictments.

Out of this turmoil came Daniel Shays. A respected Revolutionary veteran, Shays and his men closed down courts in west-

ern Massachusetts for three months and, in January of 1787, he led 1100 men toward the arsenal at Springfield, Mass.

\$20,000 came from wealthy Bostonians who saw their position threatened; it went to call the Massachusetts Militia into action. But the vets in the militia, in their first confrontation with Shays' army, fired into the



Tax collector strung up and tarred and feathered (after Revolutionary

ground (something that would happen again when veterans met veterans during the 1932 Bonus March). But Shays army was no match for the militia and finally Shays' army was scattered.

But their efforts were far from a loss. Debtors' prisons were abolished. Debts were made easier to repay. As one historian, a year after Shays' Rebellion put it, "farmers did not think it fair that they had shed blood in the field only to be worn out by taxes at home, or fought for the rights of their creditors to drag them off to prison."

Then, now, and during the period in between, vets fought for what they needed. When clothing allowances didn't come following the Revolution, vets chased the Continental Congress with bayonets--and got the allowances. When Milwaukee vets, in 1978, demanded open disability hearings, enough vets went to the V.A. as a group to once again force the government to give them what they wanted.

The confrontation between veterans and the government continued after each war. In 1818, following the War of 1812, an organized group of veterans forced Congress to pay for non-service connected dis-

abilities as well as award payments for injuries in the military. And the Civil War set the stage for another confrontation.

The Grand Army of the Republic was the veterans' organization that grew from the Civil War. Red tape, a problem then like now, was one of the vets' biggest problems. They won the right to pensions but had to fill out such a maze of forms and paperwork that many vets couldn't deal with them. That meant, on one hand, that the politicians could dangle the promise of pensions knowing they would never have to hand out the bucks. Worse even than the politicians were the "claims agents" who, according to a government investigator of the time, "would sit at the pay offices on pay days and seize the pensions of frightened, ignorant privates, frequently retaining more than half of it for themselves...." The fight of vets continued, however, and even after the beginning of World War I they forced an increase in the categories of vets eligible for pensions.

It was over thirty years until the next major military venture of the U.S. government--the Spanish-American War marked the first time that U.S. troops had been sent off in a war to gain territory outside the U.S. U.S. imperialism was getting a foothold on the world scene. Veterans of that war banded together in the Spanish-American War Veterans, a group which still exists today. But the rumblings that would become World War I followed so closely that the struggle of Spanish-American War vets barely had time to get started.

The business interests that ran the U.S. were well aware that vets had been a force in earlier wars. And when World War I dragged on to an end, they were ready with what they saw as a remedy for the problem. It was an era when turning over the old social order was on the minds of millions; in Russia, long a bastion of feudal ideas, saw the Bolshevik Revolution, and workers around the world saw a ray of hope. U.S. troops in Europe were influenced by the wave of revolutionary ideas and, at home, up to half a million men claimed conscientious objector status to avoid being to the trenches of Europe. Among the American people there were millions who saw the war as being fought for the interests



Armed with homemade clubs and bottles, the veterans of the way, but could not finally stand up to the bayonets, the

of big business--and they wanted no part of it. Such ideas, as well as those they found in Europe, also affected many of the 4 million men mobilized to fight the war.

How to deal with the problem? The official "History of the American Legion" set the guidelines: "Morale was shot to pieces. You heard every day ... something had to be done ... measures be devised to give outlet ... when the men got home and were demobilized. If not, anything might happen ... every 'Bolshevik' movement to date had its inception among disaffected troops or soldiers newly discharged...."

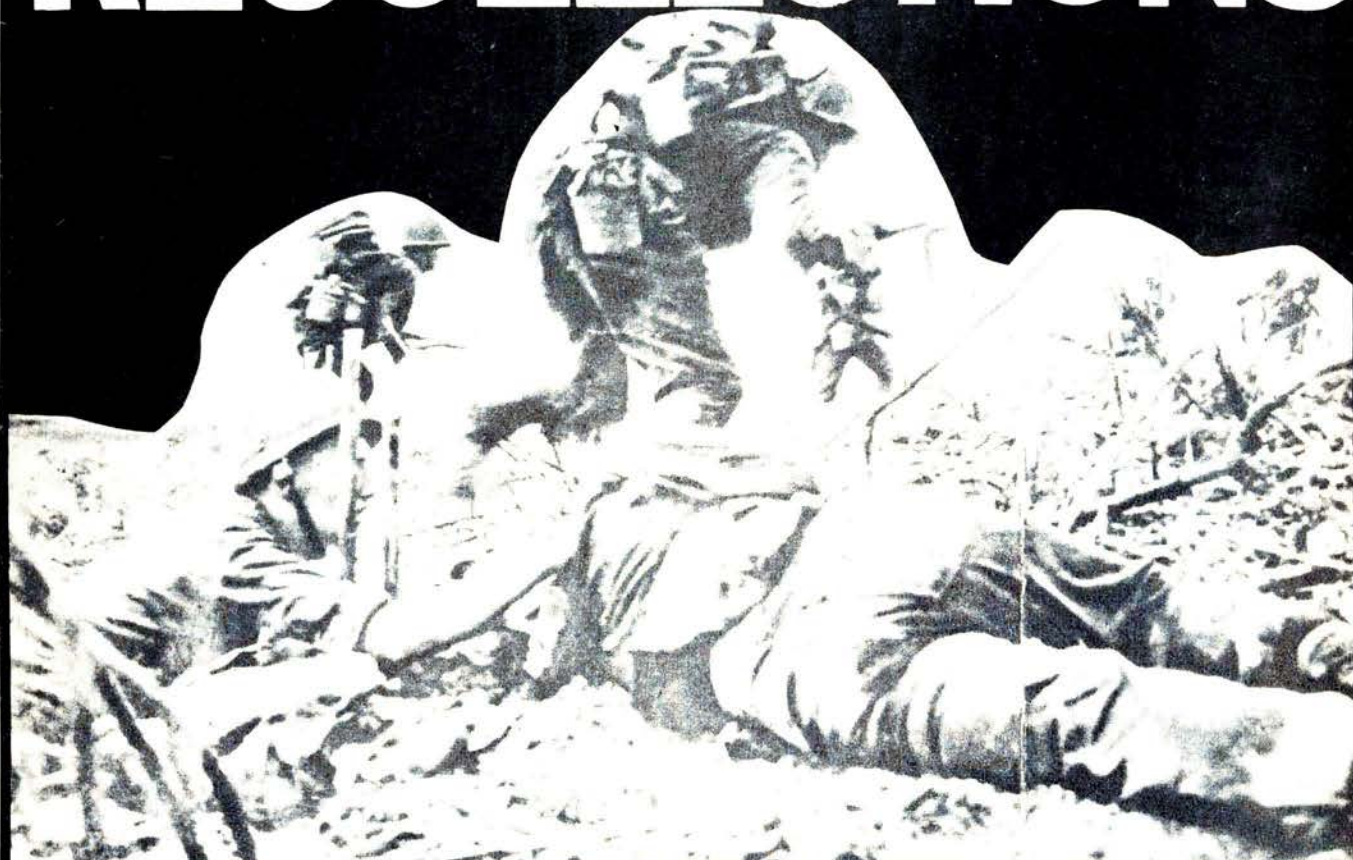
So a meeting, held in secret under orders from the headquarters of the U.S. forces in Europe, brought together 20 high-ranking officers, in Paris in 1918. The result was the American Legion, specifically designed to provide the outlet for veterans under the guidance of the government. Over the years the American Legion has served the government well. Not only has it diligently supported each and every war the U.S. government has fought, but has tried to create more--invasion of Panama a year ago being only one of the more recent ideas of the Legion leadership. Supporting strikebreakers, and actually serving as strikebreakers during the 1930's placed the Legion squarely in the pocket of big business--that's where they came from in the first place and where they have stayed ever since.

But though the Legion (and sister organizations like the VFW) attracted millions of vets, they could not subdue the will to fight back. Black vets were among the fiercest fighters--the 367,000 thousand Blacks who fought in the war were commanded by white officers, but when they came home to find the KKK



**VIETNAM VETERANS
TELL THEIR STORY**

RECOLLECTIONS



**To the Americans Who Were Used in That War
To the Indochinese Who Fought Back
To Our Brothers Who died To Our Children
In the Hope that Our Real Stories
Will Help Stop Future Wars of Aggression**

VVAW HISTORY 12 YEARS OF STRUGGLE



VVAW is approaching its 12th anniversary. On June 1st, 1967, the first organizational meeting was held in New York City. Vietnam vets, returned from Indochina, had met at an anti-war demonstration, saw they had a common bond in having fought the war they now opposed, and decided to organize other veterans under the name, VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. From these simple beginnings, the organization became one of the most powerful forces in the anti-war movement of the late '60's and early '70's.

The early days saw VVAW in demonstrations, often with a Vietnam vet speaking out against the war. In 1970 VVAW brought together 100 veterans, mostly from the Northeast, in Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal). They marched from Morristown, NJ, to a final rally in Valley Forge, conducting mock "search and destroy" missions through the towns on the route.

Around the country these simulated military raids gave the American people a small taste of Vietnam. With the Winter Soldier Investigations in Detroit in 1971, 150 Vietnam veterans from across the country came together to testify to their experiences in Vietnam.



Fifteen VVAW members seize the Statue of Liberty in December, 1972, to protest the bombing of Haiphong Harbor; in June, 1976, we did it again to protest GI Bill cutoffs.

All the individual experiences added up to a staggering indictment of U.S. governmental and military crimes against the peoples of Indochina.

A national meeting--the first--followed these investigations; plans were made for a national demonstration in Washington, DC: Operation Dewey Canyon III. Named after a secret U.S. military invasion of Laos, Dewey Canyon III saw over 1000 Vietnam veterans throwing away their war medals at the Capitol steps in anger over the continuing war. The impact around the country was tremendous. People saw veterans, because of their direct experience, turning against the very war they had been sent off to fight.

Strong opposition to the war and confrontations with the warmakers continued over the next several years. The mining of Haiphong harbor in December, 1971, was greeted by 15 VVAW members seizing the Statue of Liberty. Activists in France reacted by burning the replica of the Statue on the Seine in Paris to show their support.

VVAW took the lead in the fight for amnesty for all war resisters, focusing attention on the problems of veterans with less-than-honorable discharges.

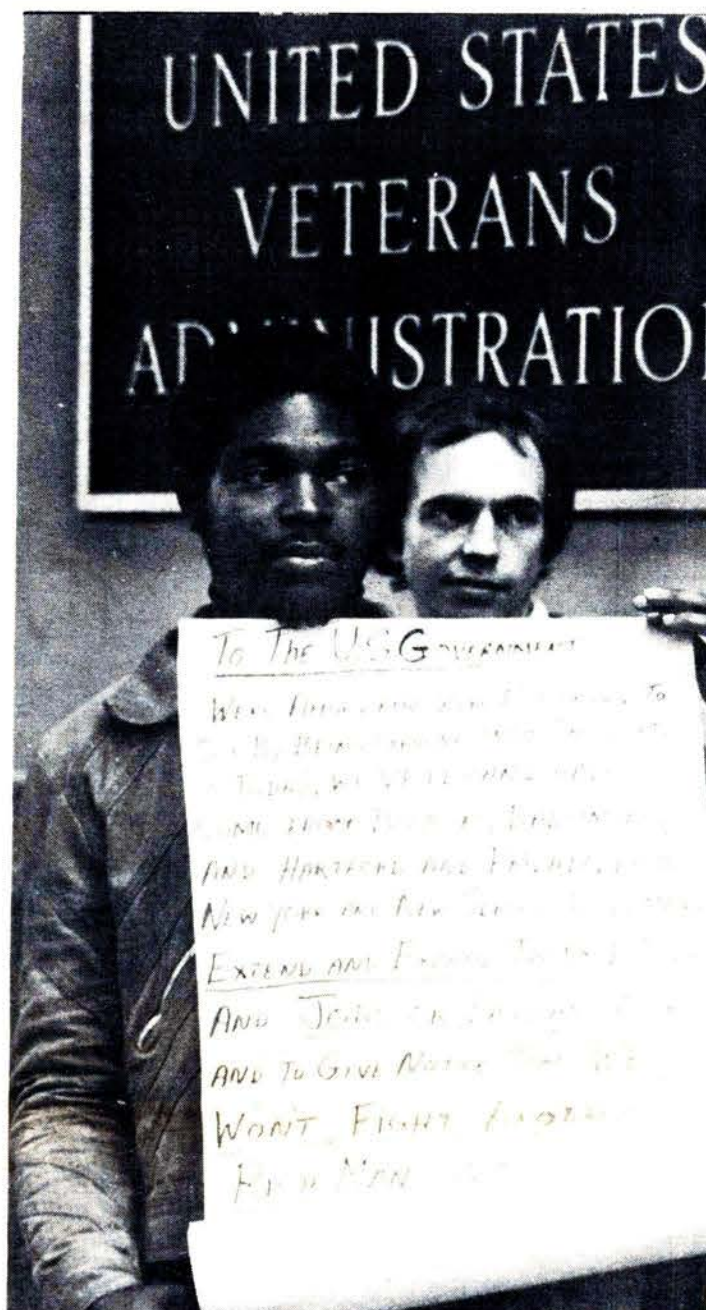
And when, in 1975, the peoples of Indochina won their fight for liberation, VVAW felt it was a victory for us as well as for the Cambodians, the Laotians, and the Vietnamese!

While we were in the streets, however, we were also learning. Those who planned and directed the war, we learned, were not the same as those who fought it; the ruling class made huge profits off our sweat and blood did not even send their sons to fight. They cer-

tainly did not care what happened to us whether it was when we were getting shot at in the Vietnamese jungles or sniped at when trying to get our disability payments or GI Bill checks on time after we got home.

Even while we were fighting against the war VVAW began to take up the problems that the veteran was facing here at home: high rates of unemployment (often intensified by bad discharges among 600,000+ Vietnam-era veterans); a GI Bill not adequate to survive on and made more unlivable by checks which constantly came late if at all. Veterans Administration hospital care was so bad that vets avoided it whenever possible.

VVAW carried on a war on the V.A., seizing V.A. offices and bringing the sorry situation many vets faced to the attention of the public. A campaign to Expand and Extend the GI Bill created considerable interest



on college campuses. And many of these problems are now focused in VVAW's nationwide campaign to get testing and treatment for Agent Orange, a defoliant widely used in Vietnam and now causing serious illnesses in many Vietnam vets.

The rich man's system not only used vets once and then tossed us aside; the same

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IT'S THE MEMORIES, NOT THE MERIT A MEDAL FOR MEN'S LIVES

A thousand Vietnam veterans standing in line. Stepping forward one by one, we hurl medals at the Capitol. It's the final day of Dewey Canyon III, the first time for a demonstration by veterans against the war they fought in. Veterans defied court orders to leave their campsite on the Mall in Washington; newspaper headlines blared, "VETS OVERRULE COURT; REFUSE TO LEAVE!" It was late April, 1971, and in Southeast Asia the war still raged. In Washington, we lobbied Congress, got arrested when we held a sit-in on the steps of the Supreme Court, and challenged Nixon to bring as many Vietnam vets as we had there to speak for his often proclaimed "silent majority." On this final day we were taking a longer step as we shuffled along hurling curses along with the medals we had won in Vietnam as we demanded an end to the war. Memories filled many of our minds and as we moved slowly along, most of us were quiet, lost in our memories....

Moving along the edge of the rice paddy, we circled the rising hill. We had taken seven casualties the day before from the local VC; today we were looking for them. We found rice caches, but the villages were empty--not even the old folks remained. Our company was spread out moving in single file between the openness of the rice paddies and the beginning of the jungle. Quietly we moved, not talking but looking, listening and waiting for something to happen.

After several hours, it happened. The VC opened up on us from a hill. We hit back, not just with our rifles, machine-guns and grenade launchers, but with heavy gunship and artillery support. The VC kept on fighting, kept on shooting and we kept hitting back at them. Our fire wasn't concentrated; we were spread out around the hill. And then friendly fire started hitting our company and my platoon--fire coming over the hill, missing the VC and hitting us! The gunships were spraying the area as well, not just with M-60's but also 50's and rockets. I grabbed my RTO and ran to the squad that was hit--we went through enemy and friendly fire, popping smoke to stop the gunships. The whole

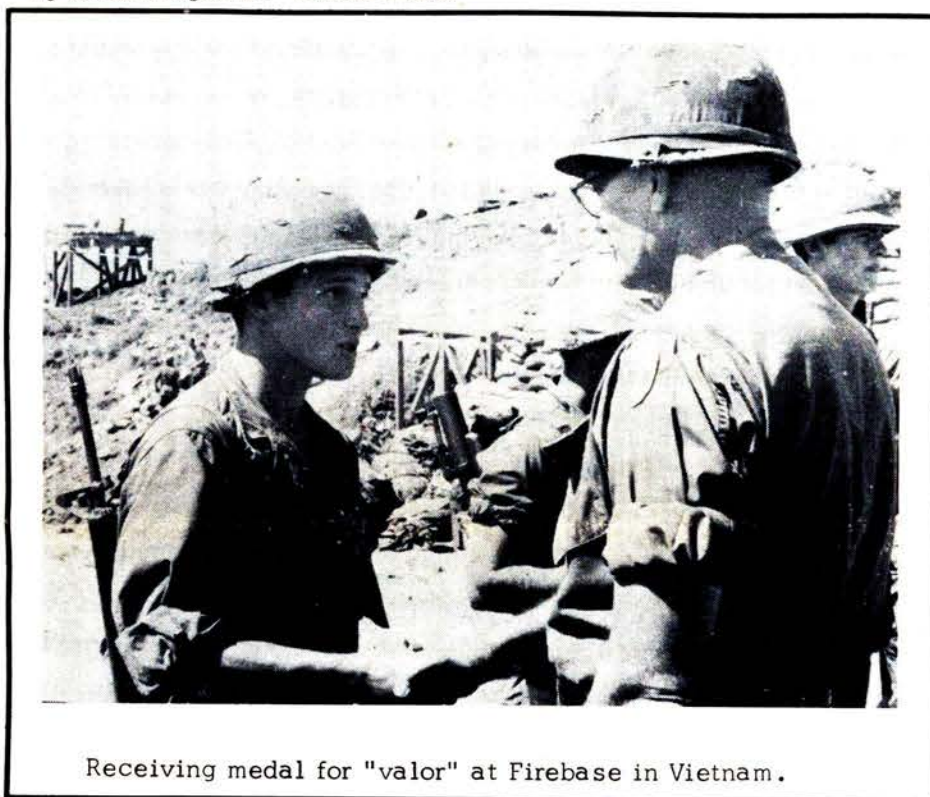
squad was hit bad. Artillery had blown men as much as fifty feet; my platoon sargeant was dead, his body ripped apart. There were no smoke grenades left to mark the area for medevac choppers to land and get the wounded to a hospital, so I ran into the paddy with the VC still firing, and had the choppers guide in on me. They landed quickly and got all the wounded out, even the body of my dead sergeant. While I was

Dewey Canyon III: April 1971 demonstration by VVAW, named after secret U.S. incursion into Laos.

M-50's and 60's: U.S. machine-guns fired, in this situation, from armed helicopters (gunships); the M-50 fires larger rounds and is thus more deadly.

RTO: Radio-telephone operator.

Medevac: Helicopters used to evacuate the wounded.



Receiving medal for "valor" at Firebase in Vietnam.

walking slowly back to the rest of the company, my CO said he was putting me in for a medal. I couldn't sleep that night. A medal for men's lives. The medic gave me some tranqs to sleep.

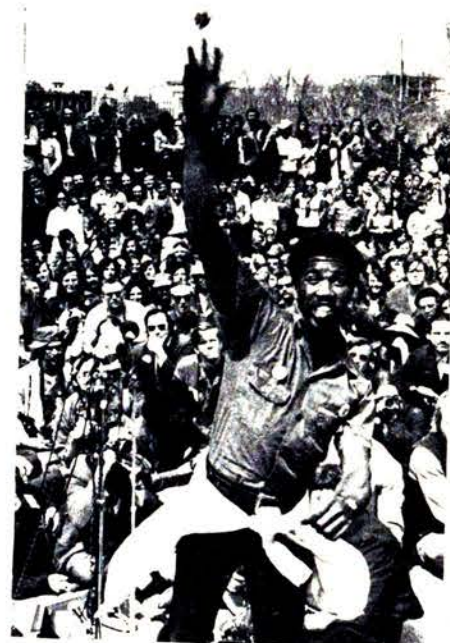
Standing in line I remembered that day, again moving slowly in single file. The day in 'Nam several years earlier was more real than the present.

As vets threw their medals away, we made statements-- "These are for my brothers," "If we have to fight again it will be to take these steps." All I could manage was "These ain't shit"--nothing dramatic. The American Legion, when asked, commented on the demo saying, "We find it sad when any veteran throws medals away won in meritorious service."

What the spokesman didn't understand that it wasn't the "merit" that made the medals of value, but the memories of friends bound up with those medals.

Vietnam Veterans as they throw their medals at the Capitol steps.

"I wish I could make 'em eat it." "I'm still on active duty, and I say get the hell out." "I gave up 90% of my vision in Vietnam. These medals are worthless." "Here's my merit badges for murder . . . from the country I betrayed by enlisting in the Army." Igor Brovosky of New York City threw most of his decorations away. "I'm keeping two Purple Hearts in memory of my friends," he said. "I'd like to say just one thing for the people of Vietnam. I'm sorry. I hope that someday I can return to Vietnam and help rebuild that country we tore apart." "I earned a Good Conduct Medal in Vietnam. In the words of another son of Massachusetts, Henry Thoreau, my only regret is my good conduct."



Veteran throws back his Silver Star during Operation Dewey Canyon III in April, 1971.

**cont. from p 2
VVAW...**

system concentrated many of its attacks on minorities. As early as 1971 VVAW was sponsoring food convoys to the Black citizens of Cairo, Illinois who were boycotting the racist white-owned businesses of the town. For several years VVAW built support for Gary Lawton, a California Black activist, who was finally acquitted after three trials for murder. And in 1978 VVAW members took part in demonstrations in Tupelo, Mississippi, in support of the United League there fighting for justice.



After several years of neglect, the Vietnam vet and the Indochina war are coming back into the spotlight--and being used to help prepare people to fight another war. VVAW is using the experience gained in 12 years of struggle to fight the new lies and the rewritten history. We're fighting against the way veterans were--and are--used once and then thrown away. We invite you to join with us!



'IT MEANS SOMETHING DOESN'T IT?'

WEST VIRGINIA, SPRING, 1966

Roy Jenkins wasn't a real good friend of mine but in a small West Virginia county like Doddridge, you knew everybody by name, and you either got along with them or you didn't. I got along with Roy. He was likeable enough and a damn good guy to have with you in a Saturday night beer joint brawl.

Doddridge County was poor, really poor; no industry, few jobs, except for farm work and the State Road Commission, and a lot of welfare. For young people coming up there was only one solution--get out. Go to the mills up north or the mines down south or into the military service for a while.

Roy, myself and many of the other guys were going into the service. What with the war in Vietnam and all, the recruiters were thick as flies, buying coffee and beer and hamburgers, making promises and telling jokes--and we were like sheep on the way to the slaughterhouse.

I signed up for the Air Force and passed the tests--I suppose mostly 'cause they promised job training you could use when you got out. Roy chose the Army--he couldn't pass the test for the Navy or the Air Force, and he wanted out of Doddridge as much as the rest of us.

Roy and I had the same date for the Armed Forces test and physical in Fairmont, about 80 miles away. We arranged a ride to Clarksburg with a truckload of men who made the 100 mile round trip to Union Carbide plant in Clarksburg every day. From there, we were going to hitchhike up to Fairmont.

It was a beautiful spring morning in May. The sun hadn't come up yet and the fog still lay in most of the low places and in patches up on the hillsides when I climbed in the back of the pickup truck. Most of the men were trying to catch a few winks so I didn't say much other than hello. We picked up Roy in front of the Red Parrot Inn just outside of Sedalia.

By then it was a little lighter out, and Roy and I could hardly contain our enthusiasm, talking about everything that crossed our minds. Most of the men just eyed us sourly and tried to sleep, except for Monk Underwood who sat there staring at us like he didn't know us or some-



thing.

After a while I felt a little uncomfortable, so I turned to Monk and said, "How ya been, Monk?"

"Fair to middlin', Bill", he said; "You boys going in the service, huh?"

"Yeah. Today's when we take the final tests," I said. Roy didn't open his mouth, but he didn't talk much, particularly to people he didn't know.

"You young bucks hot to get in the war, I reckon."

Nobody ever put it to me that way before, and I hesitated before I said, "Yeah, I s'pose."

Monk straightened up on the bench, spit some tobacco juice in a can in front of him, leaned forward and rasped, "What the hell you know about war, boy?"

"Not much", I bristled back. "What the hell you know about it, Monk?"

"Damn sure more than you do, boy. I was in Korea."

"Yeah, Monk, but this here's different."

"Bullshit; they all the same. You don't know what you're in for."

"Listen, Monk, I'm going into the Air Force, they don't have to carry guns and the recruiter said I wouldn't have to go overseas."

Monk sat there for a minute, spat into the can again. "Bullshit", he grunted, pulled his hat down over his eyes and slid down a little lower and didn't say another word the rest of the ride.

Roy and I jumped out in

Clarksburg, grabbed some coffee and rolls, stuck out our thumbs, and we were off to Fairmont.

It was a holiday for us: for me, a day out of high school on a spring day, and for Roy a day off from bust-ass work on some farm. A real holiday. I put what Monk had said out of my mind. Vietnam was many thousands of miles away. Roy didn't have the slightest idea of where it was.

CAM RANH BAY, VIETNAM,
AUGUST, 1968

Cam Ranh Bay looked the same from the air as it did on the ground, a stinking sand pit. I came in country there and was glad to be sent down to Vung Tau, a paradise in comparison.

This trip I was on a scrounge mission to get all the spare parts I could for our junk equipment to fix our junk aircraft. If they turned me loose in the parts room, like they usually did, I'd rip off everything that wasn't nailed down to sell or trade to other outfits later on.

My pilfering done, I wandered over to the Air Force EM Club to drink myself into oblivion and see what kind of shit I could get myself into.

The club was a real treat--sand, spilt beer, broken glass, and plenty of fights. The big attraction that night was an overweight, middle-aged woman singing songs about whatever city or state you requested. Whenever she hit on any place, there was always a cheer and stomping. Everybody wanted to get home and get out of this

goddamn hole.

I got a pitcher of beer and sat down. I drank about half of it without looking up. I leaned back to take in the show --fucking officers get all the good shows--we get this shit.

Looking around for any of the guys I knew in Cam Ranh, I damn near jumped out of my seat. "That guy looks like Roy Jenkins," I thought. A couple of tables away some Army dudes were drinking. "Shit, it is him", I thought again. Jumping up, I practically ran over. "Roy! Roy, you old son of a bitch!" He jumped up grinning, both of us pumping our hands like crazy.

A million questions went through our minds at once-- "How the hell are ya, what outfit you with, where you at in country--and on and on.

He introduced me to the other guys at the table as his home town buddy; they nodded and turned their attention back to the show.

We went back to where I was sitting and started talking. Roy looked bad--real bad. Not just the sun-burned, red dust weary look most of the combat troops had, but a nervous, haggard, beat-up look.

"So, how ya been, Roy?"

"No good. Bill. not good."

"How'd ya get here, Roy,"

I asked.

"Ah, we came in a truck convoy from Na Trang. Got the hell kicked out of us. Took a lot of casualties."

"You going back the same way?"

"Yeah, I reckon we are."

"What the hell for?"

"Ah, some bullshit about keeping the highway open."

"Ain't that some shit."

"Yeah, but what the hell. When we ain't there, the VC own it, and we run down it, they kick the hell out of us."

"Yeah, this is some war we got here, huh, Roy?"

"The only one we have, buddy," he said.

We both laughed.

We talked about home for hours, then he said he had to go. The truck was leaving soon back to the Army compound. I walked with him out to the truck.

When we got there, he stopped and kinda kicked some sand

**please turn to top
of next page**

continued from p.4

around with his toe. Looking at me he said, "I wish to God I'd never come here, Bill."

"Yeah, me too, Roy. This war sucks." He nodded.

"Listen, Roy, I got to go too. Keep your ass covered, OK?"

"Yeah, see you back in the world."

I watched the truck roll out. Roy waved once.

VUNG TAU ARMY AIRFIELD
VIETNAM, OCTOBER, 1968

I stopped by the mailroom and picked up whatever was there. One item was the regular letter from grandpa. He clipped the local papers for me --who got married, who died, who won the local football games.

I sorted through the clippings. Becky Harvey got married--too bad. One had a picture of some GI; I unfolded it. "Oh, goddamn no! 'Pvt. Roy Jenkins was killed in the service of his country (bullshit!) in August, 1968'. On that fucking truck convoy out of Cam Ranh--the next day. Oh, goddamn, no!"

I went back to my locker, cracked a fifth of scotch and proceeded to drink and think.

Roy wasn't the first I knew to die, but there were so many. I was the last person from Doddridge County to see Roy alive. Goddamn it! That means something, doesn't it?

Roy and the other guys bought it and I didn't really know why. I knew there was no good reason for it.

Monk Underwood knew all along, but we wouldn't have listened. He didn't have a way with words, like the rich bastards who promoted and profited from the war.

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RELOCATION



Plodding down the landing strip of an abandoned American base came a strange assortment of ox-carts piled high with household belongings, chicken cages, children; between the carts were dusty 2 and 1/2 ton U.S. Army trucks. It was moving day.

The people of the small Montagnard village had ancestral roots stretching back at least 900 years in the same place near the Cambodian border of South Vietnam. That was until the U.S. Army, in its wisdom, decided that the village must be "relocated". The new location was along side L.Z. Joe, once a U.S. landing zone but now mostly abandoned except for a Special Forces "A" camp nearby. The jungle growth in between the rows of rubber trees had already begun to reclaim the area.

As brigade information officer I had the job of telling the press how this relocation of the Montagnards would provide them with medical care (in fact no Vietnamese hospital would ever treat a Montagnard in that area) how they would be protected with the Special Forces camp nearby, and how the U.S. Army would provide them with all the help they needed to settle into their new "home". There was no mention of how they were supposed to survive since they certainly would not be permitted to cut down rubber trees (the U.S. military paid \$600 for every hurt tree) in order to have room to grow food.

Privately, the S-2 (intel-

ligence officer) of the 1st Air Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade told me that "We're moving the gooks because they're 90% VC or VC symps, and now we can keep an eye on them."

With all the decisions made, on a steamy morning in July, 1969, Engineers from the 1st Cav arrived by helicopter and began setting up surplus Army tents. Meanwhile, the trucks and ox-carts snaked out of the jungle, across the deserted strip, and the villagers began to unload. Not knowing what their new life would be, they wisely brought along everything they had including old boards to make pens next to the tents for the family pig. Around the area, 1st Cav Security forces napped in the jungle, not realizing how nervous were some of the American troops who were not used to being quite so close to the war.

By noon most of the villagers were moved in--it didn't take long to unload and arrange their few belongings. Cooking fires sprung up in front of the tents--as I walked by one tent I saw a brown snake, held on forked sticks, cooking in front of a fire.

Less than one hour later, an old man, mostly toothless and gesturing excitedly, came up to me to invite me to participate in their special meal--broiled snake, rice wine, and a plant-like watercress--they had picked in the area. As an honored guest, I was urged, with many smiles, to eat well.

But that was only the first

invitation to eat. Presiding over the relocation was the district chief, elegantly dressed in immaculate, starched fatigues, sun glasses, and carrying a polaroid camera bought at some PX; while American soldiers helped the villagers as best they could, the chief and his bevy of aides looked on, smoked cigarettes, and took pictures. In between, he retired to his tent (the first one put up), though he had no intention of staying around. In his tent the menu was somewhat different--smoked salmon, French "chartruese" liquor, dainty crackers. He talked, through an interpreter, of his great concern for "his" people.

The big event of the day, however, took place in mid-afternoon; it was planned to demonstrate how the U.S. Army would in fact do all it could to help in relocating a village. A Chinook landed next to the new villages bringing in the 1st Air Cav division band! In a small clearing between tents they put on a concert for the villagers--a somewhat nervous concert since members of the band usually played in more secure areas. Wide-eyed Montagnards watched the shiny instruments, listening to what they could hardly know was a medley of tunes from "My Fair Lady".

Well before dark, the band left; so did the district chief, driving off in his well-kept U.S. jeep with driver. And so, finally, did the rest of us, leaving behind the small villages in U.S. Army tents beside the empty landing strip.

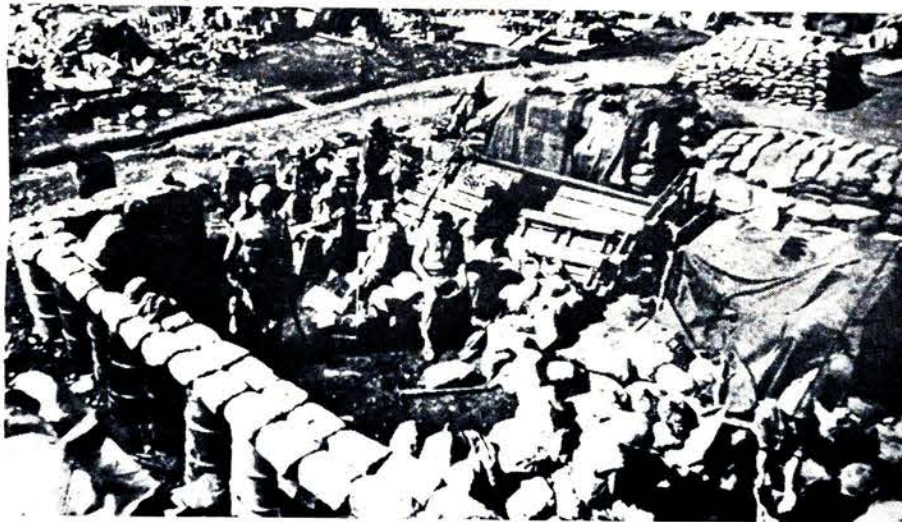
THE WALKING DEAD OF

My battalion of the Ninth Marines, nicknamed the "Walking Dead", was airlifted into the mountain valley near the evacuated hamlet of Khe Sanh during the Tet Offensive of 1968. The U.S. inability to stop the fighting during Tet finally extinguished once and for all the illusion of "light at the end of the tunnel". After Khe Sanh, Hue and the Tet of 1968 people in the U.S. came to realize we were not winning the Vietnam War.

Khe Sanh was featured on the cover of *Time Magazine* under the bold headline "Khe Sanh -- America's Dien Bien Phu?" (the French colonial war in Vietnam ended in 1954 with their defeat at Dien Bien Phu). I took the magazine with me when I was airlifted into the base and showed it around. Everyone was interested and thrilled to be in the news. It had seemed plausible that Khe Sanh was of strategic value in our efforts, but the *Time* article made it clear, even from their conservative slant, that what was at stake was a symbolic turf-holding exercise for big kids. We should have evacuated the base as was discussed, saving lives and retaking it after the offensive, because Khe Sanh was under siege; defending the base drained U.S. airpower leaving other areas unprotected. The base was only defensive and as the end base on McNamara's line crossed the DMZ to stop infiltration from the north. Under the circumstances, its mission was out of the question.

I think we all felt somewhat expendable being stuck up there. We were told if we were overrun to hide in our bunkers and throw C-ration heat cubes that burn hot into the trench line so the gunships would know where we were while they blasted the base from above. The North Vietnamese Army outnumbered us 10 to 1. The Walking Dead lost 100 men killed in 87 days of fighting at Khe Sanh and countless wounded. Many of the grunts were hit two and three times. But they stayed up there because there simply were not replacements and the unit was badly understrength at two-thirds maybe three-quarters personnel level.

I knew about the spirits of Khe Sanh in my regular job in the rear. The days before I left Dong Ha for the bush were filled with a quiet between those of us left in the rear, broken only by the morbid fascination about the fighting go-



Marines entrenched at Khe Sanh, 1968.

ing on and distant explosions. We sent thirty bags of belongings home one week and into our hearts crept the silent spirits of the battle; the frustrations of a strategic mistake: our valley location; and the anguish of the dead.

We were completely encircled. To the north were mountains and North Vietnam; to the south were mountains; the valley narrowed to the east, and toward the west and Laos, the land rose in elevation. My unit was out here on top of a hill holding this strategic point of defense.

I was enlisted and so in the custom of American military in this era I do not know much of the inside military information, and never have taken the time to read the official version available now in increasing numbers. What I know are the things of the field, the dirt of all wars, the new roar of B-52 strikes, and their glow or arc-light, like some science fiction movie, signalling the extreme destruction going on. The NVA developed a strategy to protect themselves by spreading out over a wide area. We watched our own cargo planes flying through waves of .50 caliber machinegun fire day after day dropping our supplies. All land routes were cut off. Lots of incoming rockets, mortars and artillery fired from 10 and more miles away became part of the daily experience. We always listened for incoming.

My picture and a friend's were on the cover of the *Los Angeles Times* opening a package of provisions sent from home. The woman photographer ultimately was killed by incoming somewhere else a few days later. War correspondents

--I cannot remember their names. At the airport, what was left of it, a cargo plane and several helicopters lay in wreckage. Everything was uniformly dust-

covered, not from the blowing winds but from months of pounding by artillery, rockets and mortars, at the peak rates of 1,000 rounds and more daily.

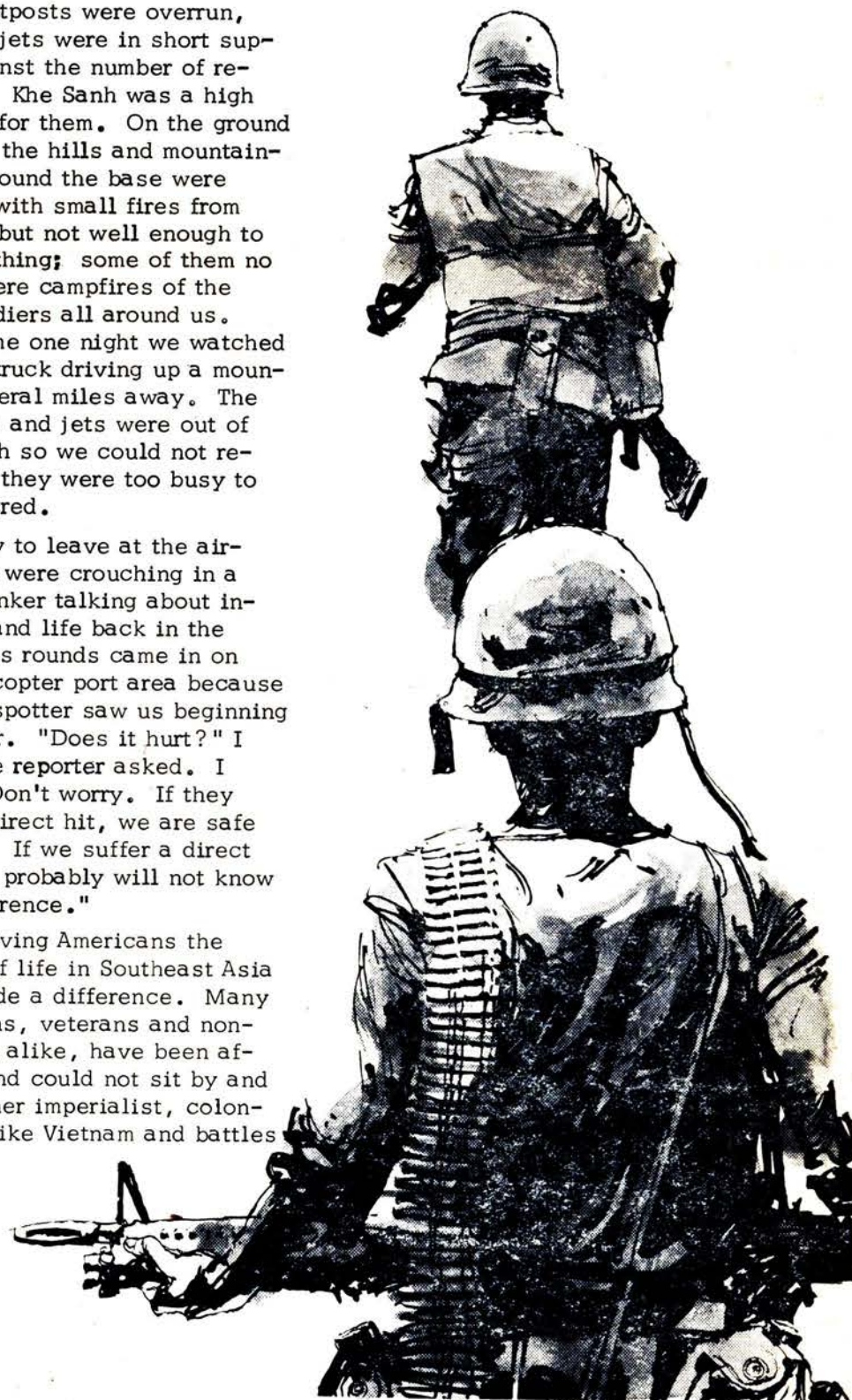
Our jets were no force for the situation because of fighting going on everywhere at once. Lots of villages fell, little outposts were overrun, and the jets were in short supply against the number of requests. Khe Sanh was a high priority for them. On the ground at night the hills and mountainsides around the base were lighted with small fires from bombs, but not well enough to see anything; some of them no doubt were campfires of the NVA soldiers all around us. For a time one night we watched an NVA truck driving up a mountain several miles away. The big guns and jets were out of our reach so we could not report it; they were too busy to be bothered.

Ready to leave at the airstrip we were crouching in a little bunker talking about incoming and life back in the world, as rounds came in on the helicopter port area because an NVA spotter saw us beginning to gather. "Does it hurt?" I think the reporter asked. I said, "Don't worry. If they miss a direct hit, we are safe in here. If we suffer a direct hit, you probably will not know the difference."

For living Americans the losses of life in Southeast Asia have made a difference. Many Americans, veterans and non-veterans alike, have been affected and could not sit by and let another imperialist, colonial war like Vietnam and battles

like Khe Sanh repeat themselves. In this regard Khe Sanh was a victory for the U.S. struggle

Khe Sanh was a victory for the liberation forces in Vietnam. Even though they never took the base during 1968 Tet, they tied up U.S. airpower defending Khe Sanh, an outpost at the end of McNamara's line. The U.S. military leaders took the bait by refusing to evacuate and concentrating on the defense of Khe Sanh; as a result, countless smaller units were left defenseless and were overrun, the U.S. embassy in Saigon was bombed, and a stronghold for the NVA was established in Hue for 25 days, completely exposing the inability of the U.S. to control the situation in Vietnam.



KHE SANH



Marines scrambling to get out of Khe Sanh

TET HUE MARINE: 'I THINK VETS KNOW BETTER'

(On the tenth anniversary of the National Liberation Front's Tet Offensive in February, 1968, newspaper articles appeared, saying that the U.S. military "won" during Tet, though the U.S. media turned it into a loss. General Westmoreland was touring the country saying much the same thing. So, THE VETERAN went to a VVAW member who was in Hue during Tet; here is his recollection.)

"In February, 1968, I was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, H Company; we were the first group sent into Hue after the Vietnamese Liberation Forces seized the city plus all kinds of other cities throughout Vietnam. We were sent up there without even knowing what we were going there for. Nobody told us how big this offensive was--we just drove up to the city and as soon as we crossed the bridge into the city, we were taken under fire--ambushed.

We were under fire for 25 straight days until tremendous numbers of Marines were called up along with the whole 101st Airborne Division, to take up blocking positions around the city. The Marines were supposed to sweep through the city and push the Vietnamese into the blocking force. Eventually, the city was returned to the control of the Thieu government but this went on for 25 days.

Now during the tenth anniversary of Tet I see on TV that people like General Westmoreland are saying that the Tet was a defeat for the Vietnamese and a victory for the U.S., and that it would have been a total victory if the politicians had taken the handcuffs off. I don't see how he can say that. First we were fighting about 2,000 Vietnamese in Hue City; at least 1,000 of them somehow got away. From what I understand, this happened all over the country--they sure weren't "wiped out". When we left Hue and went out into the countryside, the resistance was just as strong--even stronger--than it had been before Tet. People know about Hamburger Hill; that was about ten-fifteen miles north of there; hundreds of GI's--Airborne--were wiped out there, and that went on after Tet.

Westmoreland is dreaming just like he was after Tet when he came to Marine Division Headquarters and spoke to some of the troops; he said that Marines should remember their amphibious war training because they were going to be landing in North Vietnam soon to end the war. Any landing in North Vietnam--we'd have been lucky to get back as much as one C-ration can. There was no way. All in all, I think they're trying to reverse history. They're going to say it was a just war that we could have won. I think veterans know better than that....."

INCOMING

Cau Viet was way up there, about 6 miles from the DMZ. It sat on the mouth of the Dong Ha River on a sea of hot sand that ran about a mile or so, until it turned into rice paddies. It was home for Navy river boats, 1st Am Tracks, and a POL platoon (Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants). All of the JP4 gas for jets, aviation fuel, diesel and gasoline for Northern I Corps went through there, and ran in four hoses behind our bunker, and into Navy fuel boats that ran it up the river to Dong Ha.

I was one of the four radio operators assigned to the POL Platoon, and we lived in our own hootch with a bunker attached to it by a slide. Our job was to stand six-hour radio watches, handling the fuel from the Navy ships, or filling sandbags to protect ourselves from NVA artillery coming in from the DMZ. They had lots of guns in caves and on railroad tracks. Every now and then they would roll 'em out and fire a few in our direction, or else they'd let us have it with 75-100 rounds now and then. Things were very hot--the Tet Offensive was not over. Neither was the siege of Khe Sanh. So, the DMZ was like sandbag heaven. I, personally, really got into sandbags. You could only dig a hole 2 and a half feet down, 'til you hit water at Cau Viet. So, any protection from incoming was on top of your hole in the form of sandbags. We needed lots of them because we were such a good target. All the fuel was kept in 10,000 gallon rubber bladders laid out in burms of sand in neat rows. We had two fields. One about 75 yards from our bunker, which had 11 pods, and about 17 pods at the other end of the perimeter.



Waiting for a monsoon shower

On August 23, 1968, we had a very lively evening. About 9:30PM, an NVA artillery attack sent in some 121mm and 152mm's. About 90 rounds rained in on us, and 15 fuel pods were transformed into a roaring fire. After the incoming stopped, an Amtrack came over to drive us to the fire. I was the radio man, but the Amtrack driver yelled down, "You won't need your radio. I've got one." Like a fool, I left my radio behind.

We reached the fire, and jumped off; but the only radio drove away with the Amtrack! There I was--the radio man--without a radio. Sergeant Weeks yelled to me, "Hippie! Call the Navy and have them send over a bulldozer! Maybe we can save the last 20,000 gallons of fuel."

"I would, if I had the radio, but I left it back at the hootch."

Well, exactly what else the sergeant said, I don't really remember; he promised a Court Martial if I didn't get a bulldozer. I ran in the direction of the line bunkers to call up on the land line. I shouted at the two guards

so they wouldn't shoot me as I approached from the rear. They told me their land line was dead, but the next bunker over had a radio. I could see it about 300 meters away.

"Watch out for Concertina wire; the old line used to be about 100 yards away."

I thanked them and started at a dead run, seeing that I had 100 yards. Well, about 20 yards into my run I squarely hit a triple strand of Concertina wire! I fell right in, and I was stuck. Luckily, I had my flak jacket on.....

In the background, I could hear the two grunts laughing out loud. Boy, was I pissed! I still had to get the bulldozer.

"Get me the hell off!" I yelled, and they came to help pull me off.

From head to toe, except for my chest and back, I was covered with little gashes. I ran the rest of the way to the Amtrack,

turn to p 8 column 1

WE WERE THE ENEMY

Our jeep moved slowly along the crowded road. Highway 1 was always crowded. Bicycles, motobikes and Lambrettas filled with Vietnamese as well as our jeeps and 1/4 ton trucks and other equipment made for some strange highway traffic. Two different societies--the motorized U.S. Army and the Vietnamese peasants--were thrown together, getting in each other's way.

We finally reached the cut-off road to Phu Loi and turned off. Away from the traffic we were in a different world--the peaceful countryside. Officially, we had some business to take care of in Phu Loi, but unofficially the three of us just had some free time and wanted to get away from the base.

Lots of GIs have talked about how beautiful a country Vietnam is--it's true. Driving along that road was so peaceful. We only ran into a few American vehicles. Here and there one would be parked off the side of the road where a GI would be fooling around with a short-time girl.

Most of the people we saw were Vietnamese peasants going about their daily routine. Women walked along the side of the road in twos and threes. They all wore the traditional outfits: black silk pants with the wide-brimmed conical straw hats. Children could be seen playing in the dirt of the hamlets. Here and there an old man could be seen standing in the doorway of one of the wooden shacks.

That country was something else. We passed thick green forests and brightly painted Buddhist temples. Small green stalks were shooting up above the water in the rice paddies where the peasants were working alongside their buffalo. It was hard to believe that all this was in the middle of a war.

We finished our business at Phu Loi and headed back. Along the way we decided to stop at a village to get a drink of coconut milk. When we

pulled over to the side of the road, about fifteen or twenty villagers came up to and surrounded the jeep. A few were old ladies, but most were young children.

"Hey, GI, you want buy drink?"

"You want buy Coca Cola?"

The kids were cute. Some seemed to be very young. One climbed on my partner's lap in the front, and two girls got in the back seat with me.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," they said.

"How are you?" I asked.

They didn't answer. Either they didn't know any more English or they were too awed by these Americans and their big jeep. Cute. It was a nice day.

It all happened so fast. A young girl asked Jim in the front if he wanted to buy some melons.

"No thanks."

"Why not?" she asked.

"I don't want any."

"You have candy for me?"

(Was this a World War II movie? I wondered.) We didn't have any.

"You give me money," she said.

I was confused, surprised, hurt, on edge. The little girl told Jim, "You sonofabitch; Fuckin' GI." She walked around the jeep and kicked it a few times. The two little girls jumped out of the back seat. "Fuckin' GI's. Motherfucker bastards," the girl continued.

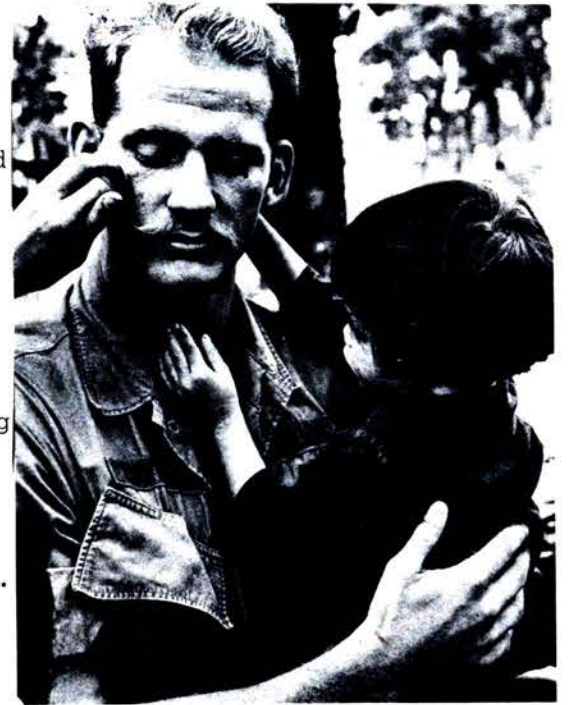
An old woman in the crowd cried out, "Motherfucker. Cock-sucker. No give us money. Bastards. Bastards!"

It was fast becoming ugly. The whole crowd was yelling at us. All these women and small children. A woman stuck her face right up to mine. "Fuck you, GI."

Jim gently but firmly picked up the kid in the front seat and placed her on the ground. He started the engine and moved the jeep slowly forward. Some women were in the way, but he

kept moving and they jumped aside, kicking the sides of the vehicle. Once past the edge of the crowd, he hit the gas pedal hard and sped away as the crowd screamed and threw fruit at us.

We rode on silently back to base, each lost in his thoughts. So much for winning hearts and minds. I had come to Vietnam thinking we were doing the right thing and helping these people fight the enemy. Because of this and a few other things I saw, I was coming to the horrible awakening that just maybe, we were the Enemy.



WE WERE THE SUPREME RACE:

"THESE PEOPLE WERE NOTHING"

I saw an officer complaining about a watered drink. He picked up the Vietnamese girl that he thought had watered the drink, grabbed her by the neck and lifted her up. He was about six-foot or more. Lifted her up, raised back, and slapped her hard. And you know what? They carried her out of that room. I don't know what happened to her. But everybody sat back down and started drinking. You know, nothing was thought about it. This happened all the time, abuse of the people. It was like we were uncaged animals. We were bored...bored and we wanted to do something, you know. It's like the guy coming to the big city and he

wants to do something. We were able to create inflation at Pleiku. As an analogy, it would be like you trying to purchase a regular \$100 apartment for \$300. Now that's beyond my means. I think it's beyond a lot of people's means. These people could not purchase apartments. They couldn't buy food anymore because we would pay whatever the people wanted. The prices just kept going, going, going. Finally, the general put Pleiku off limits because of the inflation, and because we were driving the women to prostitution so they could feed their kids. We were driving these people. And this is racism. We were the supreme race. These people were nothing.

continued from p 7 INCOMING

and burst into the light all covered with blood. The radio operator just looked at me like I just stepped out of the sands of Iwo Jima! Finally, I located the bulldozer, and started walk-

ing back to the fuel fire, which was burning with big 200 foot flames and nice, psychedelic colors.

"What a perfect target to sight in on", I thought.

Woosh! Whoosh! Two rounds. I was in the sand before they hit, but, sand in all those little cuts was no fun either. I hit the sand three more times before I reached my destination and the sergeant, who was barking out orders to the bulldozers.

"What the hell happened to you, Hippie?" the sergeant smiled.

"It's a long story, so how 'bout if I go to the aid station?"

"OK."

Twice more I had to hit the dirt before I reached the aid station. And, who was on duty? Some old lifer, who took one look at me, with my hippie beads and red-tinted sunglasses, and gave me the royal screw treatment. Alcohol to clean the wounds, without anything

to kill the chilling pain.

"No pain killers to hippies. You probably smoke dope."

That old lifer--I STILL have sadistic thoughts about him!

I left the aid station, alive and very wise to the fact that a radio man always carries his radio. And, that old lifer was right. I had a ten-pack stashed in the bunker that killed my pain, and made the fire that was burning itself out look real pretty.

THE DELTA FOX STRIKES AGAIN

The yellow Ford tractor bounced on the pierced steel planking that made up the runway at Vung-Tau Army Air Field. Hundreds and hundreds of yards of this rusty, OD green shit, like some giant tinkertoy for planes to land on. Here and there it was pock-marked from rockets or mortar rounds that had landed on it. The brass would run out the Vietnamese laborers to fill in the holes, with marshmallow fluff I think, because every time it rained it washed out the holes. We would laugh and say the laborers didn't care--"What the hell--they're the ones firin' this place up at night anyway."

I was pissed. It had to be about 100° and out on the PSP it was hot, really hot. Yentas had sent me out to get a Hydraulic unit and pull it into one of the the hanger shops. Christ, all the birds were out flying and wouldn't be in 'til late afternoon or evening and the damn thing could wait. Hell no! Not Yentas, the scrawny S.O.B. was the same rank as me--buck sergeant--but he had time in grade and would put on this show of authority for the other EM's in the shop. I could be sitting in the shade, shooting the shit with the other guys but he laid this on me, knowing I wouldn't push it on the other EM's. I guess I'm not the NCO caliber asshole type.

I hitched up the hydraulic mule to the tractor and pulled it toward the hanger. I saw the Army Otter land and bounce down the runway. The dude pulled the little green plane that looked like the Spirit of St. Louis, into one of our (the Air Force--popularly known as the Blue Screw) slots. I gave a shit. What the hell--all our birds were out anyway.

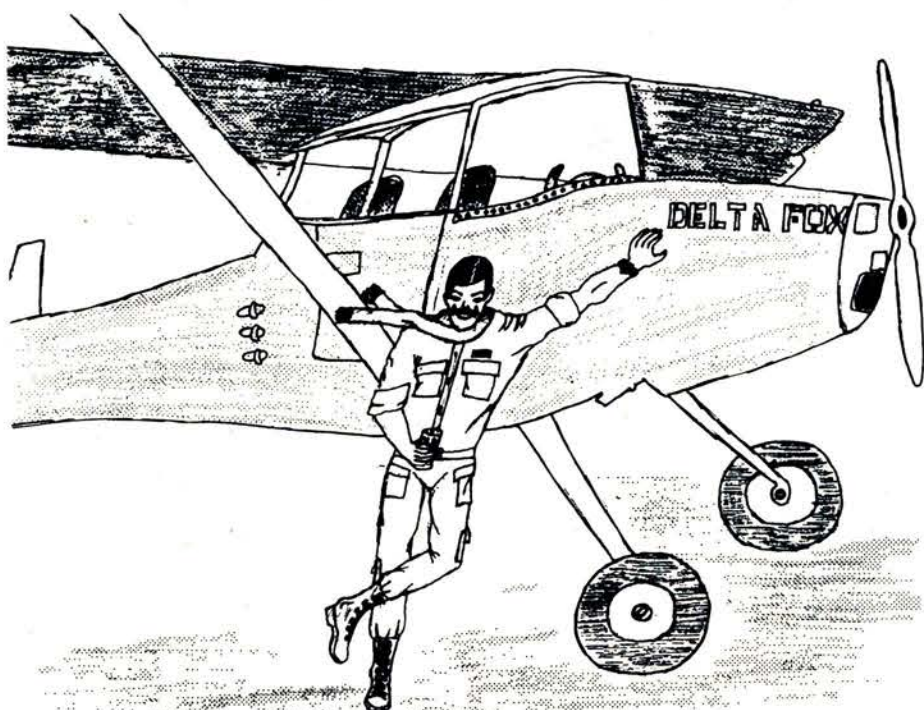
As I pulled into the hanger this lifer E-8 sticks his head out of the air-conditioned office upstairs and says, "Come up here, Airman."

"Sergeant", I yelled.

"OK, sergeant. Come up here."

"Jesus Christ!" I thought, "What now?" Shuffling up the stairs, I pushed open the control room door. "Goddamn, is it nice in here", I thought. "Air conditioned and all." I hoped these fat mf'ers would get pneumonia running in and out.

"Step over here, boy," (Screw You!); "How the hell



am I supposed to know you're an NCO," the lifer said. "You ain't got no sleeves for your chevrons." (Maybe I could get 'em tatooed on my arm!) "You ain't got no name tag, or Air Force tag, either, Sergeant; Are you in the Air Force?" ("Sometimes I wonder too," I thought as I stared at an intensely interesting trash can in the corner.) "Where's your hat, Sergeant?" ("If it was up your ass, you'd know!")

"Ah, I think it's in the tractor," I said.

"You're supposed to be covered at all times, Sergeant."

"Yeah, Sarge", I groaned.

"Have you been drinking, Sergeant?" ("Does a bear shit in the woods?") I was pretty disgusted at this point, so, spitting into the garbage can, I leaned over his desk about three feet from the pudgy little asshole, "Well, Sarge, what do you want me for?"

He got the message.

Getting a little flushed, he stuttered, "Well, uh, well, uh.. .("Get the shit out of your mouth".) "Sergeant, uh.....

"Davis", I added firmly.

"Well, uh, Sergeant Davis, we're going to give you an important mission." ("Oh, shit", I thought). "You see, Sergeant, we have an Army plane taking up one of our parking spaces. We want you to carry this written order for him to move it into the Army area."

Yentas, I'm going to kick your ass! You got me into this shit.

"And what if he won't go?" I said, taking the note.

"Use your authority to order him to move."

"Yeah, right."

I took the note and climbed into the tractor, trying to make it do a "wheely" going out of the hanger. "Christ!" I thought. "These Army warrant officers are crazy! What if he gets pissed and pulls a piece on me..... Well, I got a .45 under the seatNaw, I'd get into all kinds of shit, and maybe dead, too... What bullshit!" I stomped the gas pedal and roared across the PSP.

It was the Otter I saw earlier. As I pulled up next to it, I saw the pilot was gone. On the nose, right behind the prop were the words, painted in big yellow letters, "The Delta Fox". "Oh, Christ, I really got one now," I thought to myself. My suspicions were confirmed when the dude strolled around one of the hangers, and across the runway, sucking on a can of beer, with a case of cold ones under his arm.

He had on the OD green Army flight suit and flight glasses, but all similarity to military reality broke down there. His boots were obviously custom made, a brown Sam Browne belt with shoulder strap, an English Webley pistol, topped off with a leather flying cap, goggles, a white silk scarf, and a huge black handlebar moustache.

I was right! An Army warrant officer--a crazy Army warrant officer. What the hell war is he in? And what am I doing here? Oh, man. He's probably got a leather flying jacket in the cockpit, too.

As he got closer, I could see that he was about my age and obviously stoned out of his mind.

"Uhhh, hi there," I said.

"Hey man, what's going on?" he responded.

"Well, I was sorta told to come out here and, ah, tell you you gotta move your plane."

"I gotta what?" he said.

Oh, shit. Here we go, I thought. "Ah, the NCOIC said you gotta move it."

"Yeah, well, you know what I say about that, don't you?"

I said no, but I had a pretty good idea.

"Well, you tell 'em to go fuck himself", said the Delta Fox.

"Aw, man, I can't go in there and say that. I'm already in enough trouble with those lifers."

He popped open the door to the Otter and set the beer inside. "Shit, observing the war's hot work. I just stopped by to pick up a cool one, you know?"

Judging from the number of patches on the plane, it was hot work in more ways than one.

"Here, you want a beer?"

"Yeah, thanks." I pulled the churchkey out of my pocket and opened the beer, a rusty Black Label. "Well, anyway

here's the note they sent."

As I guzzled the beer, he read the note and smiled. "Here, take them this message from me." He wrote briefly on the side of the plane on the same paper they'd sent.

He folded it once and handed it to me. "OK, GI, can do?"

"No sweat, GI."

I climbed into the tractor as he popped another can and leaned on the fuselage drinking it.

The note read, "Fuck You--The Delta Fox."

When I handed it to the lifer and he read it, I thought he was going to have a cardiac arrest--and I would have to watch. His eyes bulged, veins stood out, and he turned five shades of red. Gasping, he bolted into an adjoining office, yelling, "Lieutenant, Lieutenant!" After a few seconds he puffed out with the scummy brown bar in tow, down the stairs, into a jeep, and roared out of the hanger.

Man, I had to see this! I ran and climbed into the tractor and fired out of the hanger myself. As the jeep got near the Otter, the Delta Fox fired it up and taxied it onto the runway. As he passed the jeep, he opened the side door and flipped the bird!

Rolling past me, he waved. I gave him the peace sign. Never saw him again.

I drove off and had a cold one to the Delta Fox.

"OLD SOLDIERS DON'T DIE...." IT'S THE YOUNG ONES WHO DO!

Tet, 1968, broke across Vietnam like a thunderbolt. The Viet Cong and NVA launched a major offensive that liberated major cities, claimed a major portion of the countryside, and sent American and allied troops reeling. It wasn't as if we did not know what was going to happen. In early December, our battalion had launched an offensive of its own in the jungles west of Tam Ky. On the operation we killed the Intelligence section of the 2nd NVA Division and captured in tact the plans for the Tet Offensive including overlays. It was an incredible coup that enabled us to bomb supply routes, station troops at strategic locations and build up our defenses.

Despite this advance knowledge and the fact that the Vietnamese attacked where the plans said they would, we were beaten back. 285,000 troops from the National Liberation Front broke the myth of American invincibility as half a million American, one and a half Saigon, and 100,000 Korean, Australian and Taiwanese troops were battered from one end of Vietnam to another. My unit, the 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry, 196th Brigade was put under command of the Marines outside of Da Nang. We, like others at Hue, Saigon and the Delta all felt the wrath of those fighting against the foreign invader and his mercenaries.

Our unit, the 196th, was developed especially for Vietnam. It was logistically self-sufficient so that we could be moved from one area to another without putting a strain on the unit we were being controlled by. This meant moving from one hot spot to another. We also lost a lot of our own men due to stupidity, incompetence and glory-hogging officers. And all this led to our becoming known as the 196th Light Suicide Brigade.

When Tet came we were sent to plug up a hole. Our whole battalion moved out on line early in the morning. We were looking for the Vietnamese before they could reach Da Nang proper. We found them--or they found us--as we reached the halfway mark of an open rice paddy area about 100 yards wide. A whole company of hardcore VC opened up; re-enforced by a rocket platoon they rained hell on the battalion from a dug-in position slightly rising out of the paddies. Most of the Battalion fell back, leaving seriously wounded and dead alike. A



small detachment made it to the VC trench but were cut to pieces.

The entire staff was assembled in the TOC (Tactical Operations Center), getting support from gunship assaults (helicopters), air support (Phantom jets) and artillery. The battalion commander issued orders trying to see if the line of Vietnamese could be breached or cracked. As the day wore on, 5 artillery batteries came in for support, gunships sprayed the area with rockets and machine gun fire, and 3 flights of Phantoms dropped fire and bombs on the guerrillas. The Vietnamese held. We took more casualties. Men died, equipment was destroyed. Despite our numbers, our superior firepower and equipment, they would not move.

We could not understand it. There was no doubt in our minds that under similar circumstances we would have fallen back. As a matter of fact that was always

a topic of conversation after an air strike--What the hell would we do if instead of F-14's, Mig's came screaming down? How would we get out? But then again we all kept short-timer calendars (marking off our 365 days in country) while the Vietnamese could not stop until they had kicked the foreigners out.

After 6 hours of intense fighting, we were losing, a fact taken in by the battalion commander, a West Point colonel. All of a sudden he decided he must talk to brigade headquarters and left. Next, the battalion executive officer, a West Point major, left "to see the colonel". He was followed by the Bn Operations Officer, also a West Point major, who had to "check personally with Bde operation." This left the supply officer, a West Point captain, and myself, a 20-year-old very junior 1st lieutenant, who was



acting intelligence officer and had only recently been pulled in from the field. Soon, the captain left to "arrange supplies". Here in the midst of the heaviest fighting of the war were and OCS junior-grade officer and assorted enlisted RTO's left to direct the battalion. It wasn't hard for us to grasp what was happening. The lifers sensed a defeat and like rats scurrying off a sinking ship, were looking to be out of the area when it happened. The lives of the men didn't matter, only finding a scapegoat and protecting that next promotion.

The battle continued. We took more casualties. The men who had been wounded and caught in the rice paddies were screaming, trapped between the crossfire of American and Vietnamese troops. It was only a matter of time until they were hit again or bled to death. The American troops who had made it back were cursing or crying. There was nothing they could do. To venture out into the open paddy was certain death.

Above all of this flew the Brigade Commander in his helicopter. He must have just seen the "Green Berets" because he came up with a plan which could have worked only in Hollywood. "Crawl on your bellies across the rice paddy until you reach the enemy, throw hand grenades and then run back!" It was suicide and the men refused to move. "Move out! Crawl, crawl!!" The men stayed put. "You are all cowards!" The men began to curse, not the Vietnamese but that fool colonel flying over them screaming into the radio. The colonel gave up his scheme but not before he had himself put in for the Silver Star for bravery for flying over the battlefield. And the men on the ground, fighting and dying in the mud? They got nothing. After all, they were "cowards". The fighting continued into the night. Under the cover of darkness the Vietnamese pulled out, taking their dead and wounded with them.

The next morning the battalion moved over the area, the battalion staff returned and the Brigade Commander's Silver Star was announced to his hometown papers before it even had time to clear channels.



My mother mailed me a newspaper clipping; it seems my unit had won a great victory outside of Da Nang with many enemy killed and a few American casualties.

"YEAR OF THE MONKEY" '69

My experiences in Vietnam began in 1969, popularly called the "Year of the Monkey" by the Vietnamese people according to their calendar. 1969 was when, at the same time Neil Armstrong was putting down historic footprints as the first man on the moon, me and my buddies were laying muddy tracks somewhere in Quang Tri Province in South Vietnam.

A couple of weeks later we read about the historic return as helicopters plucked the space capsule from the ocean, while we clambered aboard Chinooks from a sea of elephant grass. Neil and Co came home to huge crowds welcoming them from a job well done. Meanwhile, we were greeted by side-long glances and at best indifference for surviving and returning from a "trip" that should never have been taken.

In between these goings and comings in both cases, history had been made. Service to me and others had been seen as a shortcut to manhood and achievement in the eyes of our families and sweethearts. Instead, it had almost turned into a shortcut to death.

Not all my remembrances are bitter, though. The military, like some TV melodramas, becomes funny just when they want to be the most serious.

There was a sign at Edson firing range which read, "There is no more deadly weapon than a Marine and his rifle." But the infantry grunt was soon to find that in a combat situation there was "nothing more deadly than a 2nd Lieutenant with a map." To illustrate this, I remember two incidents that became so serious we had to laugh to relieve the tension.

Once under the command of a lieutenant new in country, our platoon (F, 2/9th Marines) was winding along a creek bed deep in a gorge. We'd move two steps and stop. Three feet and stop. This was a process you soon get used to in the military, but we got impatient and blamed the delays on the "boot looey." During one of the breaks, my friend D.T. took out his pen and began to write on leaves of a nearby tree. Sometime later we were told to backtrack out of the gorge. A short time later we began to move back. An excited order to pass the word came down the line. "Take cover, Take cover."



Sensing that we would make contact, we took positions and set up in anticipation of a firefight. But after being set for awhile, we discovered what had happened: the lieutenant had found the leaves D.T. had written on. One said, "Search and Destroy Bitch." Another read "Kill, V. C." When we learned what was causing the commotion, me and D.T. looked at each other and laughed, and wondered whether or not to own up to being authors of such blood-chilling messages. Finally, we did and the patrol moved on.

Another incident happened at night. We were supposed to

move to join up with another company. In reading the map, our captain would raise the compass close to his helmet and, of course, the medal of his helmet was throwing off the reading, though he didn't know it.

We walked past the position two or three times in the dark. Finally, we radioed the company and they lighted a light to guide us in. Unfortunately, nobody had told the guys standing line watch that we were coming in and when we made contact they fired a couple of shots our way and attempted

to set off a Claymore that luckily misfired.

A lot is made of combat action and the potential danger of "death by acute lead-poisoning" (also known as getting shot) but more can be said about the other killers--the bugs, the heat, the boredom of war, and the occasional hilarious misadventures that one remembers which give you that rare chance to laugh at the complete hopelessness of fighting that kind of a war.

VVAW WANTS YOU, TO TELL YOUR STORY

GREETINGS!

VVAW WANTS YOU! We'd like to draft you to write some recollections and send them to us.

At this point in time, the Vietnam War has become almost the "in" thing. There are movies and books and TV specials all around us, centered on Vietnam. Unfortunately, a lot of it is bullshit.

For example, take "The Deerhunter." How many of you came across the Viet Cong playing Russian roulette? Or how many of you are weirded out vets as in "Taxi Driver"? Or how many of you grunts think we could have won the War, like Westmoreland runs around the country to say?

It's the people who were there--the Vietnam vets--who can tell the story. Each of us knows a little bit of the story of Vietnam. We're trying to put it together so that the complete picture can be drawn.

There's more, too. We'd like to see military recollections beyond just Vietnam. We'd like stories about basic training, racism in the military, hassles with lifers and coming home.

Hopefully we can get enough of you to contribute and come out with a book to tell it like it was. Send your Recollections to:

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Box 20184, Chicago, ILL 60620

**Contributions to VVAW are
TAX DEDUCTIBLE !!**

BOOTS JUNGLE~O.D. TWO EACH

They tell you to get a haircut, trim your moustache, give you a few medals, and read a perfunctory thank you note. Forty hours later you get your shower, ETS pay, steak dinner and a fresh set of dress greens. "Thank you. Good-bye. We're proud of you."

Then what? Maybe you take your boots home with you. More than anything else, they tell your story--where you've been, what you have seen, how much there is to forget.

Before you left, your buddies asked, "How you gonna act?" Maybe you get a job, go to school, drink or smoke too much, or just leave your room. Everything's normal again. Right? You're back in the world. A lot of people think you were a fool, some want to buy you a beer, but most of all, they're uneasy around you.

For a year, you don't say anything. But every time you open your closet, your boots are staring at you and asking, "How you gonna act?" You're alone. Oh, you're back on the job, or in school, you've got friends, you are making some money, but you're alone. The newsmen, the politicians, the kids with all the answers, they don't know. They weren't there. Well, at least your country is proud of you. You've got this mimeographed letter that says so.

Then you hear that some guys are going down to Washington. Not students or carry-overs from the civil rights days, but guys just like you. You wonder what the angle is.

There isn't any. Just a lot of guys who are alone, going to school, working, drinking or smoking too much, or locked into their wheelchairs.

A year ago you put the boots, jungle fatigues, and boony cap away. Since then you've been a stranger, a part of nothing. Now, once again, you get your gear together. You put those boots on. They're part of you. They are what you've become.....

You're home now, and Washington was a long time ago. A thing most Americans want to forget. For a while, you were part of something. You were with the people who knew. But what good was it? The 101st is back in the A Shau, and guys are still coming home in rubber bags. You're a young man, but, for a moment, you thought this was your last hurrah.

Then you think of the guys. The ones with wheelchairs and steel arms; the ones with purple hearts, bronze and silver stars, the guys who "hacked" it. Their hair is longer, some have beards, but it won't hide who they are. No, this one time, America, you can't write them off because of long hair and beards. You've known these guys for a lifetime. You clenched a fist in the history of that year and the time after "thank you, good-bye, we're proud of you" was said. It's time you listened, America! There are thousand of us walking and hobbling around. You can't avoid us because we're no longer faceless--we're different. You see, we've got those boots in our closets.



E RANK & FILE'S STORY



of the Bonus March fought the military every inch of s, the sabres, and the tanks.

already led several small demonstrations. But the idea caught on, far beyond the dreams of the original organizers. From around the country, vets banded together and started for Washington. They had no jobs, nothing to keep them at home; their families were starving. And here was, for many of them, a chance to let Congress hear their side of the story.

By mid-June there were 25,000 vets and their families in Washington. They'd commandeered railroad cars, fought with police, been fed by friendly farmers and threatened by State governors. Despite everything, they'd persisted and were neither scared away nor bought off.

In makeshift camps, and buildings seized from the government, they got by in the nation's capital. They lobbied and marched, got promises from frightened Congressmen. The military was called out but refused to fire on veterans. But finally, when push came to shove, the Congress voted with the monied interests and denied the vets their Bonus. And President Hoover, who saw a revolution in the making, brought in special troops who had not been close to Washington during the weeks of the vets' struggle.

Under Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff, and his aide, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and tank commander George Patton, the military was used to force the vets out of Washington. Though they fought back as best they could, the bricks and stones of the vets were no match for Patton's tanks or the bayonets of the troops. The vets were forced out, two men losing their lives in the fight to get what was rightfully theirs.

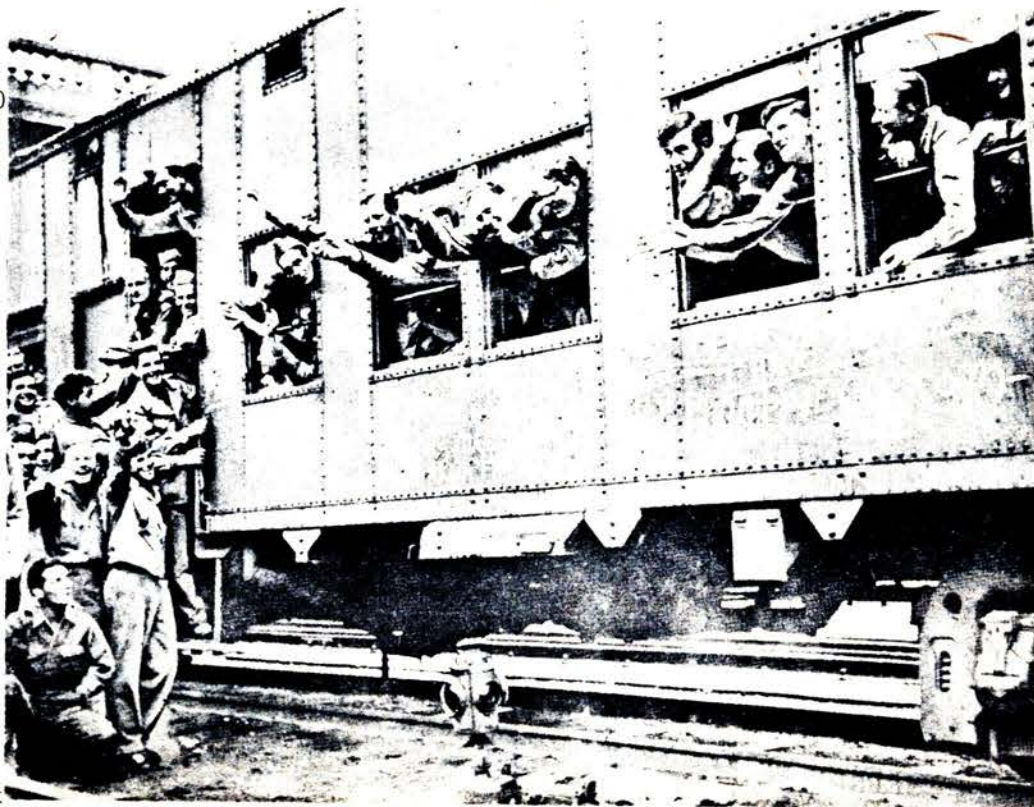
Unlike the American army in World War I, the Bonus army was integrated. And, though it was driven out of the capital, it won--the Bonus was paid and the basis was laid for unemployment insurance, another demand of the vets.

The government tried another approach at the end of World War II when they were faced with up to 14 million vets suddenly flooding the U.S. The U.S. was sitting on top of the world since none of the war had been fought on U.S. soil. The government could afford to try to buy off veterans. Before the war was over, Congress had passed the GI Bill; when housing became a major issue, old barracks were rapidly transformed into homes--which still

dot some college campuses. In short, the government could afford to give vets what was necessary to keep them quiet, if not content. Since that time, with the change in the position of the U.S. in the world, the history of the government and its veterans shows the govern-

vets, particularly around housing, but for white veterans (minority vets had other problems) they were in fact the "mainstream" that Carter now likes to talk about.

Only five years after the end of World War II, U.S. imperial-



At the end of World War II, GIs demanded to come home. Statements on the rail car say, "Stick with Mac and you'll never get back."

ment attempting to take back all it gave to World War II vets with more recent veterans trying to hold on. That's why, although the government, until recently, couldn't do away with the GI Bill the Bill today is more than 200% less in terms of buying power than it was in 1946.

The big plan of the World War II government to deal with veterans, however, never did get going. That was to keep the vets as GIs, moving veterans from the European theater of operations to the Pacific where they could be used in China in support of Chiang Kai-Shek to stop the Revolution which was well under way. These plans ran afoul of the American GI--the "Back Home" movement sprang up both in Europe and in the Pacific theatre, and the U.S. troops were in fact brought back home. Millions went to school; millions used the GI home loans at a time when housing was in desperately short supply. Millions, too, joined the American Legion and VFW as places where they could socialize with their friends (unlike Vietnam, almost everyone of military age was in fact in the military). The American Veterans Movement had some successes in organizing

ism tried to flex its new-found muscles in Korea. Vets of that war came back to McCarthyism, red scares and an era of Eisenhower do-nothing-ness. And so it was the war in Vietnam which once again energized the movement of veterans in their struggle against the government. For the role played by VVAW in that struggle, see the VVAW History in the center section of this paper.

That struggle is far from over. It has stretches far beyond vets and even their families and, with activities planned for Vietnam Veterans Week, shows no sign of stopping.



During Dewey Canyon III Vietnam vet throws medal at Capitol steps

EDITORIAL

THE DRAFT

Demonstrations against the draft in D.C. Congress debating "service to country." It's 1968--but no, it is actually 1979. It's all beginning again. The voluntary army is a bust; the "adventure, not a job," etc isn't making it. So it's back to involuntary servitude. Of course there will be appropriate exemptions for essential occupations like the son of a congressman or heir to Standard Oil. But everyone else will have to do his (and perhaps her) duty.

VVAW stands 100% against this latest attempt to crank up the war machine. The draft is merely a new move toward war, not the other way around as they would like us to believe. And it is not a duty required by citizenship; if it were, 60% of Congress and 95% of Congressional offspring would have to register as aliens.

The draft won't be substantially changed from the time of the Vietnam War. Neither will the purpose of the military. VVAW opposes even the first step, the registration of 18-year olds. The purpose of registration is induction, nothing more. Strangely enough, registration will begin after the 1980 elections. Once again our political leaders put re-election first, "conviction," second.

Lest Congress get the wrong idea and think we are against the U.S. fighting another war out of pacifism or a fear of combat, let us put forward our position on the military and the draft: we propose that all who will profit most from another war--the corporation heads, the politicians who declare it, and the generals who are supposed to lead it--that these people volunteer for the front lines, right in front of the rest of us. Let them be first into the breach, and they need not worry; we will point our guns in the direction of the enemy.



Cont. from p.3 AGENT ORANGE

treatment and disability payments for all who were exposed to Agent Orange. Environmental groups also took up the fight (Agent Orange, in a domestic version, had been used for years on forests and crop lands, and the fight to get the Environmental Protection Agency to ban its use had begun years earlier.)

Of course, the V.A. moved slowly on the issue. At first they refused to recognize the problems. Then they said that it may have affected a limited number of vets. (Of course it will cost them bucks to deal with the problem.) Since then, A Vietnam vet in New York, Paul Reutersham, waged a campaign to get 100% disability for his Agent Orange caused liver cancer. In a well publicized campaign, he won the disability just before he died.

Things have begun to move. The Environmental Protection Agency banned use of one of the main ingredients in Agent Orange. Lawyers have sued the chemical companies which produced dioxin in behalf of Reutersham's family and on behalf of three veterans in Chicago. The suit demands that the chemical companies set up a fund to reimburse the V.A. and other appropriate agencies for the expenses of dealing with the victims of the defoliant; estimates set the possible fund as high as \$4.2 billion. Scientists and medical experts are conducting tests to learn more about dioxin poisoning. Agent Orange Victims International was formed. And while there is, as yet, no solution to the physical problems facing many Agent Orange victims, millions of veterans now at least know the probable cause of their problems.

Recently, Representative Bennett Stewart requested a General Accounting Office study on Agent Orange. The GAO did the study and found that while long term effects were not known, there was every indication that Vietnam vets were suffering from long-term effects of dioxin. The GAO concluded that the Defense Department should survey Vietnam vets to identify those who may suffer long-term effects from Agent Orange. If these recommendations are followed up on it could mean that the Defense Department would begin



A South Vietnamese jungle after Agent Orange.

to correlate their tapes which could point out, first, where Agent Orange was sprayed and, second, what units (and what individuals) were in those areas during that period of time. As VVAW said when we began the campaign to obtain testing and treatment for Agent Orange, it's the responsibility of the government which sent us off to Vietnam in the first place to let veterans know they may be victims. Too long has the V.A. used the tactic of shoving the burden on the vet to "prove" that he or she was exposed.

The Defense Department and the V.A. both claim that they don't know enough to act. Either they do know enough and are trying to cover it up, or they aren't trying to know enough. It's just like the 1950's when vets were used as guinea pigs in radiation experiments. The government took so long to reveal their information because it would have cost them some bucks spent on treatment--and because they didn't want it generally known how this country treats its soldiers.

The V.A. claims ignorance,

but public pressure and the insistence of veterans has forced them to begin to act. They claim they are working on it, but what they have done is to hire Dr Holder to advise them on testing for Agent Orange exposure. Dr Holder works for Dow Chemical Company; Dow is one of the companies being sued as a result of its production of dioxin--which it fervently claims is harmless!

To show its concern for the problems of vets exposed to Agent Orange, the V.A. in Chicago transferred Maude De Victor (the V.A. worker who broke the story in the first place) to the V.A.'s version of Siberia where she now deals with home loans. And a "blue-ribbon" panel of experts which will advise the government on Agent Orange does not have one scientist on it who has stated his suspicions of Agent Orange, though once again Dow Chemical is amply represented.

In other words, it took a lot of effort to get the V.A. to move in the first place. Now it's going to take a whole lot more to get them to move off first base.



Agent Orange Symptoms include:

- *Numbness in fingers or toes
- *Skin rash, either permanent or temporary.
- *Excessive fatigue
- *Deformed children
- *Balding
- *Excessive nervousness
- *Decreased sex drive
- *Some forms of cancer--use of Agent Orange in the U.S. has produced skin cancers particularly.

PO WORKERS FIGHT BACK

AMNESTY
FOR THE 200 FIRED
POSTAL WORKERS
NOW



Last July a couple of thousand postal workers walked off their jobs in New York and in California when the contract between postal workers and the U.S. Postal Service expired. The walkout protested the peanuts the government was offering to the postal unions, and the failure to come to an agreement on an acceptable new contract.

As a result of this action--refusing to work without a contract--over 200 postal workers were fired from the bulk facility for New York City. This firing was an attempt on the part of the government to get rid of some of the most militant postal workers, since they were in the midst of the job action. More than this, it was an attempt to punish a group of workers who were asking for a decent wage increase to keep up with inflation--well over 7% at a time before Carter's guidelines had even been put out.

Since then postal workers and supporters have been pushing for amnesty for the fired workers. Centered in the New York/New Jersey area there have been demonstration and rallies demanding amnesty.

On February 27 rallies were held at many post offices around the country for Amnesty Day. In the courts, the workers and the American Postal Workers Union have asked for an injunction to get the jobs back. However,

judges keep continuing the case, hoping that the Postal Service will settle it by itself.

At this point public pressure has resulted in the rehiring of 30 workers, those who were picketing off their shift and thus not in violation of the federal law which prohibits strikes by federal employees. Plans for the future include a sit-in at the headquarters of the Postal Service in Washington in late May.

More than just the jobs of fired postal workers is at stake. Abolishing the right to strike for postal workers meant, simply, that the workers no longer had a lever to use against the Postal Service. Knowing that, the Postal Service had no intention of giving the workers a reasonable contract. The nature of the contract offer at the time the workers walked out is demonstrated by the large majority of postal workers who resoundingly voted the contract down. But a renegotiation did not bring large gains, in part because the workers did not have the ability to use the biggest weapon in the arsenal of U.S. workers, the strike. For those who did use that weapon, the government came down as hard as they could, which is one more reason support for the fired workers is essential.

To contribute to the Defense Fund for Fired Workers:

P.O.W. (Post Office Worker)
317 Grove Street, Room 5
Jersey City, NJ 07302



FRAGGIN'

Sp 5 Willy(Ret.)



The Army seems to have a new problem: Women! Actually, that's an old problem. Actually, women are not a problem at all for most people--just the Army. Recently more and more women have joined the military services and more have signed up. A woman now has command of a ship--a Coast Guard Cutter--and more are spread through the ranks. The Army can't get used to this. They're still back in the 5th century where the woman's duty was to service the troops before they went marching off to conquer the world.

A recent Army study showed--horror of horrors--a "creeping advance of sex fraternization throughout the Army." The Army wants a crack-down on these grim creepers. The report gave some examples of the intolerable, unholy fraternization. Some of the worst were "socialization, courting and marriage!"

The study even showed that some women actually "relished the attention heaped upon them." Things like this and the other "inappropriate relationships" mentioned can have a serious effect on the morale and discipline of the Army.

The report did make one pertinent point. It said that some supervisors "threaten women with non promotion for failure to yield to their social desires." This can be unfair to a woman. If her CO or NCO socially desires to drink a chocolate milk shake (two straws) with her, she should not be punished because she doesn't socially desire to drink a milk shake.

The Army is especially worried that dating may occur between people of different ranks. Worst of all it may even occur between officers and enlisted people. There goes the discipline and morale out the boudoir window. Officers could even attract the germs off enlisted persons.

So the Army is cracking down on all these perverted fraternizers. The crackdown hit PFC Margarette Braman and PVT Tracy Joe Lathrop at Fort Sill. It seems that Braman got caught taking a shower in Lathrop's barracks. That was a no-no, so the Army got tough. In the interest of morale and discipline, Braman and Lathrop were put in jail the week of their honeymoon. Separate cells, of course.

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GRENADE Of The Month

GRENADE OF THE MONTH

This month's grenade sends shrapnel to three men: Vice-Admiral George Kinnear, Commander of the Atlantic Fleet Carrier Force; Rear Admiral Robert F. Dunn, Commander of Carrier Group 8; and Captain William Meyer, CO of the aircraft carrier "America."

In February a cross was burned on the mess deck of the carrier "America." Two days later, Black Airman Apprentice Anthony Randole was "accidentally" run over by a plane in tow. A few days later some degenerates were seen running around wearing white sheets.

Kinnear and Dunn headed an investigation which--lo and behold--found no major problems. "We've honestly looked into these incidents and didn't see anything," Kinnear said. "I don't think there is any foundation for concern...."

Captain Meyer told a group of Black seamen that "if they thought (Randole's death) was related to anything else, they were quite wrong."

Kinnear and Dunn look and can't see. Meyer says nothing is related to nothing. Cowards in white robes, cross-burnings, lynchings and racism over the last hundred years mean nothing. It all just happens. The Navy can't "see" the Klan or any connection between events. In the meantime, the "America" is back at sea.

'DEER HUNTER' IS GOOD DRAMA, BUT BAD HISTORY

I was in Saigon at noon April 30 four years ago, when the old order rolled over and died.

The Americans were gone soon after dawn, the last of them dashing across the U.S. Embassy roof to a helicopter and kicking away Saigonese who grabbed at their boots. I watched the North Vietnamese forces move into the city, green-clad foot soldiers methodically navigating the streets clogged with slow-moving traffic. It was the last act of the longest-running war of this century.

I am now discovering that increasing numbers of Americans believe that the last act of the war took place in a sinister back room somewhere in Saigon, where greedy Chinese gamblers were exhorting a glazed-eyed American GI to blow his head off. Had I as a working reporter missed such a vivid human-interest story on the last day of the war, I might have opted for a similar fate.

That particularly bloody version of the war's end comes in the Oscar-winning "The Deer Hunter." It's the story of three steelworkers whose primary activity seems to be drinking and hunting. Robert De Niro is deemed the most admirable member of the trio because he kills his deer with one clear shot. It is all in the best tradition of Hemingway machismo. Then they go off to Vietnam where they are captured and tortured by the Viet Cong, who force them to compete against each other in a grisly game of Russian roulette. . . .

When I first saw the movie at a screening last autumn, one of my liberal colleagues stamped out muttering "fascist trash" when sneering Viet Cong soldiers were depicted enthusiastically torturing American prisoners of war. While I was personally troubled by much of what I saw that night, the sheer power of the film's photographic imagery, particularly the agonizing torture scenes, stunned me into mute acceptance of Hollywood's divine right to drench us in fictional nightmares.

I comment today not to challenge those who have acclaimed "The Deer Hunter" and De Niro and who have packed theaters. What disturbs me is that audiences and critics seem to have found much more historical truth and significance than there



Reality vs. movies. South Vietnamese General Loan (now living in the US) blows out brains of suspected VC.

really is in the saga. Instead of viewing "The Deer Hunter" as the spectacularly fevered product of an ambitious film director (Michael Cimino), well-schooled in the cinematic arts of blood-letting, . . . they are interpreting his film as a deep historical truth, something on the order of the TV epic, The Holocaust's portrayal of the Nazi persecution of the Jews.

While Holocaust dealt with controversial fact, the attempted extermination of a whole race, "The Deer Hunter" deals in controversial fiction.

I have found that enthusiasts are genuinely hurt when I tell them that while Vietnam had all manners of violence, including self-immolating Buddhist monks, fire-bombings, rape, deception, and massacres like My Lai in its 20 years of war, there was not a single recorded case of Russian roulette, not in the voluminous files of the Associated Press anyway, or in my experience either. The central metaphor of the movie is simply a bloody lie. "The Deer Hunter" is no more a historically valid comment on the American experience in Vietnam than was "The Godfather" an accurate history of the typical Italian immigrant family.

But Cimino defends his creative rights. During the filming in Thailand, he told reporters: "War is war. Vietnam is no different from the Crusades. It's a question of survival, friendship and courage, and what happens to these things in people under stress." But they didn't play Russian roulette in the Crusades either.

Even more preposterous than using Russian roulette as his metaphor is the morally irrespon-

sible way that Cimino casually telescopes the years of the Vietnam conflict into a convenient backdrop for his bizarre macho heroics. So is history laundered. Absent are the disillusion at home, the bitterness of those who served, the destruction of a country and any other factors that might lessen his epic theme.

Most upsetting is the callous disregard of the war's impact on the Vietnamese. While Cimino places the trauma of Americans at the center of his concern, his portrayal of the Vietnamese people as inhuman monsters, for whom life is cheap, perpetuates the racist stereotype that sustained much of America's involvement in Indochina.

The audience cares about the three Americans because they are shown to have families and friendships and feelings. When they are hurt, the audience hungers for vengeance. Yet it is unnerving to sit in a movie theater in the United States in the last year of the 1970s and hear young audiences, for whom the war is an all-but-forgotten memory, roar their approval as De Niro kills his Vietnamese tormentors. Yet no other feeling is possible, for Cimino presents every single Vietnamese as a cardboard caricature. They are not real people and are, therefore, easy to hate--and it is all too easy to applaud their murder.

Cimino's depiction of the Vietnamese mortally wounds the moral integrity of "The Deer Hunter." Cimino seems to be saying: "Yes, war is hell, but especially for young, white Americans." "The Deer Hunter" is inescapably a movie about archetypes. When a director as self-conscious, indeed as pretentious, as Cimino puts those

three young Americans on a 70 mm silver screen in living color they stand for all Americans. The portrayal of the Vietnamese similarly involves archetypes. Unfortunately, it is a lie.

There are a few real moments. Helicopters bucked and strained against the pull of gravity. Refugees streamed in fearful confusion down oil-stained roads. Panicked crowds stormed the U.S. Embassy walls. But when Cimino inserts actual ABC News footage of the last hours of the war, he is bending esthetic license to its limit. Such use of actual film clips imparts a gloss of historical accuracy to the entire film. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In his artistic selfishness, Cimino seems oblivious to the nation's underlying anxiety about the Vietnam experience and its need for explanations. Rather than applauding his directorial cleverness, the New York audiences I observed were glorying in "The Deer Hunter," partly because of the simple, satisfying answers that it gave to the tough questions.

In "The Deer Hunter," the enemies in Vietnam are ugly, sadistic torturers, while the American boys are noble; the Saigonese are greedy gamblers willing to bet on an American's blowing his brains out--they show no concern over the imminent collapse of their city. The movie was touted as being a major antiwar film, but it is packed with simplistic answers to some of our most enduring anxieties.

Some critics were harsh on "Coming Home" because they felt that the plot, which had housewife Jane Fonda bidding farewell to her gung-ho Marine husband as he went off to the war, and then having a love affair with paraplegic Voight while her husband was away, was just too much like soap opera. Historically speaking, "Coming Home" is an honest attempt to come to terms with one agonizing aspect of the war. And speaking personally, I would rather leave a theater with the suds of "Coming Home" in my mouth than the ashes of the "Deer Hunter." (The review reprinted above is taken from Peter Arnett who won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Vietnam in 1966. The article was originally written for the Los Angeles Times.)