

30 YEARS



ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

Founded in 1967, VVAW Pioneered
Post Traumatic Stress Rap Groups and
Work on Agent Orange
From the 60's to the 90's
30 Years of Struggle for Veterans, Peace and Justice

May 16 & 17, 1997
Chicago, Illinois

Welcome from the National Office

Greetings to all members, friends, and supporters of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), and welcome to the events that mark our 30th Anniversary in the continuing struggle for peace and social justice!

In June 1967, six Vietnam veterans marched in an antiwar demonstration in New York under a hastily-made banner which proclaimed them "Vietnam Veterans Against the War." I am sure none of them thought VVAW as an organization would be around any longer than it took to end that immoral and illegal war against the Vietnamese people. Yet, here we are, thirty years on, older and grayer (those of us with hair) and still determined to fight for justice and peace. Many ask why we are still around, and still crazy, after all these years.

We are still here because of the things we did that were correct in the social justice struggle. For

example, we were the first veterans' group to talk about Agent Orange and PTSD back in 1971, and in 1990, we were the first to warn about what would occur if chemicals and experimental vaccines were used on our own troops in the Persian Gulf.



We are still around because VVAW was always an organization of committed people, including tens of thousands of veterans in the early 1970s, who believed in the veteran and GI movement, and this organization always was and is more than its leaders. Those of us in the National Office and the

Regional Coordinators are just people who serve the other members of the organization, and, whether the leadership was always correct or not, VVAW members always managed to find the correct direction in any struggle.

Unlike many other organizations that were formed around the Vietnam war, VVAW never disappeared during the past thirty years.

Why? We had a solid base in members and friends who kept on trucking. We learned how to work through differences, to work on the basis of consensus, on the basis of "what unites us is greater than what divides us." This has allowed us to continue, without much financial support from outside of the organization, working for veterans of all eras, for peace and real social justice, since 1967.

This is why we are celebrating this weekend, and we thank all of you for joining with us in this occasion. The struggle continues!

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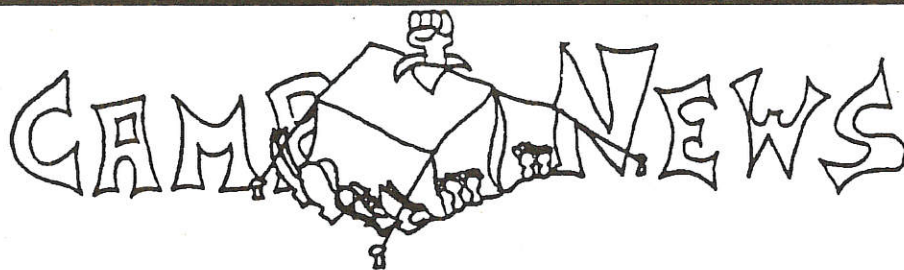
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*Damato, Romo, Miller and
a cast of thousands*

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A SAINT'S DAY—The anniversary of St. Frances X. Cabrini feast



**To All Our VVAW Friends:
We Salute 30 Years Of Fighting For
Veterans, Peace, and Justice!**

Love And Best Wishes,
Emily Friedman, Annie Luginbill, and Ellie Mattern Shunas
- "Survivors" -

Chicago Area Military Project (CAMP/CAMP News)
& VVAW's National Office for Service Counseling
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Maude DeVactor, Mayor Harold Washington & Virg McFadden - VVAW rally, Chicago, 1986



1995 VVAW National Meeting - Chicago

"Don't forget your history,
Know your destiny."

- Bob Marley

Thanks to VVAW for never letting us forget.

Dave, Pat, Nick & Alex Kettenhofen



Kent State 1990 - Dave Kettenhoffen

**A WWII VET
STANDS WITH
VVAW**

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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

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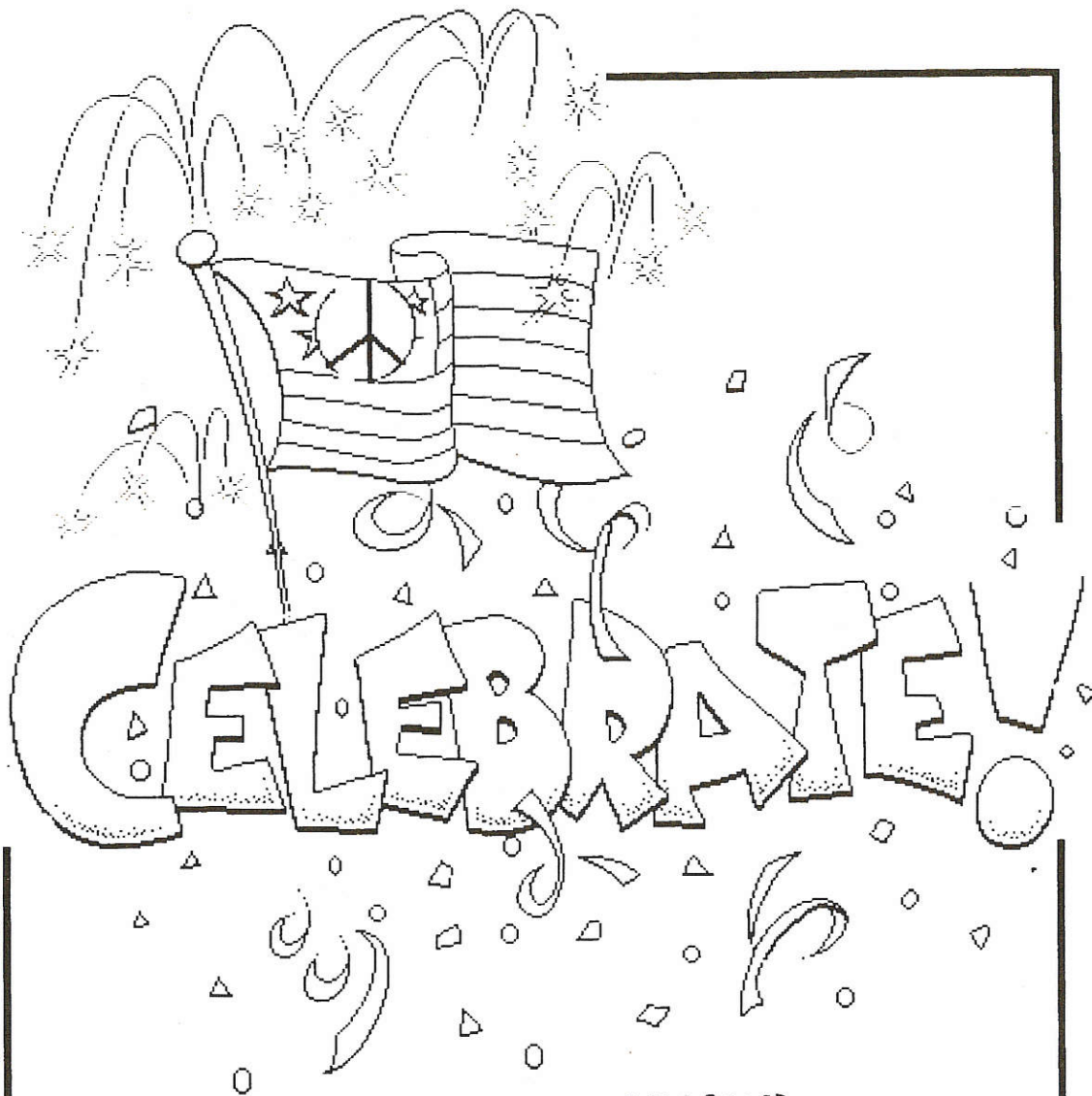
**A McCLOSKEY
MEMORIAL TRIBUTE**

**FROM ALL THE VVAW
CAMPERS DRENCHED BY
THE RESULTS OF A
CAMPFIRE RAIN DANCE:**

"FUCK YOU, JACK!"

Jeanne Friedman

**former
California
coordinator,
Vietnam Veterans
Against the War**



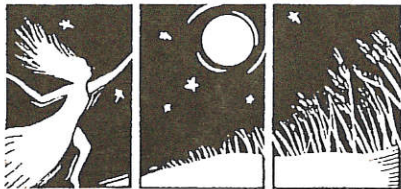
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for 30 years... one struggle, many fronts...

mark z. hartford
us army 1966 - 1969
co-coordinator, california VVAW,
1970 - 1974



Kim Phuc with Pershing Family - Chicago, 1996

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and
Future.**

History of the U.S. War in Vietnam

By Barry Romo, Peter Zastrow, and Joe Miller
National Co-Coordiators, VVAW, Inc.

More than any U.S. war since the Civil War, Vietnam divided America and made us reevaluate our society.

By any standard, the American effort in Southeast Asia was a major conflict. Money, bombs and men were fed into a meat grinder whose purpose seemed to change at every Presidential press conference. With Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris movies, the Academy Award for "Platoon," our involvement in Central America, and the war in the Persian Gulf, more and more people continue to ask questions about the history and lessons of the war in Vietnam.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam did not begin in the 1960's or even the 1940's, but in 1845. That's right — 1845. In that year the people of Da Nang arrested a French missionary bishop for breaking local laws. The U.S. commander of "Old Ironsides" (the U.S.S. Constitution) landed U.S. Navy and Marines in support of French efforts to reclaim their missionary. Mad Jack Percival, the ship's captain, fired into the city of Da Nang, killing 3 dozen Vietnamese, wounding more, and taking the local mandarins hostage. He then demanded that the Catholic Bishop be freed in exchange for his hostages. The Vietnamese were unimpressed. They refused his demand and waited. "Mad Jack" got tired of waiting, released his hostages, and sailed away leaving the Bishop behind. One hundred and thirty years later, Americans would again

become tired of their involvement and leave Vietnam. Unfortunately we would leave behind far more than 3 dozen dead.

U.S. involvement in Vietnam during World War II saw the Vietnamese as our allies. A group of OSS agents (later to become the CIA) made contact with anti-Japanese guerrillas in Southeast Asia. The French who had controlled the area were the "Vichy" French who, with their Nazi leanings, supported the Japanese. Of the different Vietnamese nationalists, only the Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh led the national network of underground organizations and guerrillas fighting.

Ho Chi Minh met with the U.S. operative, Major Patti, and they agreed on joint anti-Japanese actions. The U.S. dropped supplies behind the lines to Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh helped Americans downed behind Japanese lines. The first American advisors helped train, equip and arm the Viet Minh. In 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed with Ho Chi Minh as the first President. American planes flew over Hanoi in celebration of the founding. The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence echoed that of the U.S.: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...This immortal statement is extracted from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of

America in 1776. Understood in the broader sense this means: All people on earth are born equal. Every person has the right to live, to be happy, and free."

Ho Chi Minh asked the Americans to honor their commitment to independence, citing the Atlantic Charter and the U.N. Charter on self-determination. However, by the end of the war, the U.S. government had begun to redirect its foreign policy from the wartime goal of the liberation of all occupied countries and colonies to the postwar anti-communist crusade which became the Cold War. In France, where communists had led the resistance to the Nazi occupation, American policy supported General Charles de Gaulle and his anti-communist "Free French." De Gaulle aimed to restore the glory of France, which meant the return of all former French colonies. U.S. relations with the Vietnamese turned sour. President Truman refused to answer letters or cables from Ho. Instead, the U.S. began to ship military aid to the French forces in Indochina.

The French return to their former colony was not easy. First, they had to arm and use former Japanese POWs to establish a foothold; not a move fated to win much popular support. They were able to retake towns but not the countryside. In 1950, General Giap launched a general offensive against the French which, though it

continued on next page

History of the U.S. War in Vietnam

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was premature, resulted in 6,000 French killed or captured. France turned to the U.S. for more aid. At first it was \$10 million a year but it grew to \$1 billion (80% of the cost of the war) by 1954. That year, the French were decisively defeated at Dien Bien Phu. Although the French government described Dien Bien Phu as a "victory," it was more truly portrayed by commentator Bernard Fall as France's "greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm died at Quebec."

With the French out, the U.S. moved in. According to international agreement, Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into north and south, with free elections to take place nationwide in 1956.

Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese Catholic living in Europe, was chosen Premier of South Vietnam, which was 95% Buddhist. The U.S. set up MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) to train a "nationalistic" Vietnamese force of a quarter of a million men. This force was largely made up of Vietnamese who had fought for the French. In 1956 the U.S. refused to go along with the elections because, in the words of President Eisenhower, "Possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Chief of State Bao Dai." U.S. involvement continued and so did U.S. money and men. American presence rose to 500 under Eisenhower and grew to 15,000 under Kennedy. But Diem continued to be in trouble: former Viet Minh cadres helped to support a number of groups to

oppose Diem and the French successor in Vietnam — the U.S.

The similarity between the French and the U.S. forces in Vietnam was, from the Vietnamese point of view, more than that both were foreign oppressors. Even our uniforms were similar, right down to the green berets. In fact, U.S.

troops were known as "Frenchmen with money."

Buddhist unrest grew in the cities. In the countryside the National Liberation Front (the NLF, called the Viet Cong or VC by Diem and the U.S.) were killing Diem's cronies and consolidating power. The U.S. decided to back a



Bleeding for the Cause - Danny Friedman, 1974 VVAW Demo

coup of Vietnamese generals to topple Diem. Not only did the generals get rid of Diem and assassinate him, they also went on to overthrow one another on a regular basis.

The situation was desperate. More and more American troops were put in to replace Saigon troops who could not, or would not, get involved in the fighting. The Saigon government had no real base other than the aid it got from the U.S., and we got exactly what we paid for: pimps, prostitutes, cowards and gangsters, masquerading as a government and a military.

This was bad enough. But it was coupled with the incredible arrogance on the part of the U.S. government and military leaders. They could not believe that Asians could stand up to the might and technology of the U.S. As the war progressed, we went from one stage to another without any real change in the situation. Strategic hamlets, Vietnamization, search and destroy, pacification: all these programs had been tried by the French, but somehow the U.S. thought we could make them work. They did not.

The American people were not being told of the plans or the policies of the U.S. government. To the contrary: Lyndon Johnson ran as a peace candidate in 1964, saying, "I won't send American boys to do the fighting for Asian troops." Americans were told that Vietnam was two countries (omitting some 2,000 years of history) and that the North was invading the South. And none of the information given out did anything to answer the questions of the 19-year-old American fighting the guerrillas in

South Vietnam. While Saigon's leaders were talked about as the Vietnamese versions of Jefferson and Lincoln, we saw the drug pushing, the black marketeering and the torture cells.

Somehow in order to save Vietnam we had to destroy it. Civilian casualties from U.S. actions ran from 100,000 in 1965 up to 300,000 in 1968, just from bombing and artillery. In addition, millions upon millions of gallons of herbicides were sprayed over 6



million acres of land. We bombed hospitals to save orphans, we sprayed Agent Orange and destroyed the land in order to save crops, we burned hamlets to save villages and turned Vietnam into a huge whorehouse in order to save Vietnam from Communism.

As GIs in Vietnam we saw the often stark realities of Vietnam and could compare them to the "truth" the American people were being told. We saw the corrupt Saigon generals making money hand over fist while their armies would not fight. We saw the hate in the eyes of the local villagers who never welcomed us as "liberators" bringing us bouquets of flowers as we had seen in World War II movies. The only Vietnamese who seemed to want us there wanted greenbacks in return for drugs, booze or

women, or all three. We also saw the enemy fight and had to admire both his bravery and tenacity in taking on U.S. tanks, planes and helicopters with grenades and rifles. We supposedly valued human life while our enemy did not. Yet we paid the owners of the Michelin plantations \$600 for each rubber tree we damaged, while the family of a slain Vietnamese child got no more than \$120 in payment for a life.

We fought up hills, winning what the press called "victories," but we saw half our friends die so that the company body count could go up to enhance the career of some lifer officer. And then we'd give up the hill and have to fight for it again later on. The war was not something to be won or lost by the grunt, but 365 days to be survived.

The U.S. tried everything to win. We dropped more than three times the total tonnage of bombs dropped by both sides in World War II. We conducted "Operation Phoenix" during which the CIA and the Saigon government killed up to 40,000 suspected members of the Viet Cong, according to Douglas Valentine. We defoliated 10% of the land, much of it permanently. We bombed, bribed, shot, killed and burned for more than 10 years at a cost of \$170 billion (and a future cost which is continuing to rise). Despite all this, we still lost.

Nixon did not pull out because the U.S. was winning but because the Vietnamese were. Some generals today are saying we lost the war but never lost a battle — but what the hell did we "win" at Khe Sanh

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History of the U.S. War in Vietnam

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or in the Iron Triangle or in Laos or in Cambodia besides having some hole punched in some officer's promotion card?

The simple fact is that neither the American people nor the American GIs fighting in Vietnam thought that the goals — real or imagined — were worth the lives and the money being squandered. The war was lost on the battlefields of Vietnam and in the hearts and minds of the American people.

During the war, VVAW led tens of thousands of Vietnam vets in demonstrations against that war. No comparable group of Vietnam vets ever rose to challenge VVAW or our goals. When VVAW brought 1500 Vietnam vets to protest Nixon's renomination, the Republican Party could only come up with 6 vets to support the war — and some of these did not support Nixon. Vietnam vets knew first-hand about the real war, and they opposed it.

When this was first written, it was clear that the Reagan administration was determined to get us involved once again. The invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the abortive occupation of Beirut, Persian Gulf patrols — all reflected a new U.S. readiness to intervene overseas. The parallels with Vietnam were particularly striking in Central America. In El Salvador the U.S. allies were just as brutal and corrupt as were Theiuv and Diem and Ky. In Nicaragua we paid mercenaries to burn, loot, rape and kill, and then called them "freedom fighters" anointed in the names of

our "founding fathers." Reruns were always big for Reagan fans.

Then, in 1989, the Bush administration followed suit with the invasion of Panama, supposedly to capture a drug dealer (who had long been on the CIA's payroll). Thousands of Panamanians were killed and many more displaced in this "just cause." This "success" emboldened Bush to take us to war in the Persian Gulf in 1990-91, merely to protect our sources of oil and to reestablish the royal family in Kuwait. Hundreds of thousands died in this one-sided conflict, including nearly three hundred U.S. troops (many the result of accidents and "friendly fire"). The Iraqi people continue to suffer under a horrible embargo that was established at the end of that war.

Vietnam was not just a mistake. Any U.S. venture in another part of the globe will also not be a mistake, except for the GIs who buy the government's lies. Vietnam was not a "noble cause," except for those who fought to bring our

brothers home after they made the mistake of going. As for foreign aggression, hear the words of Medal of Honor winner and Marine commandant Smedley Butler:

"War is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes...How many millionaires ever shoulder a rifle?

"For a great many years as a soldier, I had the suspicion that war was a racket. Not until I retired did I fully realize it.

"I was," said Butler of his own role in Central American intervention, "nothing more than a gangster for Wall Street."

(revised & updated, 1997)

About the authors: Barry Romo and Peter Zastrow are members of the Chicago chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Joe Miller teaches at the University of Illinois. All three are on the VVAW national steering committee.



California contingent, Dewey Canyon III - 1971

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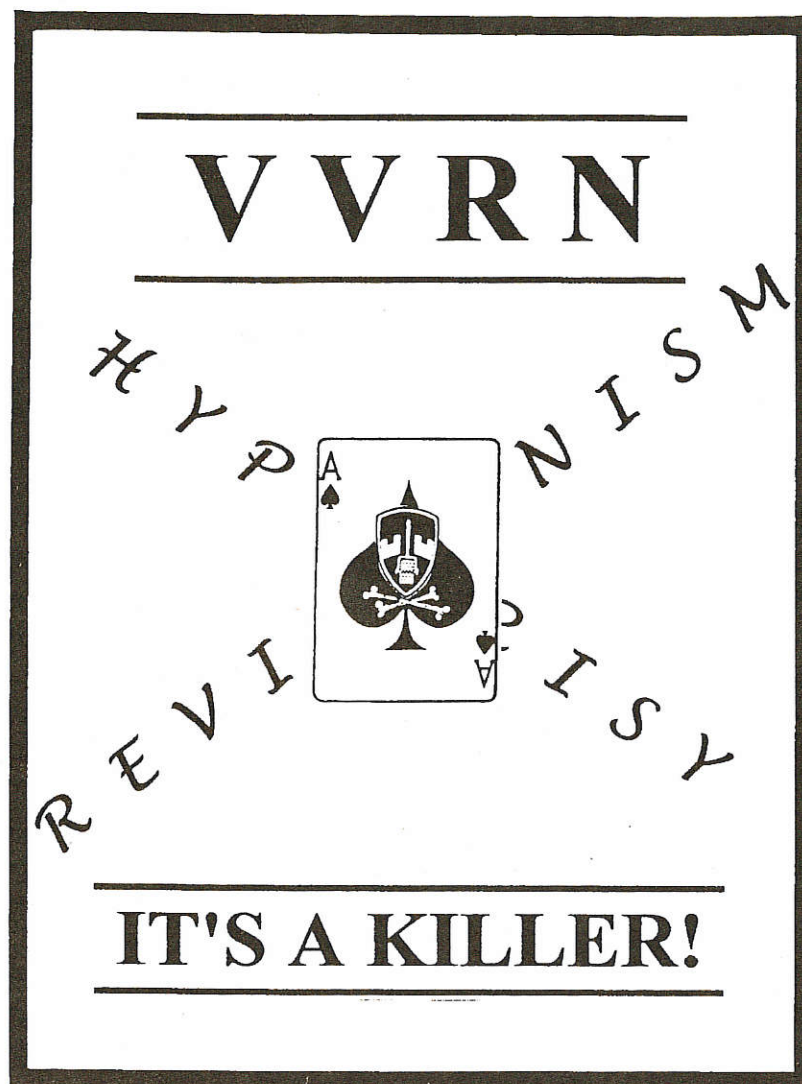
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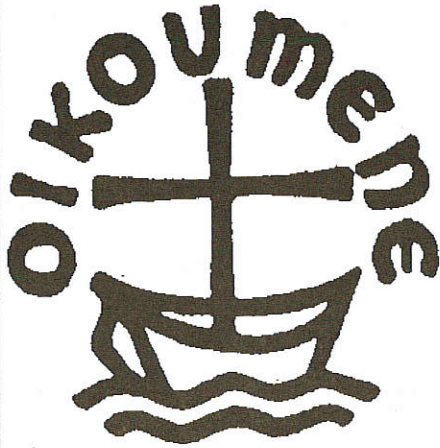
Janice Duren

Newburgh, NY



At times I wonder if it really happened
strange as it may seem at times I long for the smell, feel and sounds
truly only the people who have been there know
no matter who we are now
we all share that time and place in our mind
PEACE TO ALL MY BROTHERS THAT SERVED
PEACE TO ALL WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THE WAR
TO THE FOUNDERS AND ALL WHO SERVED THE VVAW
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR COURAGE AND BELIEF IN JUSTICE

robvfp



The Illinois Disciples Foundation, a peace with justice campus ministry in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, supports and celebrates 30 years of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. We look forward to working with you for at least the next 30.

The Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative celebrates 30 years of VVAW.

Thanks to Barry, Bill, Joe, Ray and all of VVAW who have provided expert advice and leadership in our struggles.

A Luta Continua!



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I REFUSE:

MEMORIES OF A VIETNAM WAR OBJECTOR

by Donad L. Simons



Set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, I REFUSE details the author's attempts to obtain recognition as a conscientious objector from Selective Service. After being denied conscientious objector status he refused induction, was convicted of violating the law, left the country and lived in exile for several years.

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In 1991, the film was released on VHS cassette. A must film for libraries, educators, vets and peace activists. 110 minutes. \$22.50.

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Beautiful Wreckage

What if I didn't shoot the old lady
running away from our patrol,
or the old man in the back of the head,
or the boy in the marketplace?

Or what if the boy but he didn't
have a grenade, and the woman in Hue
didn't lie in the rain in a mortar pit
with seven Marines just for food,

Gaffney didn't get hit in the knee,
Ames didn't die in the river, Ski
didn't die in a medevac chopper
between Con Thien and Da Nang.

In Vietnamese, Con Thien means
place of angels. What if it really was
instead of the place of rotting sandbags, incoming heavy artillery,
rats and mud.

What if the angels were Ames and Ski,
or the lady, the man, and the boy,
and they lifted Gaffney out of the mud
and healed his shattered knee?

What if none of it happened the way I said? Would it all be a lie?
Would the wreckage be suddenly beautiful? Would the dead rise up
and walk?


W. D. Ehrhart



4 Annies + 1 - Anniversary of Dewey Canyon III - (l-r) Mary Murphy Zastrow, Annie Luginbill, Annie Hirschman, Annie Bailey & Annie Pine



Dave "Buzz" Doyle & Jeff Machota - Chicago 1996



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"...A human being is part of the whole...He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of consciousness...Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures, and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Albert Einstein

"Knowledge rests not upon truth alone, but upon error also."

C. C. Jung

"You know...everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects."

Will Rogers

"The struggle continues..."

Michael & Jill McCain

HAPPY 30TH, VVAW!



Dave Klein, Clarence Fitch, Elena Fitch & Vietnam Vet Homeless Activist - 1987

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**Congratulations, VVAW
 for
 30 years in the struggle!**



**8th Day Center for Justice
 205 West Monroe, Chicago, IL 60606
 312/641-5151**

John and Annie
call for a major
PLAN 47

to celebrate
30 years
and in remembrance of
the Corby's Caucus

MILWAUKEE
VVAW
SALUTES
Billy Curmano
"Swimmin' the River"

IN 1967 WE SAID,
"NEVER TRUST ANYONE OVER 30."

MAY VVAW BE 29 FOREVER
JOHN & EDIE ZUTZ



Djar Horn - 1973



Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.

For more information:

- VVAW, PO Box 408594, Chicago , IL 60640
- 773-327-5756
- jtmiller@uiuc.edu
- <http://www.prairienet.org/vvaw/>