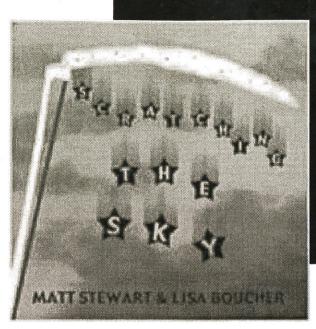
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Welcome from the National Office

VVAW is now thirty-five years old. We welcome you to rededicate and remember.

When VVAW was first established in 1967, we wanted to end the war in Vietnam, but we did so much more. We've made history and we've changed America.

Yes, tens upon tens of thousands of vets found a home (not to mention husbands, wives, partners, parents, ne'er do wells and malcontents). But we did not just camp.

We took our message to the American people and to the international community. We changed policies and minds through our commitment and our activism.

Long time peace and justice activist Dave Dellinger has said that we breathed new life into the peace movement. The largest demonstrations against the war were in the 70's, not the 60's, inspired by our arrival on the scene.

We were not only talking about our brothers and sisters still in the military but about the victims of war as well. We showed our solidarity with the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians by meetings, visiting their countries, and bringing up their side of the tragedy. We were the first to return and continue to build friendship.

Yes, we also began the whole PTSD movement, nurtured and expanded it. There would not be compensation, vets centers, or

thousands of people alive today

Agent Orange, educational benefits, homelessness, equal rights for women, yeah, that was us, too.

We didn't have degrees or money but we had experience and heart.

We we never blind to domestic ills, especially racism. We fought it in the South and the North. We faced the KKK and Nazis in Cairo, Illinois, Tupelo, Mississippi, Alabama, Washington D. C., Attica, N.Y., Chicago, and Riverside, California and Miami.

In Miami '72 not only did we trounce and decimate Nazis, but VVAW was in the leadership of the Poor People's Political Campaign at the Democratic convention. (The only predominately white group along with SCLC, National Welfare Rights Organization, Tenants Union, etc.)

We marched and fought with pride, as we never did or could in the U.S. military.

We did not go unnoticed by the FBI, the CIA and others. Tails, wiretaps, provocateurs, agents, investigations, trials and jail followed. The state came after us because we had served and they were afraid. It wasn't always easy in the movement and we lost family, friends, and jobs.

The end of the war in Vietnam was not our end. Because real justice could not have been achieved. We declared war on the VA right here in Milwaukee, and we demanded a decent shake for all vets, regardless of discharge, as well as amnesty for all war resisters.

We took up the scourge of Agent Orange following the lead of the courageous Maude De Victor, and we let Reagan/Bush know that there should be no war in Central America.

We continued to warn the American public of another 'Vietnam' (we love the "Vietnam Syndrome"), and put our lives on the line in again opposing the killing.

We did not stagnate, and we are proud of the younger vets who found a home in VVAW. Panama, Lebanon, Grenada and the Persian Gulf War have brought new blood, and yes, there are people on active duty today who also belong.

We have a past, a present and yes a future.

We do not sit idly by while an endless war on terrorism engulfs the world. We must still speak out in high schools, colleges, pulpits, the halls of congress and the streets. We still have to feed homeless vets and demand decent benefits. Why? Because this new American Empire will not take care of anyone but the rich of the world.

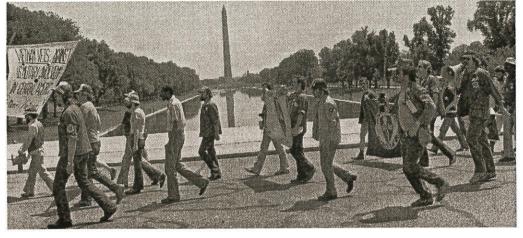
So, celebrate with us our longevity and our past victories and commit to work with us in the future for peace and social justice for all!

On the Cover: Milwaukee VVAW chapter takes over the VA Hospital, 1974

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VVAW members march for recognition of Agent Orange's health effects; Washington, D.C. 1981



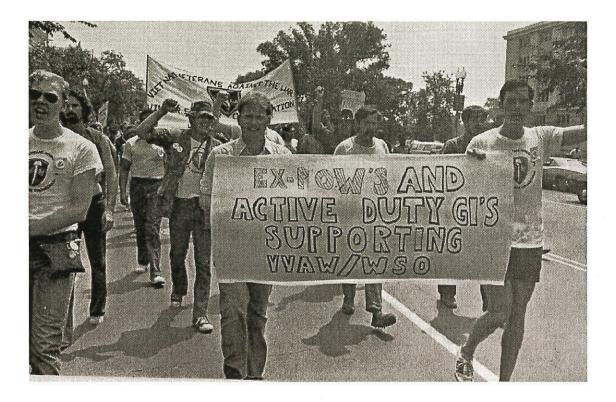
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VVAW Demonstration in Arlington National Cemetery at the tomb of Medgar Evers

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"I am opposed to every war but one ... and that is the worldwide war of social revolution." --Eugene V. Debs, Socialist Party Convention, June 16, 1918

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History of the U.S. War in Vietnam

By Barry Romo, David Curry, Peter Zastrow, and Joe Miller VVAW, Inc. Revised and Updated, 2002

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. Questions about the history and lessons of the war in Vietnam continue to be raised again and again in the face of current events. The events of 9-1-1 brought the violence that is part of the daily life of so many of the world's peoples into the lives of Americans in a way that has never been paralleled. A War on Terrorism has been declared that has no end in sight. U.S. military personnel have been put at risk in not only Afghanistan, but in increased presence in the Philippines and Columbia. Popular culture offers Mel Gibson's portraval of Vietnam back when the issues were simpler and We Were Soldiers. Blackhawk Down shows the value of U.S. combat deaths regardless of the settings and the goals. We feel that it is important to remember the lessons of the U.S. War in Vietnam as we knew and lived it.

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.

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 was premature, resulted in 6,000 French killed or captured. In 1954, 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."

According to international agreement, Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into north and south, with free elections to take place nationwide in 1956. Even before the French were out, the U.S. was moving in. Prior to Dien Bien Phu, the U.S. set up MAAG (Military Assistance and Advisory Group) consisting of 350 U.S. personnel operating in Saigon in support of the French. Between 1950 and 1954, the U.S. contributed over \$3 billion to their French allies in the fight for Vietnam. By 1954, the U.S. contributions were providing 80% of the cost of the war. MAAG began 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.

Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese Catholic who had lived in the U.S. and Europe, had been appointed Premier of South Vietnam by former Emperor Bao Dai. Though Vietnam was 95% Buddhist, the Catholic Diem was soon recognized as the future leader of Vietnam by the CIA and other U.S. interests. In 1956 the U.S. refused to go along with the promised nation-wide 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 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 took and defended "strategic" hills, winning what the press called "victories." While the enemy body count (noted for the thin line between military and civilian dead) enhanced ranking officers' careers, it was the casualties among our friends that were felt first by us. 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. 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 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 firsthand about the real war, and they opposed it.

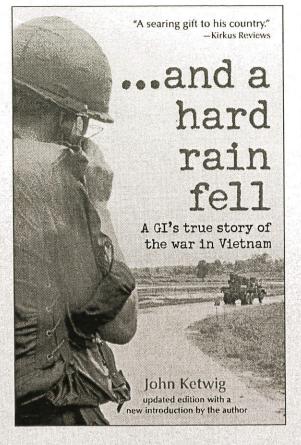
When this was first written, the Reagan administration had begun again to put U.S. service lives on the line to further foreign policy goals. The invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya, the abortive occupation of Beirut, Persian Gulf patrols — all reflected a new U.S. readiness to intervene overseas. The parallels with Vietnam were particularly striking in Central America were the U.S. supported repressive regimes against popular insurgencies.

The first 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. Under Clinton came the use of U.S. troops in Somalia and the continued advancement of a "war on drugs" against the people of Columbia. With the horrible events of 9-1-1 misused as justification for any kind of violent or repressive response, U.S. military personnel are once again being used to fulfill political aims.

Vietnam was not just a mistake. Any U.S. venture in another part of the globe will also be a mistake 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."

About the authors: Barry Romo and Peter Zastrow are members of the Chicago chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Joe Miller is a member of the Champaign-Urbana chapter of VVAW. All three are members of the VVAW National Office. Dave Curry is a staff member of the National Office.

The above and more can be found in the following works: George McTurnan Kahn & John W. Lewis, The United States in Vietnam, Dial Press, 1967; Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History, Viking 1982; Douglas Valentine, The Phoenix Program, William Morrow & Co., 1990.



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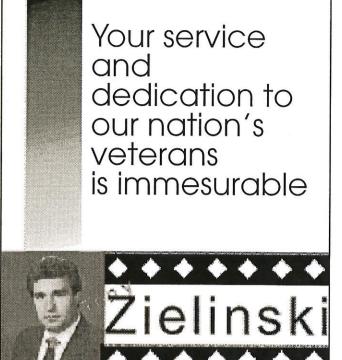
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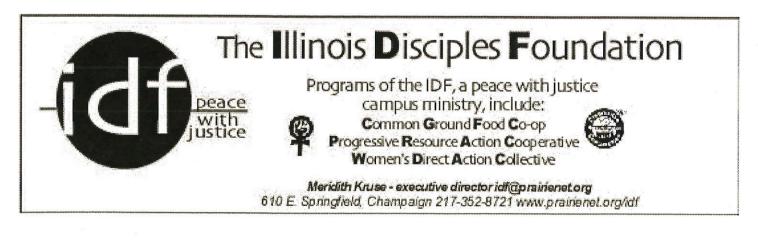
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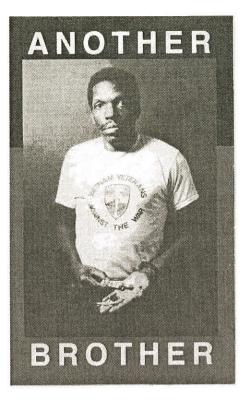
The Green Party of Bergen County, New Jersey





The Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative would like to congratulate VVAW on its 35th Anniversary. Thanks for the continued support and your unending commitment to justice. PRC wishes VVAW all the best in the future.





The best way to honor me would be not to have another Vietnam that would be the best memorial for me.

Clarence J. Fitch, VVAW 1948-1990

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VVAW members support the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid groups, 1976

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VVAW Demonstration, Washington, D.C., 1974



VVAW Members march during Dewey Canyon III, Washington, D.C., 1971

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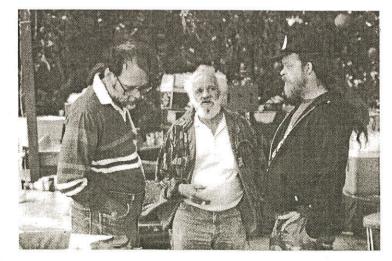
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Former Chicago mayor Harold Washington with Josh, Becky, and Joan Davis, and Jessi Romo, after a 1983 VVAW Demonstration



We extend our fraternal greetings to the "Winter Soldiers" of VVAW on your 35th Anniversary and salute you for your continued service for Veterans, Peace and Justice.

Today we live in "Times that try men's souls" and progressive Vets are again called to the front lines to defend our liberties and to oppose militarism and war. Veterans for Peace is committed to this struggle and we look forward to greater unity between our organizations in the future.

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VVAW 35th Anniversary Program

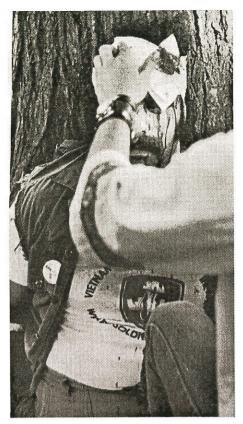
Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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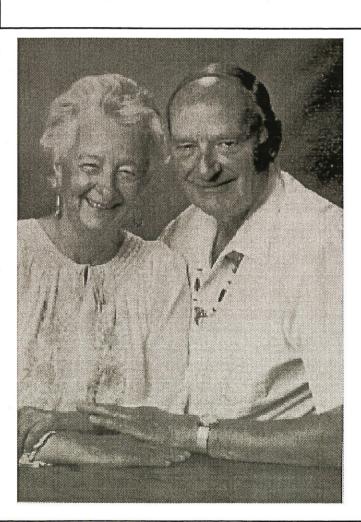


Danny Friedman beaten by D.C. Police, 1974



VVAW Keg moving crew at the Milwaukee Beer Fest, 2000

VVAW 35th Anniversary Program



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HONOR YOUR TIRELESS WORK

ELIZABETH AND DAVID

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WITH LOTS OF LOVE AND RESPECT

THE MOTHER CABRINI BRIGADE

35 YEARS OF VVAW

31 YEARS OF THE CATHOLIC CAUCUS

DAMATO, ROMO, MILLER, and a Cast of THOUSANDS not to forget **First Fridays**



18



1967 - 1975: What would we have done without you?

2002 - ????: We need you now more than ever!

Best wishes for the hard times ahead,

Arthur Kinoy & Barbara Webster



VVAW members in Japan for Hiroshima-Nagasaki Day



VVAW Campout in Wisconsin, 1979



VVAW members march against against Nixon's war policies.



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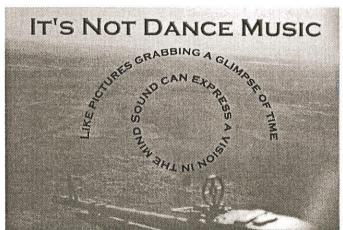
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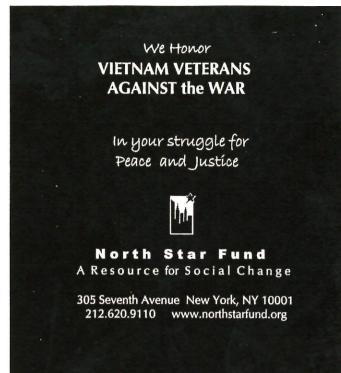
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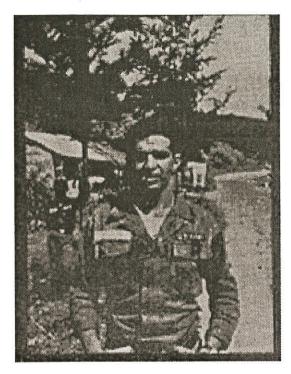




VVAW Member returns his medals in Washington D.C., 1971

VVAW Remembers....





from the newspaper Enlisted People in the Army, 1756-1973

Jeff Sharlet served in Vietnam for over a year; he had been trained as an intelligence expert and knew the Vietnamese language. As he learned more about the Vietnamese and their country, he became angrier at the U.S. for its war. After ETSd in 1964, he thought about the war while egaged in student political work at college, then took the money he got for a graduate-school fellowship and founded Vietnam GI, a newspaper for the GIs in

the field. For two years, he gave all of his money, his time, and his health to the paper, answering every letter, scrounging money, recruiting staff. Worn out, he went on a vacation in 1968 -- only to find he had incurable kidney cancer. As he lay dying, his last attempts at speech were directed to sharing organizing ideas with the Vietnam GI staff. Jeff died at the Miami VA hospital on June 16, 1969, at the age of 27.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. P.O. Box 408594 Chicago, IL 60640 www.vvaw.org vvaw@prairienet.org

