



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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Dear Supporter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War,

Thank you so much for your support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Every time I write one of these updates, I think about I think about you and the individuals like yourself who have supported us. Your confidence in us has enabled VVAW to play its vital role in the anti-war movement.

When we make financial decisions, one of my first thoughts is, "Does this course of action fulfill the trust you have placed in us? Are we using your contributions frugally and effectively toward ending the war and obtaining decent benefits for all veterans?"

2007 is Vietnam Veterans Against the War's 40th Anniversary. Thanks to your support and the dedication of our activists, we celebrate this anniversary larger, stronger, and more active than we have been at any time since the 1970's. We had a big celebration in August attended by the original founding members, by former members who had left the organization, and by Vietnam Veterans who had never before joined. People left rededicated to activism in VVAW and to ending the war in Iraq.

I am particularly proud of the role Vietnam Veterans Against the War plays in the peace movement. A Louisville peace activist was recently quoted in *The Nation* saying, "When Harold and Carol (local VVAW leaders) joined us, it elevated our credibility about 1 million percent. When people came up to us saying 'Yeah, what the hell do you know about it? You've never fought in a war,' we could point to Carol and Harold and say, 'They have.'" (I will be telling you more about Carol and Harold further on.)

We had an amazing success this summer in our support of war resister Eugene Cherry. Last summer, Eugene's mother called our military counselor, Ray Parrish, to ask for help for her son who was AWOL from the Army and living at home. With his post-traumatic stress symptoms and his AWOL status hanging over his head, he was not able to get a job and resume his life. Ray asked a psychologist who is a Vietnam Veterans Against the War member to see Ray on a pro-bono basis. After many consultations with Ray and the psychologist, Eugene, armed with a psychological report documenting his service-connected post-traumatic stress disorder, returned to his base to get for a discharge. Needless to say, he was very worried that the Army's response would be to put him in jail.

Ray called on Tod Ensign of Citizen Soldier to offer support when Eugene arrived at Ft. Drum, New York to turn himself in. Citizen Soldier played a critical role in orchestrating the media strategy to encourage the Army to discharge Eugene.

The Army tried to persuade Eugene to stay in, but Eugene no longer supported the war and no longer was willing to stay in the Army. Instead of giving Eugene a medical or even a "bad conduct" discharge, the Army told Eugene he would be court-martialed in a proceeding that could sentence him to a year in military prison. Ray talked to Eugene and his mother by telephone, at some points every day, to offer advice and emotional support.

Eugene's mother, the military counselor, and the VVAW psychologist prepared to travel to New York to testify at the court martial. At the last moment, Eugene heard that he was going to be offered a discharge under "less than honorable conditions." Such a discharge prevents a veteran from receiving health care at the VA, but Eugene was very relieved and planned to accept it. In a few more days, even better news arrived. His performance evaluations while serving as a combat medic were so outstanding that Army regulations required that he receive a "general discharge under honorable conditions," a discharge that preserved his access to VA benefits.

Now Eugene is back home. He has had multiple media interviews, including a New York Times story that also mentioned the roles of Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Citizen Soldier. He has become a member and an active speaker for Iraq Veterans Against the War.

This was not a normal result. Most soldiers in Eugene's situation receive at least a few months of jail time and a dishonorable discharge.

We are also closely watching the case of war-resister, Ehren Watada. His second court martial is now scheduled to begin October 9. His lawyers will urge dismissal on grounds of double jeopardy, since his first court martial ended in a mistrial.

Meanwhile Ray has continued to serve veterans and GIs needing upgrades of bad discharges, make referrals and offer counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder, and give advice to GI callers about grounds for medical discharge, to name just a few of his activities.

Ray has been receiving calls from former Marines affected by the recent call-up of the Marine Individual Ready Reserve. After separation from active duty, GIs are put into the Individual Ready Reserves. They are subject to involuntary call-up in an emergency until a total of eight years from the beginning of their service. Recently, hundreds of call-up letters have been sent out to former marines who have resumed civilian life.

Karl (not his real name) is an anti-war activist and an Iraq veteran. He called Ray when he got his call-up letter. He could see his whole life dissolving. Ray talked to him for a while and it became clear that Karl was suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Until they talked, Karl hadn't seen the connection between his family problems, his excessive drinking, and his difficulty in sleeping. Ray advised Karl to go to the VA for the PTSD treatment he has needed for a long time. At the same time, the VA can document his PTSD as a medical reason that will prevent his having to be called up.

Don has been frantically worried since he got his call-up letter. His therapist has told him that, since the letter came, he has gone backwards and lost all the progress he has made in overcoming his PTSD. When Ray asked if he was collecting VA disability benefits for PTSD, Don told him he was. His disability was rated at 30%, which is the cut-off point that disqualifies soldiers for reactivation. He was incredibly relieved when Ray explained this to him. Ray told him to send a copy of his disability papers to his command and to cc his Congressional Representative to make sure that his command does not feel free to ignore the regulations.

Because our name "says it all," Vietnam Veterans Against the War spreads its message just by visibly showing up. **People who see our name and our slogan "Honor the Warrior not the War" see that the war is not only opposed by the usual suspects, but by veterans who have first-hand experience of combat. We have always had banners in large cities, but your financial support has enabled us to purchase banners for Cincinnati, Atlanta, Louisville, Phoenix, and Camarillo, California.**

Louisville Vietnam Veterans Against the War contact, Carol Trainer, a Vietnam era veteran, went to a local festival with an anti-war sign. She had made sure to check with the festival organizer in advance to get permission. Some pro-war individuals took offense and made a complaint to the sheriff, who arrested Carol, and treated her very roughly. The charges against her have now been resolved, but it was quite an ordeal for Carol, a 60 year old grandmother who had never been an anti-war activist until the war in Iraq.

Nevertheless, Carol, her husband Harold, and other Kentuckiana VVAW members have kept up a high level of activity. They participated in a Take a Stand rally in August and followed it up with a candlelight march and picket of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's house. They have been a presence at other anti-war rallies in Kentucky and Carol and Harold made up part of the veterans' contingent at the Washington DC march.

Carol has recently been contacted by the GI Rights Hotline and asked to serve as their Louisville contact. The Hotline advises AWOL soldiers about their options. If a soldier decides the best course is to turn him or herself in, Ft. Knox, right near Louisville, is one of the main bases that processes AWOL soldiers. Carol will organize the local peace community to support these soldiers by providing rides to the base. The soldiers will also need legal assistance, and Carol has recruited a pro-bono lawyer.

Harold and Carol are outstanding, but they are by no means the only local leaders that have significant accomplishments to their credit.

Our activist members participate in many counter-recruiting activities. Speaking in classrooms about Vietnam and its lessons for us in the present period is a constant. We also inform students and parents that they can avoid having their child's high school give their address and phone number to recruiters if they "Opt Out."

In some locations, we pass out flyers outside of schools, but our Northern Wisconsin contact, Jay Tobin, is working on the "wholesale" level. Together with other anti-war veterans in nearby towns, he is approaching the school board in Eau Claire to get the whole district to include "Opt-Out" forms in students information packets. Their group has already had success in Chippawa Falls, Menomonie, and Altoona. Jay tells me that he knows a sympathetic Eau Claire school board member personally, so he anticipates success.

Steve Crandall has been the spark plug in founding the new California Central Coast Vietnam Veterans Against the War chapter. One of their recent activities has been to participate in the Stand-down for homeless veterans. Standdown is a term from military service where soldiers get a break from participating in combat. Homeless veterans get a break from life on the streets when coalitions of veterans groups provide food, showers, ordinary necessities, medical care, and a place to stay for one or two nights. When Vietnam Veterans Against the War participates (as they do in Phoenix, Milwaukee, New York, and Chicago), they not only contribute to easing the hardships of homeless veterans but also they have an opportunity to make connections with veterans from groups like the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who are more open to our message of "Honor the Warrior, Not the War" than they have been at any time within our memory.

Our leaders are in the media. Cincinnati Vietnam Veterans Against the War contact and founder of the Ohio River Valley VVAW chapter, Marty Webster, appeared on three local TV stations when the media sought responses to Bush's claim that the Vietnam War was lost because the United States withdrew prematurely.

Marty also exemplifies the role our activists play in bringing the anti-war message to community audiences. To cite just one of his recent speaking gigs, he served as a panelist addressing the question, "Is the Iraq War Winnable?" along with Cincinnati's mayor and City Council candidates. 500 people were in the audience.

Along with our skilled and dedicated activists, I credit you, as a person who has made financial contributions to the work of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Without your donations, our organization would not be the strong and vibrant group that it is today. Thank you for all you help. If you are able to make a 40th Anniversary donation to VVAW at this time, your will further help us to oppose the Iraq war and fight for decent treatment for all veterans.

For peace and justice,



Barry Romo
National Coordinator



Steve Crandall and Bill Hammaker, 98-year-old World War II CO

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War ☐\$35 ☐\$50 ☐\$100 ☐\$250 ☐\$500 ☐Other
to support its work for peace and its efforts to expose the Bush Administration's hypocritical neglect
of returning veterans. Checks to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at vvaaw.org.

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