

FINAL AGENT ORANGE SETTLEMENT APPROVED

Federal Judge Jack Weinstein has approved his final plan for distributing the Agent Orange settlement money. As it first appeared, it is the lawyers (\$30 million to date) and a few vet "leaders" who have

made out like bandits; vets and their families are left out in the cold.

No one who is partially disabled will receive a cash settlement. Children disabled due to birth defects as a result

of Agent Orange will remain penniless. The \$150 million will be distributed over a 10 year period. The maximum payment to a disabled vet is \$12,800 (\$1280 per year for 10 years) and widows can claim, at most,

\$3,400.

The interest on the settlement is not being distributed; instead, the estimated \$50 million will be given to a non-profit vets organization run by veterans (chosen by the judge and paid salaries comparable to the lawyers' fees) to provide non-cash services to an estimated 250,000 vets and their families who are not "eligible" for the

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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

VOL. 15 No. 3

SUMMER 1985

Reagan Moves Toward War

NICARAGUA THREATENED

Bureaucrats Lose CHICAGO VICTORY

In the last issue of THE VETERAN, we reported that local Chicago bureaucrats had cut contract service for Vietnam veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

To oppose this outrage--the program had been of substantial aid to a number of vets--VVAW members mobilized both veterans and elected officials. First, veterans and their families began to confront the cutoff and the VA. Then the vets and VVAW started to contact politicians to put pressure on. By Memorial Day, Senator Simon's office, and Congressmen Hays, Evans and Collins and a representative of the Illinois Attorney General had all asked the VA for answers.

To our "surprise," the VA "found" the money to reinstate the program in full. It all goes to show what can be done by fighting back instead of begging or complaining.

If you were one of those cut off the program and want reinstatement, contact your former counselor or VVAW; for more information about the program, contact Chicago VVAW or the VVAW National Office.

Join the Vets Group Fighting For All Vets!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

National Office
P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

Nonprofit Org
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Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, speaking at VVAW Memorial Day Rally, states: "I'm for peace, I'm against war, I'm for nuclear freezes... and if you don't like it, you can go straight to hell." Bill Davis of VVAW, Mayor Washington, center.

(Photo by Maureen Dolan)

Cuts That Kill

VA BUDGET

Every major program in the U.S. (except major weapons programs) is up for deep cuts this year. Since 1979 the VA has been taking cuts and this year is no different. There's supposed to be \$1 billion off the top of the VA budget.

All this comes from a President who can praise the dead at Normandy while ignoring the contributions of their living comrades once he gets home. This time around all veterans and our families are being dealt the first in a series of death blows to the VA medical system.

Whether you fought the "Good War" against facism, or one of the nasty ones like Korea or Vietnam, the ax of David Stockman is about to fall, with the help of Wisconsin's Senator Kasten. The so-called

"painless" budget cuts would include:

1. No cost of living increases for VA Disability checks.
2. A proposed savings of \$600 million by applying a means test or by attempting to bill 3rd party insurance companies for non-service connected disabilities.

This means test has been on the books for years and the VA chose not to use it because it does not need it. Vets with insurance go to private hospitals. Twenty-five % of vets who use the VA make less than \$6000 a year. Only 1 in 9 veterans use the VA in their lifetime. The point is that only the service-connected and poor veterans now use the VA. A means test is simply a waste of time and

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As we are printing this issue of THE VETERAN, the Reagan Administration has revealed that it is seriously considering the use of U.S. combat troops in Nicaragua.

These threats to use troops coming on the heels of recent aggressive moves against Nicaragua are partly being used as political pressure on Congress to restore aid to the contras. However, they are of great concern to veterans and all Americans who vividly remember the quagmire that was the Vietnam War, and who do not want to see a repetition of our government sending Americans to fight against a people defending their lives and liberties from foreign domination.

In fact, on May 1st, Reagan used the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War to order a total economic blockade of Nicaragua, cancelling all imports, all export, the landing of Nicaraguan planes in the U.S. and the docking of Nicaraguan ships in U.S. ports. Having faced the loss of the contra aid vote in Congress, and widespread criticism for honoring Nazi war dead in Bitburg, Reagan moved quickly to tighten the economic vise in which he had already placed Nicaragua over the past 4 years.

The current economic embargo is indeed an escalation in the Reagan Administration's economic warfare against Nicaragua, which is attempting to weaken and demoralize the widespread popular base of the Sandinistas, while creating a dissatisfied middle class fifth column in Nicaragua that can link up with the contras. By weakening Nicaraguan society internally, Reagan hopes that the government will either collapse or become a more susceptible target to the military intervention that he is now contem-

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FRAGGIN'



Sp5 Willy(Ret.)
A.K.A.
Bill Shunas

I was thinking about the word "pig" the other day. Seems like no one uses that word anymore. Back in the days when every other day brought a demonstration against the war or for civil rights, the police used to club demonstrators, gas them or set dogs loose on them. Soon, demonstrators and their supporters began calling the police "pigs" because of these and other acts of brutality. There were objections by various farm groups and swine raiser associations, but the word stuck. Gradually the term was expanded to include members of the ruling class, police agents and various anti-people flunkies who were apologists for the politics of the ruling class.

Over the last ten years or so, people stopped using the word "pig" extensively. I guess that's because the cops aren't busting heads anymore except here and there. But I miss the word. Instead of giving a five-minute speech or writing seven paragraphs to explain why someone was an ass, you just said "Pig." That made everything so simple.

So why am I having a nostalgia attack about pigs? It's because of a report coming out of Lower Saxony which is in Germany. There, some of the police are really pigs. They've been using dogs to sniff out heroin and other drugs, but now the dogs are being replaced by--you guessed it--pigs. Luise, a 160-pound sow is one of the newest recruits on the police force in Lower Saxony. The authorities there claim that Luise and her colleagues have an acute sense of smell. I guess we've come full circle.

There's a new word appearing on the scene today: "war wimp." War wimp is a phrase coined by Congressman Andrew Jacobs, a Korean War vet. Jacobs is referring to those politicians, policy makers and opinion makers who are willing to fight the Red Menace or the peasants in Nicaragua to the last drop of somebody else's blood; but who, at the same time, avoided military duty when there was a war going on and they were of fighting age.

Writer Jack Newfield of the Village Voice compiled a list of war wimps, and lo and behold, some of the leading congressional defense appropriations pushers like Representatives Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott are on the list. There are even several in the Defense Department. Most of these were of fighting

age during Vietnam, but managed to get out of going by staying in school or failing the physical or joining the Coast Guard Reserve.

The White House even has a few war wimps. They recently hired Patrick Buchanan, a noted flaming conservative. One of Buchanan's jobs will be to set up a "response desk" to return fire when the President is attacked by his critics. He uses all the words that make life sound like a battle, but when a real battle was going on in Vietnam where he could have shot some of the real "commies" he talks about, Pat Buchanan pleaded a bum knee to his draft board.

The, of course, there is the Supreme War Wimp, the Commander-in-Chief Ronald Reagan who managed to remain 4F during the Big One. C'mon now. A guy I work with was missing two fingers when he was drafted for WWII so you know that Ronnie could have went if he was such a patriot. They were taking anybody for that war. But no. Ronald Reagan sat out his war in Hollywood. Now that he is Commander in Chief behind a desk in Washington, he has become a militant. From Lebanon to Grenada to Nicaragua, he's ready to send the boys into battle at the drop of the stock market.

There are no wimps in the Army. At least not around the Pentagon or on various bases. These soldiers are tough--so tough that a little rain water can't hurt them. The Army Clothing and Equipment Board found that out recently. They had the audacity to suggest that uniformed men around bases and the Pentagon be allowed to use umbrellas. The issue went all the way up to the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff where it was disapproved because they "feel the image of male Army officers walking around with umbrellas is somehow intrinsically unmilitary."

I know a lot of us thought our officers were all wet, but we weren't aware that it was SOP. The Navy and the Marines feel that way too, but Air Force officers are allowed the use of umbrellas. Pilots always were a strange breed.

Notice that they were concerned about the "image of male Army officers." Women in uniform are allowed to use umbrellas. I never looked closely. I wonder if umbrellas are OD. Or camouflage. I wonder if women officers get to use the umbrella

because the rain will spoil their perm? Is it macho to be all wet? I thought the dry look was in. I don't know. If it rains, give me my poncho!

I guess when you talk about women in the military, double standards will be around for quite awhile. Take the case of Marine Lance Corporal Candy Clark. She was raped by an officer who subsequently received an honorable discharge with all the bennies.

One year later Marine Corps Captain John Moultaf fell in love with Candy. When handing down his dishonorable discharge, the court martial board at the Marine Corps Air Station in El Toro, CA, ruled that Moultaf's wanting to marry an enlisted woman was "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman."

I guess the rapist upheld the image of a Marine Corps officer. He probably never uses an umbrella. He's one of the Few. The Proud. The Marines. But Captain Moultaf didn't make the grade. He evidently didn't understand the Marine Corps' concept of how gentlemen should behave towards women.

I don't support the Navy is any better. At least not at the Trident Refit Facility in Bangor, Washington. There, the civilian executive director, Hal Singleton used the Navy photography lab to print up posters of a group of women hitched to a plow. Singleton passed out copies of the photo to Navy employees, telling people, "That's what God put women on earth for--to replace horses."

There was a flap, a complaint to Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder and an investigation by the Navy. The Navy investigation found that Singleton was going to use the photograph for Human Relations Week and gave him an oral reprimand. I don't know what kind of human relation's program the Navy has, but they ought to get themselves some umbrellas. They can use them to hide their faces. As for Hal Singleton, I bet he's pretty good at sniffing out drugs--just like Luise.

One final note here. I came across an interesting piece of history that deserves mention

in any column called Fraggin'. It was back in 1857, in India, that this happened, when the British were there to colonize and subjugate the people. Colonel John Finnis was a British Army Commander. Evidently the good colonel, although not a war wimp, was probably a pig. He decided to give his troops a lecture. His topic for the day was insubordination. Upon completion of his lecture, his troops immediately terminated Col Finnis. Touche'.

GRENADE OF THE MONTH

This month's John Finnis memorial grenade goes to a civilian--Robert A Rowland, an appointee by the War Wimp as head of the Office of Safety and Health and supposed guardian of the health of America's working people. Rowland gets the grenade for a recent decision he made regarding farm workers.

Over the objections of five of his staff members, one of whom didn't have civil service protection and was fired, Rowland ruled that farm owners did not have to provide toilets and running water for their workers. Even enlisted Marine women get to have toilets and running water.

In the uproar following this decision, personal information came out about the stockholdings of this buddy of the War Wimp. It seems that he has a generous stockholding in Tencoco, a company which, among other things, employs 2,000 farm workers to work over 10,000 acres of farm land in California and Arizona.

And this wasn't the only time he made an anti-worker ruling affecting a company in which he had stock. His extensive stock holdings include companies that manufacture formaldehyde and ethylene oxide. He has recently ruled against setting standard limits of exposure to these chemicals which are believed to be health hazards.

Robert Rowland seems to be a prime example of conflict of interest by a man in a high position in government, something that seems quite common nowadays. Rowland probably never uses an umbrella to tarnish his image. Then, with a chauffeur-driven limo, he probably doesn't need one, although he might feel just as comfortable rooting around in some mudpile.

Remember Diem?

EL SALVADOR'S JOSE DUARTE



STARRING

★ RONALD REAGAN AS LYNDON JOHNSON
★ EL SALVADOR AS SOUTH VIETNAM

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO REGISTER FOR THE DRAFT AGAIN!

(The following article was written by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador--CISPES.)

The Reagan administration justifies sending over 1 billion dollars to war-torn El Salvador by claiming that its president, Jose Napoleon Duarte, is a democratic moderate. But what is the reality behind that image?

Duarte's rule began with the assassination of El Salvador's Archbishop by army death

squads who then continued their terror campaign until over 50,000 Salvadorans had been killed. Congress almost cut off aid to El Salvador due to these murders, but backed off when Duarte promised to investigate the crimes. Reagan says that because four soldiers were convicted for the notorious 1980 rape and murder of four U.S. churchwomen, Duarte is making "progress" in human rights. But the lawyer who defended the soldiers recently fled El Salvador saying that when he began to look into the involvement of higher officers in the crime he was arrested and severely tortured. Even as the lawyer was being tortured Duarte was assuring the U.S. press that a "full investigation" had been made.

Now that Duarte has U.S. aid safely in his pocket, death-squad-type murder is again on the rise. According to the Christian Legal Aid Office, 501 people were assassinated by the government forces in the first three months of this year, twice the figure for last year.

Under Duarte's government, a new and much deadlier kind of "death squad" has been turned loose: helicopters and bombers which drop about 7.5 tons of bombs a day on the countryside where a rebel movement is growing. It is the most intensive bombing in the history of the Western Hemisphere.

"When the planes spot villages they attack indiscriminately," explains a rural priest. "If someone has their clothes out to dry and hears the planes, they rush to take them down, for wherever the pilot spots drying clothes the bombs are sure to fall. So the people live in the hills and mountains, sometimes sheltered only by trees and bushes."

Our taxes pay for these

planes, the bombs they drop, the fuel that powers them and the training for their pilots. U.S. advisors are directly involved too, choosing targets, dropping bombs, mapping strategy.

Most of the country folk support the guerrilla movement. The bombing is intended to drive these people out of the mountains so the guerrillas won't have a civilian base to give them food and supplies. The country people support the guerrillas because the guerrillas have promised to:

- *end the government repression and prosecute the responsible officers,
- *lift the state of siege and allow freedom of the press,
- *implement a large-scale land reform,
- *raise wages,
- *hold elections, and
- *seek a negotiated peace to end the war.

These are the same things Duarte has been promising to do for four years. If he really believes in those ideas, why does his government bomb and murder an opposition movement that wants the same thing? Why doesn't he just do these things himself?

Reagan says we should support Duarte because he won the last elections. But were these elections really democratic?

*The opposition was excluded from the ballot. The army published a "death list" of people it calls "subversives," including every potential candidate who would offer a real alternative to military rule. These people don't dare show their faces in public, much less run a presidential campaign.

*There is no freedom of the press. All the opposition newspapers and radio stations have been bombed out of existence by government forces.

*The CIA bought the election—with \$2 million they spent to insure Duarte's victory (about \$3 a vote in a country where many only earn a dollar a day).

While Duarte has fulfilled none of his promises to his people, he has succeeded at one thing: convincing the U.S. Congress to pay for his war. Every few months our involvement increases: more money, more planes, more advisers. The last time we got into a war like this was in Vietnam. The wounds from that tragedy have yet to heal. Let's stop this one now, before it's too late.

CISPES National Office
P.O. Box 50139
Washington, D.C. 20004
(202) 887-5019

CISPES (the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador) was formed in 1980 in response to growing public opposition to the Vietnam-style war developing in Central America. The goals of CISPES are two-fold: to educate and mobilize the public against U.S. intervention; and, to build support for the FMLN-FDR, the broad popular movement for social justice in El Salvador. We also support the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the revolutionary movement in Guatemala.

EDITORIAL

DIVIDE and CONQUER

Recently Congress has taken to pitting vets of different wars and different eras against each other. Unfortunately, the leader of Vietnam Veterans of America, Bobby Mueller has seen fit to go right along with this tactic.

Claiming that there is not enough money to take care of the aging World War II veteran population, Congress now claims it cannot fund service for non-service connected medical problems without putting the whole system in jeopardy. Adding his two cents worth, Mr Mueller chimed in that the 1st priority was service-connected disabilities, especially those of 'Nam vets; he added that non-service connected problems of older vets should not be handled by the VA.

Just to remind Congress and Mueller, the VA was set up to care for all vets. When we were drafted or enlisted that was one of the promises (among many) held out for us. If the government didn't want to adhere to it, they shouldn't have promised medical care back in '42. Maybe they should have thought ahead and only drafted 2 million instead of 16 million, but then we might well be talking German instead of English.

Coupled with the promises is the hard fact of proving a service-connected disability. Look at the problems Vietnam vets are having with Agent Orange poisoning or delayed stress. In these cases, often a vet will be dead if he must prove that the problem is service-connected and wait for help from the VA.

Vets have more in common than not; we need to stick together. In 1976 VVAW members seized the Statue of Liberty to protest the removal of Korean vets from the GI Bill as well as demanding jobs and education for all vets. We were proud to be fighting for other vets from other wars. There is money to deal with our problems--and it's right in the present budget. Cut aid to the contras; cut aid to various two-bit dictators; cut the MX or B-1 programs or get rid of star wars.

The simple fact is that the government must deal with the problems of the past warriors before filling some Latin American dictator's bank account or buying some Pentagon bureaucrat's pet boondoggle.

VVAW National Office

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR NATIONAL OFFICE HAS CHANGED ITS MAILING ADDRESS TO:

VVAW National Office
P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

Oct. in NY-NJ

NATIONAL VVAW MEETING

The 29th VVAW National Steering Committee Meeting will be hosted by the NY/NJ Chapter of VVAW and will be held over the Columbus Day weekend. The meeting will begin on October 12th in Jersey City (easy access to the Newark airport).

Topics to be discussed include the U.S. war in Central America and the response of veterans, centering on what's going on in El Salvador and Nicaragua; Counter-recruiting particularly in high schools with reports on these activities; Agent Orange and where do we go from here; Building VVAW.

Any VVAW member is eligible to attend; if you have any questions or want to add items to the agenda, contact the VVAW National Office. Contact the National Office for further information or contact Clarence Fitch NY/NJ coordinator (also contact him for housing).

NY/NJ VVAW

Box 74, Van Brunt Station
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 499-1101.

The U.S. may have lost the war in Vietnam, but it sure as hell is winning the movie version of the war. The latest in a crop of crap is Rambo: First Blood, Part 2.

This is the fourth movie to be released about 40-year old Vietnam vets returning to find MIA's alive; it is grossing millions and is probably almost as profitable as the war itself--to some people. If these movies were merely the dream of some REMF* about what combat was about they would be harmless. After all, middle-aged men running around the jungle (and I do mean running) without getting heat stroke, drinking paddy water without getting dysentery, surviving in the jungle without losing weight, and able to leap tall buildings at a single bound, all of this is ridiculous to most vets who have seen real combat. But unfortunately, these movies carry a very subtle message to the younger generation which does not remember the Vietnam War. Killing is fun again! Like the John Wayne movies of our youth, death and killing have been cleared up as the nation looks forward to another Vietnam in Central America. No where do men have their legs blown off and live; no one is confined to a wheel chair; no one has children born handicapped because of chemical defoliants.

In fact for the most part the "good guys" don't even die, just thousands of nameless, faceless "gooks" who don't respect life anyway.

There is an interesting twist to all these movies. In order for Americans to be the "good guys," and in order for them to win, they become guerillas. There is a grand role reversal in which the American fights with his hands (instead of with B-52's) and the "bad guys" have the helicopter gunships. Pardon me if

RAMBO or How I Won the Vietnam War Ten Years after the 'Politicians' Lost it !

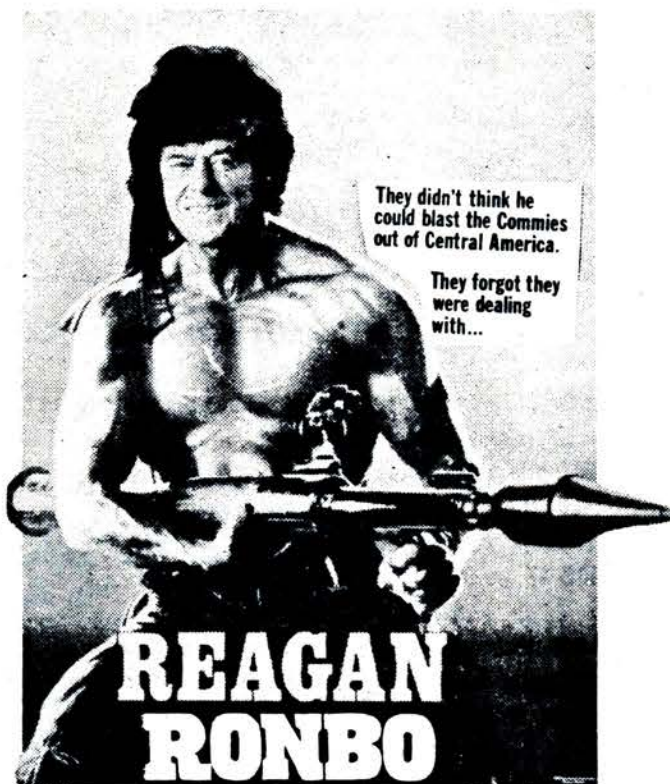
my CIB* is showing, but I seem to remember the VC making grenades out of C-ration cans and facing the overwhelming power of battleships, gunships, Puff and all the rest.

who bombed his home--and this is the same "enemy" the U.S. is likely to face in Central America.

I suppose some will think it is cheap to attack the person-

patriot. It seems that from one generation to the next the ones who make the wars and the ones who make the movies are never the ones who do the fighting or the dying.

--Barry Romo
VVAW National
Office



These new attempts to entice young people set a challenge to VVAW. Already many chapters and members do work in high schools and with youth groups to counter the lies and promises of military recruiters. Coupled with this is the necessity of explaining what Vietnam and combat are really like. And there is the further necessity of putting a face on the "enemy" who was, like as not, a 14-year old fighting against the foreigners who were invading his country and

alities starring in these movies, but I just can't help but burn watching these new John Wayne types play 'Nam vets. Most of these "heroes" are old enough to have had the chance to "play" war for real if they had tried. Stallone is a prime example. While Vietnam was an act in the process of looking for extras, "Rocky" was in Europe going to school. As Vietnam continued, "Rambo" was making bucks making porno flicks; as Vietnam ended Stallone became a true

Nam Vets Picket Rambo

A group of Vietnam vets in San Francisco have been picketing "Rambo: 1st Blood, Part II"

Edwardo Cohen, spokesman for the Veterans Speakers Alliance told THE VETERAN that they "took offense that Stallone would make a movie at a time when our country is openly intervening in Central America."

Cohen, a veteran of the 173rd Airborne, was "upset that Stallone is depicting himself as the voice of Vietnam vets when he neither served in Vietnam or in the armed services.... He exploits our sacrifice in Vietnam as well as the tragedy of the MIA's families."

The veterans have continued their picket line from Thursday through Saturday since July 24th and have been successful in exposing the film both to moviegoers and in the media. They have offered to debate Stallone concerning Vietnam and vets

The group hopes that other vets across the country will take up the challenge that this movie presents and picket it as Vietnam vets.

For more information, contact: Veterans Speaker Alliance
P.O. Box 40755
San Francisco, CA 94140

*REMF stands for "rear echelon mother-fucker."
*CIB is the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

A gut catcher

Have you ever seen
A gut catcher?
Perhaps not
If you never had to use one.
There is no patent on them.
They're make shift
Depending upon time
And place.
I've seen ponchos used
And a pack
And a canteen cover
Or your hands.
You catch the guts of your
buddy
As they spill out of his body
And try to stuff them back in
But they keep sliding out.
For a face blown in
For an eye blown out
For an arm blown off
For a body blown open
.... A-gut catcher.

--Stan Platke
4th Infantry '68-69

For Those Who Fought

For those who fought and died, a bitter wall
Rises before the eyes of those who sent
A city of young people out to fall
For old men's greed and vanity. They went
With young men's courage, fought the best they knew,
Better than the bureaucrats deserved;
They did far more than generals could do
To save the honor of the land they served.

And we who by our best lights fought for peace
And walked the path of march, and prayer, and fast,
Who worked to make the death and killing cease,
Now walk, un-monumented toward the past.
We ask no wall--just some small guarantees,
Or hope, at least--that their wall be the last.

Marian Henriquez Neudel

FLASHES

Old men's fissured lips
in history's aged
mirror sneer
Again.

War becomes peace.
Peace becomes war.

Flashes of blinding
white light belt
churches to graveyard ash--
their pilgrims
disillusioned
disappear.

Leadens days
bear barren nights.
Silent winds
rage through time
then slowly cease
spent of will.

A ray of light.
A seed is sown.
A blade of grass.
A babe is born.
A mirror cracks
Again.

--Ed Damato
VVAW New York

Once Was One Time Too Many VIETNAM ANNIVERSARY

The 10th anniversary of U.S. Marines jumping into helicopters amid a squalling mass of Vietnamese who wanted to get out--and the end of U.S. occupation of South Vietnam--has come and gone. New York City held a ticker-tape parade, there were kind words and pats on the head from politicians around the country, a smattering of new memorials and ritual bows to the newfound "heroes": the Vietnam vet! Meanwhile, vets without jobs are still unemployed; vets suffering from various forms of post traumatic stress have not been cured; vets whose problems led to alcoholism or divorce and still drunk and divorced. And the Vietnam vet suicide rate--well over 100,000 and rising--continues to grow.

Fifteen years ago VVAW tried to understand and tell others what it meant to separate the warriors from the war. You can and should hate the war, we told people; but don't hate the warrior. Hate the generals who plan the tactics or the politicians who plan the strategy, or the corporations who make billions in profits; don't hate the GI who carries out these god-awful policies.

The distinction between the two sounds simple today. Fifteen years ago we faced those who supported the war and were sure the reason we were losing was the hippy, drug-crazed troops over there; and, on the other side among those who knew that the war was wrong, we faced those who were sure the blood-thirsty GI's were slaughtering innocent Vietnamese.

While much has changed in 15 years, much more stays the same. Reagan and the Reagan-influenced media have begun to make heroes out of Vietnam vets and, not only were the vets "heroes," but the war itself was an "heroic" effort. The war and the warrior are being confused all over again. This time there's a purpose: make Vietnam heroic, show the real American "heroes," and especially let the youth understand the patriotic zeal of these heroes. Make enough camouflaged fatigues (in Taiwan, of course) so that every teenage male can prowl his macho jungles looking like a refugee from an army surplus store. It's guaranteed to pay off at the recruiter's office.

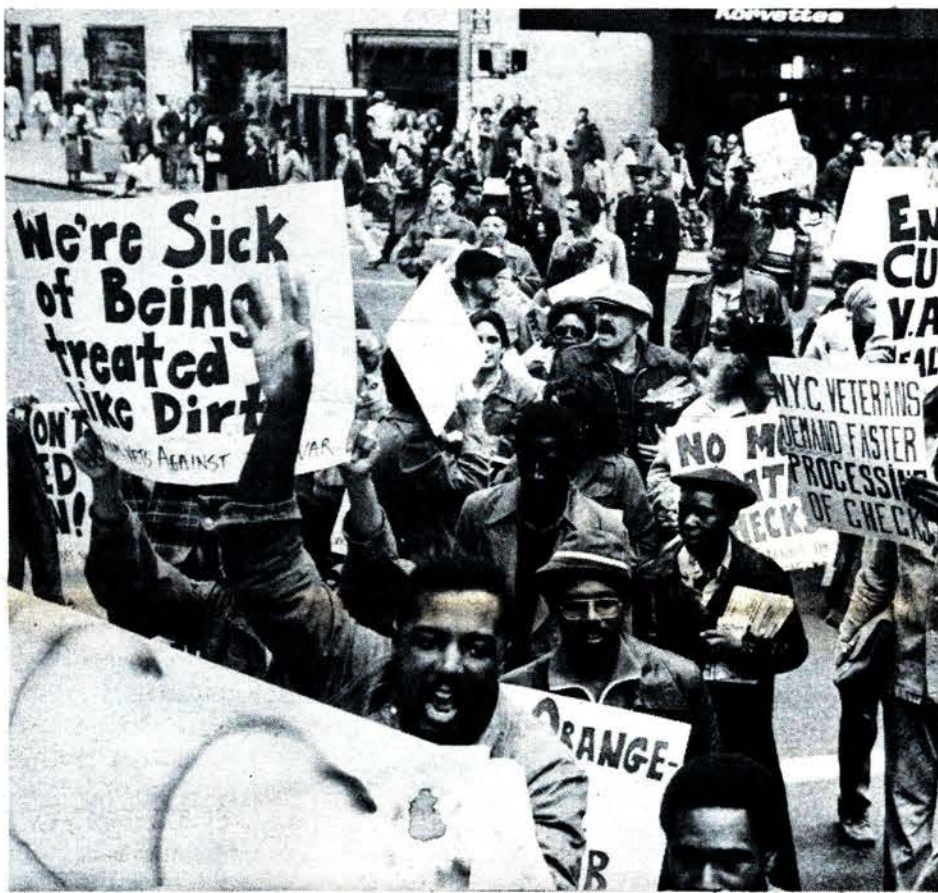
Patriotism is in again. Notice hold often we've been told that the "wounds of Vietnam are now being bound up." "Bound up" means healed means forgotten. A wound hurts, but the scar is somehow heroic.

Recruiters, and Jr ROTC, reappear in schools. The National Boy Scout Jamboree is treated to

several days of Special Forces exhibition--all you need to do is change uniforms. And, of course, Rambo rampages through the theaters, his pockets stuffed with box office receipts.

If we are honest with ourselves almost any Vietnam vet openly or secretly gets off on the new adulation, even when we know it's for all the wrong reasons. Our experiences let us live up to the John Wayne image: "I've stared death in the face, and death blinked" which our society has so thoroughly ingrained in us. We've been dumped on for so long it

the military's silly rules (we had learned in Vietnam that after enough days in the field, hair got long and didn't interfere with the job), and that drug use was, for many of us, one symptom of the disease of the Vietnam experience, these truths didn't matter. Worse than just being drug-crazed hippies, according to the Nixon-ites, we were dangerous and threatening, planning, according to the indictment of VVAW's Gainesville 8 (and, by extension, the whole organization) to disrupt by violence the Republican convention.



gives us a little thrill to be a sort of role model for high school males.

The image of the Vietnam vet--that is, what others see us as--has shifted drastically in the last 15 years. For us as children of a media age the image is particularly important: once the myth has been set up we try to grow into it.

In the late '60's, the early days of VVAW, we were "alleged vets" as if our authenticity determined our credibility. During Operation Dewey Canyon III, in 1971, climaxed by vets throwing back their Vietnam medals on the steps of the Capitol, the medals, the artificial limbs, the crutches and the discharge papers all spoke directly to our "alleged" status.

Nixon's White House, however, could hardly permit a large group of Vietnam vets to protest and, in passing, explain the war in which we had just fought. So they attempted to undermine the credibility of vets with a few more broad brush strokes--we became drug-crazed hippy vets. That we let our hair grow in reaction to

Since vets from Vietnam were not joiners, for the most part (we had joined one thing once and that had got us to Vietnam in the first place), the next image foisted on the American people was the vet as loner. And, as a loner, he tended to go berserk. For years we worried each time we picked up a newspaper that headlined an act of violence, because somewhere in the story--usually in the first line--there would be a Vietnam vet. Vet holds hostages. Vet goes berserk--kills family. Vet turns sniper--kills 31. And on and on.

Still, the power structure hoped people would believe that vets had nothing worth saying about the war that did, in fact, drive some of us crazy. By lumping all vets together the powers that be could minimize the effect of what any vet's perception was concerning what had happened to him or her and why. And who can say how many vets, already balancing uneasily on the edge of reality, got their final push over the edge from stories that made all vets seem crazy.

The vet myth had moved from groups of vets to stories

about individual vets; the next stop was nothing--the disappeared vet. Neglect was the key; don't talk about them and maybe they'll go away. Sweep them under a rug, press down hard on the rug, and they will disappear and take their war with them. It was a time when the government seemed to believe if people would only forget Vietnam then the government could get on about its important business of invasions, occupations, overthrows of unfriendly governments, etc.

But with events like Agent Orange, with the maturing of many Vietnam vets into seats of power, and with the work of many vets themselves, today's vet image is no longer neglect. Check your newspaper, especially around Vets Day or Memorial Day and you'll find the new vet--a weeping vet. "Vet remembers lost comrades," the caption will say. Weeping is an act that binds wounds; it shows we've come to grips with our grief and with the problems, that, once again, we've put the war behind us. Or so they would like us to believe.

The weeping vet fits, too, with half of VVAW's Memorial Day message: Remember the Dead.

And the living?

The answer to the vet images and the vet myths, to the children prowling their jungle schoolyards in camouflaged fatigues, to the recruiting ads that hope to reap the harvest of American youth to fight their wars, the answer to all of this is truth. Just simple truth. To understand that a 13-year-old child may be the enemy who wanted to kill us in Vietnam--that truth stands far above any Rambo-type vision of Russian evildoers pulling all the strings. The agony of the vet whose shrapnel wound still pulses when the weather is damp is a fine antidote to the recruiter's poisonous message.

Yes, there was a little rush of adrenalin at the moment we thought we were just about dead, but there was also dirt and leeches and weariness and blood and men who lost fingers and feet and eyes and balls, and there was incredible boredom. There are better ways to get the rush of adrenalin.

If we learned anything from the Vietnam experience, it is that the war was stupid; looking back it made the situation in Vietnam worse than before we started. And for that American youth died--over 58,000 there and more to come.

There were heroic acts in Vietnam--many of them. But it was far from an heroic war. And we have to make sure it is not a repeated war. Once was one time too many. Again could only be worse.

--Pete Zastrow
VVAW National
Office

In a driving rain storm with 50° temperatures and 20 mph winds, VVAW-Chicago held its most successful Memorial Day program since the Chicago Chapter initiated the activity in 1971.

Coinciding with a city-sponsored event, the program brought out the political richness that is the best and the worst of down-and-dirty Chicago politics.

VVAW has a consistent history of timely, interesting Memorial Day programs speaking to the issues affecting not just Vietnam veterans but a wider audience. Combined with an active life in the many communities that are Chicago and a high profile in the Vietnam veterans population, the Memorial Day programs have survived the worst possible weather, police harassment, indifferent press, and less-than-friendly city administrations.

With Chicago Mayor Harold Washington in Washington, DC lobbying for more federal funds for Chicago, attacks in the press began on his Administration for lack of veterans programs, but more specifically for not having a parade "like New York City." A cluster of muckrakers with the Chicago Tribune tried, through their daily gossip column to launch an attack on the Mayor. Spokesmen from the VVAW National Office pointed out that the New York parade, like the Washington DC Vietnam Veterans Memorial, were projects put on by Vietnam vets for Vietnam vets with planning and funding coming from private sources.

Unfettered by facts, the Tribune writers, joined by a Chicago Sun-Times columnist stepped up their efforts to show a division in the 'Nam vets across the city. With the announcement that Mayor Washington would speak at VVAW's annual Memorial Day program and then invite all Vietnam vets and their families to a picnic afterwards, the fuse was lit.

According to the Sun-Times, VVAW, "a group more surrounded by police than by dignitaries" was being elevated to a level slightly better than pond scum. Officials of the VFW and American Legion were hounded to make statements about their distaste for VVAW and our Memorial Day activities; they declined, at least in public.

Attempts by foes of Washington in the Chicago city council to steal the limelight and glory faltered, mostly from lack of experience with Vietnam vets and ties only to the more traditional veterans groups. Chicago Park Czar Kelly refused to allow the Mayor to dedicate a flower garden to 'Nam vets and instead dedicated it in a nearly secret ceremony to someone, presumably veterans.

The last run at the Mayor's

office by opposition forces came in the form of jobs. Accused of fostering unemployment by pulling the plug on the "Mayor's Office of Veterans' Employment" by Republican Party officials and spokespersons for Chicago members of Vietnam Veterans of America, Washington was being accused of something that happened well before he took office.

Memorial Day 1985 was to be as bad a day weatherwise as any previous. Over 100 people, mostly Vietnam vets, stood in driving rain at Heald Square's Vietnam Veterans Fountain to hear a short program of speakers including 3 national officers of VVAW, poets, and Mayor Washington.

"Before I begin my prepared speech, I want to make a few things clear to those attacking this event," stated Mayor Washington. He continued: "I am against war, for peace, for a nuclear freeze and anybody who doesn't like it can go to hell."

Pete Zastrow of VVAW's National Office, took it further by stating, "We've got our parades and we got our monuments now, but anyone here would trade a monument for a good jobs program."

Mayor Washington announced the formation of a Vietnam vets task force to plan a "fitting" Memorial for Vietnam vets and a liaison from his office to Vietnam vets groups.

The ceremony closed with all present laying flowers at the base of the memorial fountain.

A city-sponsored indoor picnic followed, attended by 500 people, primarily Vietnam vets and their families. The entertainment of jazz, rock and blues performers were all Vietnam vets. The food was delicious, the mood informal and relaxed as the Mayor moved through the crowd talking to any vet who cared to, smiling but seriously listening to the vets who spoke with him, pausing for pictures with vets and their families.

The invitation to Harold Washington to speak at the VVAW Memorial Day program brought more attacks on VVAW than one can recall in recent years, but resulted in strengthening the Chicago Chapter. The response by the membership, old and new, has put the work of VVAW far ahead of what anyone anticipated.

Linking Mayor Washington to VVAW, the press, rather than soiling his image, made his Administration look good. Beyond VVAW's presence in communities throughout the city, the Black community considers any attack on Washington as an attack on the Black community.

VVAW in Chicago deeply appreciates Mayor Washington's participation in our Memorial Day program, helping to bring alive the theme of the day: "Honor the dead--Fight like Hell for the living!"

MEMORIAL DAY CHICAGO STYLE



Top: VVAW members Bob Spicher, Tony Wright and Pete Zastrow march to the Fountain. Center: Participants place flowers at Fountain. Bottom: Mayor Washington speaks to vets after the ceremony. (Photos by Maureen Dolan)



10 Years Later STILL TAKING CASUALTIES



VVAW JULY 4th NATIONAL CAMPOUT and PIG ROAST

More than 150 people (plus 40 kids under 18) attended this year's July 4th Campout in Wisconsin. Here, John Zutz, John Lindquist, Annie Bailey and Eddie Zutz marinate a pig, donated by the Zutzes. See you there next year. (Photo by Virg McFadden)

Monday, April 29th, 1985 was the 10th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam. Twenty-five people from the Milwaukee VVAW chapter picketed the offices of Senator Kasten in Milwaukee.

"Bobbie Kasten is a slime, Puthim in the unemployment line...."

bounced off the walls downtown along with others of the world-famous VVAW cadences.

Senator Kasten sits on the Senate Budget Committee and has personally endorsed \$320 million worth of "painless" cuts to the VA budget. They include:

1. 1% staff cut.
2. A 5% cut in staff and workers salaries.
3. A total wipe out of one year's construction funds.
4. A user fee of 5% on VA home loans.
5. An attempt to seek payment from private insurance for care at a VA hospital. A cap of \$5,000 for vets income to get non-service connected medical care.
6. And don't forget that they still want to tax VA disability checks as income.

VVAW was warmly received by guards who were 75% Vietnam vets themselves. Senator Kasten's office refused to meet with us and then said they would meet with three people. The group voted not to split our forces, so no meeting was held.

We need all the veterans and families who read THE VETERAN to write or call their Senators or Congresspeople to stop these VA budget cuts. Every VA budget since '79 has been cut. Last year 250,000 veterans were denied care at VA facilities because of cuts in staff and beds.

All this is coming at a time when the 10 million World War II vets are reaching the age of 65. Not all of these vets will end up at the VA, of course. But the veteran population needing care will increase until at least the year 2010. This is no time to cut the VA budget.

Ronald Reagan and David Stockman want to see the VA "privatized" like the report of the Grace Commission says. Mr Grace makes hundreds of millions, but wants to see "waste cut" and big government off our backs. He'd like to see the multi-national companies on our backs, even more than they are now. Members of VVAW know that, "When they say cut back, We say fight back!" Taking care of the veterans is a part of the cost of war we will not let them forget. No More Vietnams! Vets of All Eras, Close Ranks!

--John Lindquist
VVAW National Office

--Bill Davis
VVAW National Office

Hiroshima and Nagasaki BOMBING ANNIVERSARY

Ten years ago, on the thirtieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an American delegation traveled to Japan for the observances there, marking the events themselves as well as a huge international conference opposing nuclear weapons.

With delegations from over 100 countries present, the program took on an added significance as the first meeting of an American peace delegation with their counterparts from Vietnam where the war for liberation had just ended.

The month I spent travelling Japan, meeting with the Japanese people and speaking of my Vietnam experiences was offset by the realization of standing at ground zero in two beautiful cities and beginning to understand in a real sense the death and

suffering that atomic explosions brought there. Without malice or condemnation, members of Genseikyo, one of several Japanese anti-nuclear and peace organizations, patiently led myself and other Americans through the cities and countryside of Japan meeting the Hibakusha, the wounded survivors of the bomb blasts and seeing the museums of death that no one who passes through can ever forget.

Among older Americans in the U.S. delegation there was a feeling of guilt; among younger members the feeling translated into a quiet rage and a determination. Anti-war and peace activists became anti-nuclear activists.

The meetings with government officials, marches and rallies of hundreds of thousands, conversations with American GI's

and Japanese students faded in comparison to the experience of being seated at a small table in Hiroshima with two Vietnamese veterans of the war. With nothing more dangerous than a bottle of beer between us, we never spoke but still communicated the horrors we had seen that day, horrors that for that brief moment offset the horrors and suffering that had been our common experience in Vietnam with the knowledge that this could have happened to and by us.

Nuclear proponents should be led through Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the children and grandchildren of the survivors; it wouldn't hurt them but it may save all our lives.

Interview with "Mother of Agent Orange" MAUDE DEVICTOR IN

(The following interview was done for THE VETERAN by Maureen A Dolan; its subject is Maude DeVictor whom many vets remember as the "Mother of Agent Orange." As a VA worker in Chicago, Maude put together case histories of enough vets to ask some of the questions about Agent Orange exposure which eventually made vets and the American public aware of what had been done to us.)

Ms Dolan: Would you explain how and why you decided to go to Nicaragua?

Ms DeVictor: I went to Nicaragua for the entire month of February this year as part of a harvest brigade which had a subgroup of veterans. I went on a scholarship from the Nicaragua exchange. The main reason for my going was that we Blacks of the U.S.--the have-nots of North America--are not getting the true picture of what is actually going on in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is a small country about the size of Massachusetts, with about 3 million people. The average age in Nicaragua is about 24. This is a 3rd World country whose population is smaller than Chicago and does not pose a security threat to the U.S.

The Reagan Administration is trying hard to whip up public support for its intervention policy in Central America. Its hope is that enough propaganda will become a manufactured reality.

We need to recall the time when Martin Luther King got involved in stopping the Vietnam war. There was a sentiment among Blacks of taking care of our own as there is now with fighting the Administration's policies at home. But, at a crucial point in time we began to see how related the fight for civil rights and the fight against intervention was; Blacks were dying in disproportionate numbers in Vietnam. Blacks had originally been brought to the U.S. to boost the economy as slaves. U.S. intervention in Central America is also for U.S. profit.

Nicaragua solidarity groups are seeing the importance of outreach to Latinos and Blacks in the U.S. We are brothers and sisters in the kinds of oppression we have faced. The scholarship I received enabled me to go in and observe, ask questions and formulate a package of information whereby Black Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, etc make the connections, develop a seeking mind, and perhaps even go there to see for themselves.

Q. How has the embargo affected this?

A. This was a profound move on Reagan's part. One of the effects is that it has affected American's constitutional right of travel--which is as important as the right to vote. We shouldn't just depend on Ronald Reagan or Dan Rather as our only sources for what goes on in other coun-

tries. It was only one flight a day but an important source of revenue to Nicaragua. It was a way for North Americans to go directly there to gain personal knowledge. Now we have to go other ways.

Q. Could you describe some of the changes going on in Nicaragua?



Maude (center) with Barry Cate (to her right) at Managua press conference. (Photo by Jeff Jones)

A. Nicaragua is functioning like a UN pilot program. We hear always about the number of Cubans and Rumanians but there are representatives of many countries learning in Nicaragua and contributing to the development there. For instance, the Finnish parliament gave 12% of its national budget in foreign aid to Nicaragua to help develop a dairy system and hospitals. Austrians sent technical brigadistas with computer expertise. There are also West German and Swiss cultural brigades. It is interesting to see retired Sorbonne professors chipping in, even getting their hands dirty in some cases. The Canadians are helping to develop a co-op farming system.

The spirit prevalent in Nicaragua is that great things are possible and everyone is part of building the country up.

Look at the literacy program. Rightwing, leftwing, any wing, how could you possibly be against something which helps people become more fully developed as human beings? In 5 years the literacy rate has jumped from 12% to 50%. Through this program every household got hands-on experience with the revolution. Every citizen brushed up against it in one way or another. The common people are meeting world-class political strategists.

There is a spirit of a common bond of humankind. One crucial thing I learned was that propaganda is not just a whole lot of sound--not just rhetoric--but

visual and tactile experience.

Under Somoza, the people could not learn to read, did not have enough to eat, could not govern themselves. It is very different now.

I could travel freely in Nicaragua--in some ways more so than in the U.S. I waved down rides from campesinos. There

were no restrictions.

The militarization is overstated. We have received a one-sided view. The Nicaraguans are serious about protecting themselves but I have heard more gunshots at 79th and Halsted in Chicago than I did when I was in Nicaragua. As a veteran I noticed the difference in the military there. Nicaragua sends its recruits to school first and then people go to military service. Here, in many cases, you have to spill your blood first, perhaps risk your life, before the U.S. government is willing to pay for your education. Theirs is a more humanistic approach.

One of the things that struck me as so different from the U.S. was that, in Nicaragua, workers are held in high regard. Every union official in the U.S. should go there and see that the workers are not just some cog in the wheel but are treated as valued human beings. When we were picking coffee, we said every bean we pick is one less for the contras. And more for the people. (And there's an awful lot of coffee in them hills!)

Q. How are ex-Somoza supporters treated?

A. There are people from the upper classes who still have their fancy homes, phones and swimming pools (but there is no chlorine for the pools). These people are not under house arrest but have socially distanced themselves by choice from the exciting task of building the coun-

try. The rubber plantations, etc have been confiscated, but only after a period of non-productivity. After all, the Nicaraguan revolution concerns class struggle. Nicaragua is a very beautiful country with many resources. It is similar to Vietnam with its supply of rubber, tin, oil and the prevalence of water.

Q. Can you describe some of the effects of U.S. policy in the Central American region?

A. Actions by the Reagan Administration give us important lessons. One was the protocol for Grenada. The Administration viewed the Grenadian invasion as proof that non-caucasoids would kill non-caucasoids for caucasoids. The government purposely used the 82nd Airborne staffed with different oppressed nationalities. It was their hidden agenda to prove that Blacks would kill Blacks.

Operation Big Pine was a lesson to us, as well. American Congressmen did not vote to send troops and equipment there for wargames. The troops got rotated out but the equipment--tons of it--remains, functioning as 18-month interim funding for the contras. Many people are not aware, either, that there are many retired U.S. military officers who own big farms in Honduras and Costa Rica. The current decision on humanitarian aid along with these supplies has a chilling effect on total balance of power in the area. If we were serious about humanitarian aid it would go to children in Lebanon or in the Bronx or on Indian reservations.

I was filmed by NBC at the Intercontinental Hotel when I arrived and when I returned. Reporters have as much access to information as I did. Whether by their own bias or the fact that their reports get butchered when they are sent back to Miami, the U.S. public is not receiving the full picture. For instance, we don't hear of the weekly protests by North American citizens residing in Nicaragua outside the U.S. consulate. We are not getting the truth about what the contras are up to, especially the fighting in the primarily Black populated Bluefields area.

The Reagan Administration wants to dictate to Nicaragua how it is to run its country, like someone bursting into an operating room and taking over from the doctors and nurses. Our government officials are making a big deal out of Ortega's visit to the Soviet Union, not mentioning that he visited other countries as well. Perhaps, the U.S. would have the right to get angry if it had volunteered aid and been turned down, but that is not

Orange' on Recent Trip IN & ON NICARAGUA

the case. Nicaragua did not spurn the U.S. government, it was the other way around. The Nicaraguans do not want anyone telling them what to do. They will accept aid, but each offer is looked at for what is gained and what is to be given up. They are not about to give up their hard-won independence.

The Nicaraguans know that Reagan is not the spokesperson for North Americans. They have seen with their own eyes many different kinds of people from different walks of life—even doctors and lawyers put on blue jeans and help them and learn from them. They see the distinction between the U.S. government and the U.S. people.

Q. Most North Americans don't know that much about Nicaragua and its people. Could you describe some of the different kinds of people who make up the population?

A. We have much to learn from Nicaragua's rich culture and the different political forces building up the country. There are six cultures in Nicaragua. They include the Spanish, the Suma Indians, the Miskito Indians, the Afriques (with ties to African culture) and Creoles, with similarities to the Virgin Islands people.

The Pacific side was more subjugated under Spanish influence. The Atlantic side kept much of its cultural identity. This is why Sandino said that the moral and economic victory of the revolution would be won on the Atlantic side. While the Spanish side incorporated some elements of Spanish macho emotionalism, the Atlantic side, influenced by the Moravian Church, experienced over 200 years training in elementary logic as an overlay of their culture. The terrain served to separate the cultures. The Atlantic side is very much like equatorial Africa, with a water-based culture which has a broader protein base, including different kinds of fish, turtle meat (which is rich in vitamins and has an anti-aging element), 7 kinds of yams, sugarcane, yucca, mangos, bananas, etc. Because of this, the multinational conglomerates were more concentrated on the Atlantic side.

The different cultures experienced different forms of oppression and resistance. Under Somoza, the Pacific side experience the overt repression shown by blood on the sidewalk, the rapes, the disappeared, and the people fought valiantly against that oppression. On the Atlantic side, the company store and the long hours in the fields of the campesinos brought other forms of resistance. There is a long history of Nicaraguans fighting for their independence.

I remember one story of the Miskito women swimming across coral reefs through shark-infested waters to get supplies from one of Sandino's boats.

Q. Can you describe some of the class differences?

A. Different trends with different histories support the revolution. For instance, an entrenched

A. Freedom is a yearning and a sense we are born with and sometimes take for granted. Liberation is a catharsis within a cultural and political orientation. The Nicaraguan revolution has set up the conditions to support freedom in its culture and politics. There you get a vision of all being possible, that each



Maude in Nicaragua (Photo by Jeff Jones)

middle class grew under Somoza and through the Moravian church network. These people travelled and became educated as doctors and lawyers, etc. They were literate and worldly and expected to lead the government. But the campesinos say "we did not make revolution to replace Somoza with an intellectual elite." They maintain that everyone has a place in governing, not just a few. The lifestyles of those who united with the Sandinistas were different from those who automatically thought they were entitled to govern.

What many North Americans don't realize is that the Sandinistas want their country to survive and prosper—else there would be no need for their party. Also, many people do not realize that there are many forces who were and are involved in building the new Nicaragua. And they did it on their own. It is a unique situation—they took the best from democracy, Marxism, tribalism, the churches, and mixed the best elements together. The Nicaraguans deserve their chance and our support.

Q. You mentioned before the importance of Black Americans learning about Nicaragua. Could you expand on this?

person can develop to his or her fullest. You don't get the signal you are crazy for wanting freedom. It is not the same signal we Black Americans grew up with here with separate water fountains. When I see President Reagan handing out a Medal of Freedom, or something, to one of his friends, I just say cancel that thought, Maude. That will not happen to you. In the U.S. the government does not honor you for trying to accomplish something for the people.

But we cannot glamorize the revolution. Conditions are not easy. One Afrique woman, who looked like she was straight from Ethiopia, asked me to give her something to "remember you by." I had some things like a flashlight and needle and thread. When I gave her the thread, she broke down crying, and hugged me. Thread costs 70 cordebas a spool. There are many shortages of things like that—scissors, Q-tips, which the Nicaraguans have not seen for years, things we take for granted. Reagan would have you believe that all the Nicaraguans want are guns and grenades.

Not many Blacks from the U.S. have been to Nicaragua. There need to be more. The

Black leaders in the U.S. need to pay attention to what is happening in Central America. We need to find out the facts for ourselves and educate our people. We cannot afford to listen to a bunch of old, white, power-hungry men, but must learn the truth for ourselves.

Q. What are some ways North Americans can learn more and do more about the situation in Nicaragua?

A. First, if it is possible, go to Nicaragua yourself. Help organize through church groups here. One of the women on our brigade was a nun from a primarily Spanish-speaking school in the States, and she picked coffee right beside me.

To the youth I say, if you want to travel, by all means go to Nicaragua, but don't go through the military to get there. We don't need to encourage more gravediggers. It would be good for our churches to sponsor youth to learn from the Nicaraguan experience. It would be great if our kids could earn college credits from the learning experience down there. The brigade experience should be more universally implemented.

Second, contact solidarity groups here and learn from the speakers and films and slide shows available. Educate yourself and other people.

Third, get involved in material aid campaigns in order to help send much-needed everyday items like band-aids, etc.

Fourth, keep up a steady flow of communication with your Congressman through phone calls and letters, opposing U.S. intervention in Central America.

Fifth, and this is more longterm: We need to take a global approach to events like what has happened in Nicaragua. We need a monitoring device under the auspices of the UN—perhaps a citizens' review panel. For one thing our youth should be encouraged to learn Spanish, particularly because, in the hemisphere we live in, Spanish is the language which predominates. And our youth need to be more realistically educated in order to be vigorous leaders for the 21st century. Finally, there needs to be a cultural depository—artisans and craftspeople who can produce unique craftwork of the country and make it available all over the world, and perhaps an intellectual exchange to share Nicaragua's beauty.

I would like to conclude by saying that there are people like Reagan who would rather turn back history, who hold certain outdated precepts which are non-functional in a technologically advanced world; their ideas could unleash terrible destruction. We have a stake in upholding the Nicaraguans right to self-determination. There are no absolutes except in nature. You cannot outlaw a rainbow from the sky.

Where We Came From, Who Are We, Who Can Join VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

A National Veterans Organization Recognized as Tax Deductible.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War began in 1967 to join the ranks of those who wanted an end to U.S. involvement in Indochina. Basic principles of the organization have continued ever since: we have fought against unjust wars, whether the U.S. invasion of Indochina or, potentially, El Salvador, or the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. We have supported, by whatever means were possible, those who are fighting for their own liberation. And we have stood with veterans of all eras in fighting for the things we need, have been promised, and have been earned.

From its early days VVAW has operated on the knowledge that the government will give vets what we need only when forced to do so—that vets get nothing for nothing. We've learned that when one vet fights alone, there is a limited amount he or she can accomplish, but when veterans unite to fight together, we can do much. VVAW has seen some real successes: we helped to put an end to U.S. troops in Southeast Asia, we helped get Nixon tossed out of office on his ear, we helped to win (to a great extent) amnesty for war resisters. With other vets groups we helped to stir up enough public furor that the Veterans Administration took its first halting steps to look for an answer to Agent Orange poisoning, and recognized what VVAW used to call Post Vietnam Syndrome when we were leading rap groups in 1970 (and is now called "post-traumatic stress or delayed stress syndrome") as a service-connected disability.

VVAW has consistently stood with the interests of vets of all eras, especially Vietnam and Vietnam-era vets. Sometimes this has brought us into conflict with the "traditional" vets organizations. While they have tended to stand behind the U.S. government and its various war-like maneuverings, VVAW has always asked "Why?" We've opposed moves toward war, fight against registration and the draft which will follow, opposed inflated defense expenditures, welcomed vets with "bad" discharges into the organization and fought to get the discharge system dropped entirely from the military.

We know what it means to have been used once by the government and its corporate backers, and then be thrown away with a bad GI Bill, wretched healthcare, Agent Orange ravaging our bodies, vivid memories of the war often ravaging our minds, no jobs, and all the multitude of other problems Vietnam vets often face. We do not intend to see our children go through the same thing in the next war for somebody else's profit!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

NATIONAL COORDINATORS

Bill Davis
(312) 386-1413

Barry Romo
(312) 327-5756

Peter Zastrow
(312) 761-8248

John Lindquist
(414) 963-0398

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BY-LAWS OF VVAW

1. The name of the organization shall be Vietnam Veterans Against the War.
2. Membership in the organization is open to all veterans (regardless of discharge) and to non-veterans interested in joining together to build a veterans movement. While VVAW is made up primarily of Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans and their families, the organization also welcomes veterans from other eras and non-veterans.
3. Membership requirements include filling out a membership form, paying the \$5 initiation fee and \$1 monthly dues to the national office. Other requirements, not in conflict with national requirements, may be added by local chapters.
4. Local VVAW chapters will decide on their own chapter structure, by-laws and dues. Chapters will, to the best of their ability, work on the national programs of VVAW plus whatever local campaigns they decide on which are not in opposition to national programs.
5. National meetings of the organization, open to all members, will be held at least once yearly. A National Steering Committee, made up of the national officers, the regional officers, & an elected representative from each chapter shall meet as necessary. Such meetings may consist of phone calls to the chapter representatives if necessary.
6. National officers are elected at national meetings for a period of a year. They are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the organization, for speaking on behalf of the national organization, and for the publication and content of THE VETERAN and "The Guldun."
7. Regional coordinators, as needed will be elected at national meetings to serve 1 year terms; regional coordinators will facilitate and coordinate regional activities, aid the building of local chapters, and provide input from chapters into the national office.
8. Policies, programs and positions of VVAW nationally will, as much as possible, be decided at national meetings. If that is not possible, such decisions will be made by the National Steering Committee or, in emergencies, by the National Office.

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VVAW welcomes all people who want to join together to build a fighting veterans' organization. Although the majority of our members are vets of the Vietnam-era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to build the vets' struggle. Membership requirements are participation in the life of the organization, and payment of \$1 per month to the national organization with a \$5 initiation fee.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local projects and programs under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to the National Steering Committee meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day leadership and publish the national newspaper, THE VETERAN.

Signature _____

Continued From page 1

NICARAGUA

plating.

What are the arguments Reagan is using to justify his vicious attacks on the Nicaraguan people?

1. That Nicaragua is engaged in "aggressive activities in Central American," and

2. That Nicaragua is a Soviet satellite whose "massive arms buildup" threatens the U.S.

Both these charges are blatantly false.

WHO IS REALLY ENGAGED IN AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES?

U.S. State and Defense Department officials have told the New York Times (March 30, 1985) that they do not believe Nicaragua has any intention of attacking its neighbors.

A Congressional position paper states that Nicaragua's military capabilities are inferior to the combined military power of its U.S.-allied neighbors in Central America, in both land-based military power and air-power.

According to David MacMichael, former CIA analyst in Central American affairs, there has not been a verified report of arms moving from Nicaragua to the insurgent forces in El Salvador since April 1981.

Nicaragua supported the proposed Contadora treaty for peace in Central America. The Reagan Administration has refused to sign that treaty, and pressured its Central American puppets to also refuse to sign, mostly because the treaty calls for all outside military personnel to be withdrawn from Central America. Although Nicaragua has agreed to remove all Cuban advisors, the U.S. would never consent to withdraw its massive Central American military presence that is the mainstay of the brutal right-wing regimes of El Salvador and Guatemala, and which has turned Honduras into an armed camp in preparation for the threatened U.S. military invasion of Nicaragua. The Honduran buildup has included the construction or enlargement of eight airfields, and the staging of a virtually continuous series of war games over the last two years, involving thousands of combined U.S. and Honduran troops at a time.

The only aggressor in Central American is the U.S., which has funded a 15,000-man army

of Contras, who have killed over 8,000 Nicaraguans, and provided the aid and expertise that is ultimately responsible for the deaths of 100,000 Guatemalans and 50,000 Salvadorans at the hands of rightwing government troops and death squads.

SOVIET ASSISTANCE IS VERY LIMITED

No Soviet or Cuban military bases exist in Central America; many U.S. bases exist. For example, the U.S. maintains its main command center for Latin America in Panama (the Southern Command), including

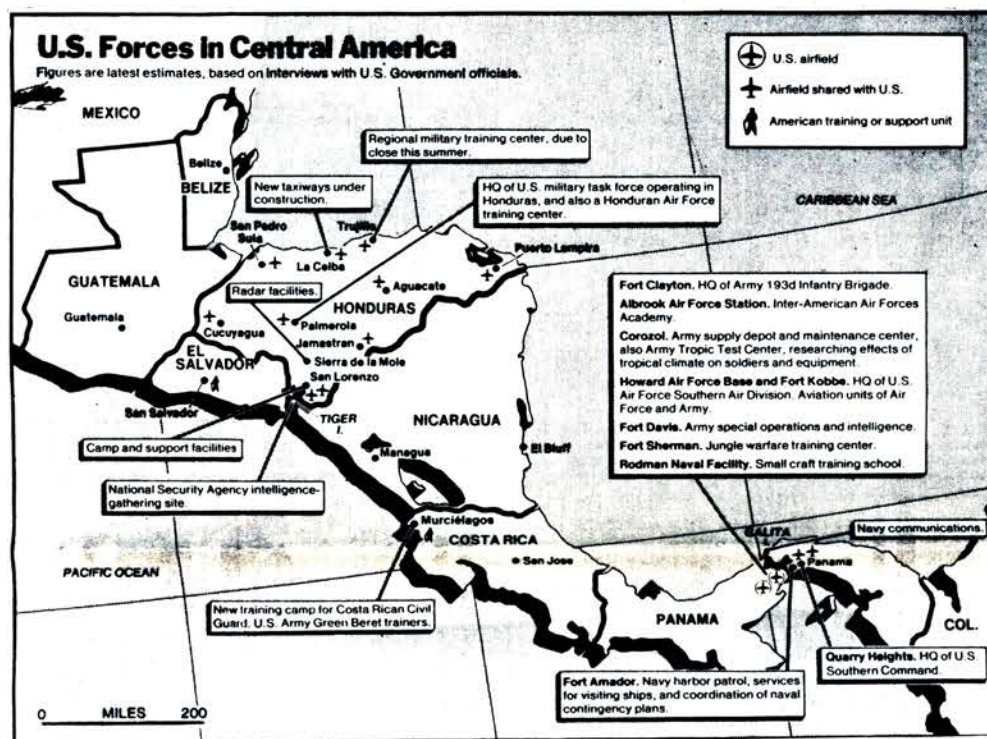
agricultural loan to Nicaragua.

REAGAN'S ILLEGAL TRADE EMBARGO

Given the foregoing, there can be no justification for the escalating economic warfare being waged by the Reagan Administration against Nicaragua. In addition, Ronald Reagan's trade embargo against Nicaragua is an illegal act:

--The Charter of the Organization of American States, to which the U.S. and Nicaragua are signatories, states in Article 19 that:

"No State may use or encourage the use of coercive measures



8 U.S. command posts and training centers; at least 10 military bases in Honduras alone are being "improved" by the U.S., with more on the way. In addition, there are two U.S. naval fleets patrolling off the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Central America, and five other military bases within close striking distance of Central America, including the U.S. military base in Cuba itself. Nicaragua has proposed an agreement prohibiting any foreign troops or bases in Central America; the U.S. has rejected this proposal.

A leader of the U.S.-supported contras, Adolfo Calero, has stated that his own contra troops have seen no evidence of a major buildup of Soviet arms in Nicaragua (New York Times, Nov 22, 1984).

Jaime Chamorro, editor of the anti-Sandinista newspaper *La Prensa*, has stated that the Soviets are providing little assistance to Nicaragua.

Nicaraguan President Ortega's recent trip to the Soviet Union was planned in January to request agricultural credits after the U.S. had pressured the Inter-American Development Bank to hold up a \$58 million

of an economic or political character in order to force the sovereign will of another state and obtain from it advantages of any kind."

The 1956 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the U.S. and Nicaragua allows for freedom of commerce and navigation, and the treaty requires a one-year notification before it can be terminated. Reagan's embargo violates the Friendship treaty since the treaty is still legally in force.

Finally, the embargo may likely violate the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and also the 1974 UN Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

REAGAN MORE ISOLATED (AND DANGEROUS) THAN EVER

While the embargo is a dangerous escalation of the war against Nicaragua, it is also costing the U.S. a great deal of worldwide respect. The foreign ministers of Canada and of several European countries, including Reagan's strong allies of Great Britain and West Germany, strongly disapprove of the embargo, and the Executive Committee of the Common Market on May 15th voiced its opposition

when it proposed a political cooperation agreement with four Central American countries, including Nicaragua. On the same day, representatives of 24 Latin American countries, at a meeting of the Latin American Economic System, called on the U.S. to lift the embargo, and pledged efforts to help Nicaragua. Even Reagan's Central American friends have not jumped on the embargo bandwagon, and the embargo has already been criticized by the conservative Nicaraguan Archbishop Obando y Bravo, and by the rightwing business sector in Nicaragua, which will be directly hurt by the loss of U.S. trade. Thus, in the wake of the Bitburg fiasco, Reagan is again legally and morally isolated in his Nicaragua policy.

In face of this widespread opposition, the Reagan Administration continues to push for aid to the contras by saying that the only alternative will be the commitment of American combat forces in Central America. Many of the same arguments used to sell the American public on Vietnam are being used again--with claims even being made that an invasion of Nicaragua would be an easy military task--by many of the same policy makers who lied to us before, and who have lately been trying to rewrite the history of the Vietnam war to make us forget the lessons of the past.

The Reagan Administration daily prepares for conventional and nuclear war, asking those of us who can least afford it to foot the bill. While the military budget for next year will be approximately \$300 billion, Vietnam vets are given inadequate Agent Orange benefits, with proposed social cutbacks including a year's freeze on veteran's pensions, disability compensation and retirement benefits. We all have a stake in opposing Reagan's dangerous and costly aggression, and it is critical that we organize widespread U.S. Congressional and public opposition to continuation of any aid to the contras. We must also end the embargo and economic war that Reagan is waging on the Nicaraguan people, which recalls the U.S. economic destabilization of the Allende regime in Chile. That resulted in the rightwing coup that killed 30,000 people. Whether Reagan plans a Chile-style economic overthrow of the Sandinista government, or an Indochina-style military debacle, we have to put a stop to him now!

--Robert Gould

U.S. Out of Central America (USOCA)

For additional information about the situation in Nicaragua and the activities of USOCA opposing U.S. intervention, please write or call:

USOCA National Office
2940 16th St, Suite 7
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 550-8006

Memorial Day Milwaukee Action

"It always seems that Memorial Day in Milwaukee is cold and wet. 1985 was no different. 48° and misty. For the 8th year in a row VVAW attended the official VA Memorial Day at Woods, Wisconsin. About 15 of us met in the parking lot and marched behind our wreath up through the old Civil War Soldier Home buildings up to the cemetery. Two hundred and fifty people representing 30 different veterans' groups, Congressman Kleczka, and veterans from the hospital came to the wreath-laying ceremony.

A couple of sour apples told us to go back to Hanbi, but everyone else that came up thanked us for coming. Congressman Kleczka must have been listening during the budget hearing he held in Milwaukee, because he purposely mentioned no cuts in the VA health-care budget. In fact, Congressman Moody's office let us know that the House requested \$250 million for an increase in the healthcare budget.

After the ceremony and the laying of the wreaths, we went to the VA hospital for a reception, and that went really well. We went up to some of the wards and brought the veterans down for coffee and donuts. We passed out copies of THE VETERAN and talked about proposed cuts in the VA budget. Like VVAW has always said, "Honor the Dead, Fight Like Hell for the Living."

(A special thanks goes to Buds and Blossoms for the wreath they made and donated for the ceremony--thank you.)
VVAW Milwaukee

Verona, Wisconsin, a small community in the South central section of the state, honored Vietnam veterans with a three-day festival, on June 6-9.

Back in 1966, Donald R. Schmidt, a Verona resident stationed in Vietnam with his buddies of the 3rd Detachment of the 101st Airborne, adopted the sleepy town of Verona as the "perfect example of Hometown U.S.A." The men of the 3rd Detachment felt that Verona personified our country and its strengths, and bestowed the title "Hometown U.S.A."

As a result, Verona has celebrated with an annual festival every summer since 1966. This year's three-day celebration was dedicated to the men of the 3rd Detachment, as well as to all of those veterans who served in Vietnam.

The city and residents of Verona concluded the festivities this year with a Hometown U.S.A. sign dedication, and a Memorial service to honor those who served during the Vietnam War. The residents also organized a Welcome Home Parade for vets that they felt was long overdue.

VVAW brought up the rear in parade, with our colors and a marching unit consisting of members of the Madison and Milwaukee Chapters. We were well received by the crowds, calling a new cadence, provided by Milwaukee VVAW:

Heidy Heidy Heidy Hey
This is Hometown U.S.A..
Heidy Heidy Heidy Ho
We're just here to let you know
Heidy Heidy Heidy Hey
Thanks for having us today!

Marching In "Hometown U.S.A."



VVAW members enjoyed the applause and the hoopla--it was obvious the crowds appreciated our lively steppin', our banners declaring NO MORE VIETNAMS & TEST, TREAT & COMPENSATE AGENT ORANGE. All along the parade route we were greeted by cheers and standing ovations.

It was great.
Following the parade we

gathered at the festival grounds, manned the information table, sold buttons and talked with the folks. Over and over we were told we were a welcome sight and a nice break from the traditional vets organizations and their usual, boring routines. Thanks again for the Hometown welcome!

--VVAW Madison

MILITARY SERVICE Choice or Chance?



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Parents and Faculty

NEW VVAW PAMPHLET

This 12-page pamphlet, printed with a Spanish section, is designed to inform young people, parents and teachers about the military service--the truth, not the recruiting ads.

VVAW

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Looking for someone you served with in 'Nam? Agent Orange Victims of NJ (Box 233, English-town, NJ 07726) is acting as a clearinghouse for this information. Send them names, dates of service, unit and location in 'Nam and they'll try to match up people. Please include a Donation to Cover Costs

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sun tzu

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SETTLEMENT OR SELL OUT?
AGENT ORANGE TRIAL page 4

THE VETERAN
Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Vol. 14 No. 2 Spring 1984

SUBSTANTIVE LEGISLATION INTRODUCED FOR DISABILITY FOR
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VVAW Member Notes
Arrested
For Saving
Lives

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GEORGIA MEMORIAL

Under a partly sunny sky the vans rounded the last curve and passed under a banner which read LZ FRIENDLY. A cheer went up as we pulled into the drive marked by a totem-style sign topped with the words THE WORLD. A tall man doffed his cap with a box and said in an affected southern drawl, "Welcome to Georgia."

Thirteen VVAW members

from Wisconsin and Illinois tumbled from the vans wanting to do everything at once; unfold their bodies with a good stretch, meet old friends and new, and set up camp. What's all the excitement?

Well—it was the first annual VVAW and Northeast Georgia Vietnam Veterans Coalition campout held in Hull, GA during the Easter weekend. The high

point of which was the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial pictured here.

After the camp was set up we got into what was uppermost in our minds, talking to other veterans and their families. About 60 folks camped for the entire Easter weekend and each evening the number swelled as local veterans gathered with us around the campfire.

John Snyder, 26 month Vietnam veteran, and his wife, also a veteran, hosted the event on their farm. John and Elton Manzione, VVAW co-ordinator for the region, got together some months ago to organize the event. And, an event it was! Food for every taste from hot dogs to roast goat; bands during the day and at night; fun for the kids (of all ages) including a magician; and most importantly, veterans, veterans, veterans.

The non-partisan, non-political event drew many veterans who were just beginning to deal with their Vietnam experience, as well as those who have been coming together at events such as this for years. They came together with a spirit and comradeship that was refreshing, joyful and hopeful. The exclamation, "Wow, really!", carried across the campsite more than once. "Where were ya'?" "When were ya' there?" "Did ya' ever meet so-and-so?"

An eerie displacement occurred as I walked past a group of men good-naturedly talking about the shopping habits of their wives. Their burst of laughter, and mine, was accompanied by the blare of the sound track to Apocalypse Now and someone yelling "outgoing" as the nearby mortar fired wads of paper and puffs of smoke into the air. Some apogee occurred there. A paradox of life, where the parallel existences of the same man met for a brief moment on a sunny GA field 10 years after.

A request that 3 Huey helicopters pass over in formation was officially denied; but, a lone Huey appeared, lumbered slowly overhead, its blades thumping out a rhythmic beat, and disappeared behind a forest flowering with dogwood.

The national and local TV and newspaper reporters swarmed over the campsite all weekend filming and interviewing the vets and their families. Some set up tents and joined the vets around the evening campfires. With the cameras put away, the full moon, and low of the fire, warm calm settled over the camp as small groups talked in muted tones or wandered from the beer/soft-drink coolers to tents and back again.

There was laughter and chuckles when we heard it had snowed 'up-North'. For a short time at least, we were enjoying sunny days and mild nights and had the sunburn to prove it.

It's impossible to separate people from their politics and this gathering was no different. So,

along with "How does your garden grow" and "Tall Tales" was the ever-present talk of economy, jobs, the military build-up, the VA, intervention into other countries' internal affairs, and the wars in Central America. There was much bantering about; as when an ex-Army nurse expressed, with a tinge of hostility, her concern for "how the Vietnamese are handling their orphan problem." To which Chicago Bob said, "That's not a complete thought." "What do you mean?", she said. "Well, if it wasn't for us and the French they wouldn't have an orphan problem," he said, "and anyway, why should they be accountable to us since we've maintained an embargo against them and never paid reparations as agreed by treaty." This was followed by nodding heads and a new topic.

Early Easter morning I stumbled from my tent and by an act of will made it across the campsite to a huge coffee pot. I collapsed into the nearest chair hugging the warm brew and gazed across the field I had just crossed. Inside the firebreak tents ringed the field, each with its own colorful balloon floating overhead. This was the morning we had awaited. Each of us with our private thoughts. God, I thought, wouldn't it be grand if this was the last monument to the last combatants of the very last war mankind makes on himself. My eyes came to rest on the granite monument nestled in the far corner of the field. The sun, just peeking over the trees, struck the face of the granite, turning its Pink/Gray color to a brilliant White glow. Folks began to fill the field with the familiar look of "greens" and boonie hats.

The dedication started with speeches; some short and direct, one long and tedious. A few hundred people waited respectfully, each with a flower to place at the foot of the monument.

The crunch of gravel underfoot was the only sound as the long march approached its destination. Veterans soon stood in ranks before the monument which reads VIETNAM 1945-1975 LEST WE FORGET. An M-16 was placed, a pair of jungle boots below, a helmet aloft. The salute was accompanied by the slow notes of Taps. After the flowers were laid the crowd and the veterans came together laughing and crying at the same time.

There was a feeling of completeness, and a renewed vitality in our commitment to fight on for the human and legal rights of the veterans of Vietnam and other wars.

Across our huddled group I looked up at Elton, and with tears streaming down my face, laughed and said, "I don't look like it now, but I've had a good time."

--Virg McFadden

Chicago VVAW

(This article is reprinted without editing from the Chicago VVAW Chapter newsletter.)



Photo by Maureen Dolan



Bill Branson of VVAW with Fr Cardenal during his Chicago visit. (Photo by Virg McFadden)

VVAW helped provide security for Fr Ernesto Cardenal, a Catholic priest, one of Central America's foremost poets and the Nicaraguan Minister of Culture. His stay in Chicago was well received by artists and the general population. His message, both in poems and his talks was clear: the wish of his people for a better life without interference by Reagan.

Continued From page 15

Tunnels....

the Vietnamese who could use one man to plant a mine or a couple to fire a few rounds and tie up an entire convoy.

In every aspect the war against the tunnels and their inhabitants showed the stupidity of the U.S. effort in Vietnam as a whole. Not understanding the nature of tunnel warfare led to spasmodic (and no doubt expensive) attempts to solve the problems of the tunnels by U.S. technology. A "concept" team would appear from USARV with some new brainchild--liquid explosives, for instance, that ended up injuring only the tunnel rats who were ordered to carry out the experiments.

The book begins with a Vietnamese poem, "The Mother-The Native Land." That too in its way shows why the Vietnamese were going to win the war against the Americans just as they had won countless wars against the Chinese, then the Japanese and the French. A sense of continuity flowed from

identification with the land that went deep and was not going to be denied.

Read the book. You'll meet some fascinating people from both sides (and a few stuffed shirts, particularly American generals who don't realize how silly they sound). You'll find out more than you ever wanted to know about tunnel warfare. And, finally, you will find out again, from an unusual perspective, why the Vietnamese won the war and the Americans lost.

--Pete Zastrow

VVAW National Office

PS: When I was in Vietnam with the 1st Air Cav, every major hill we were near was supposed to be "honeycombed" (the local term) with tunnels full of VC. Nui Ba Dien (near Tay Ninh), Nui Ba Rha (near Song Be) and Hong Kong Mountain in An Khe all had U.S. bases on top, but all the supplying, etc was done by helicopter. Mangold and Penycate deal only with the Cu Chi area, but from all they say tunnels could have been built anywhere. Maybe there's another book waiting to be written.

Continued From page 1

Agent Orange



I DID MY DUTY.

monetary restitution.

In order to seal the sellout, the Judge dismissed the claims of Vietnam vets who had tried to opt out of the settlement, denying them their day in

court.

Vietnam veterans had fought long and hard for a chance to prove the connection between dioxin and a myriad of health problems including children with birth defects. Our lawyers promised us just much before the trial in an open meeting--they would not, they said, accept a settlement. They lied and got \$30 million. The judge smiled at vets and their families during the hearings around the settlement. He even cried

in Chicago when two children affected by Agent Orange told what it was like knowing they would die before they were 16 years old. In the end his sincerity wasn't worth spit; now

he can retire probably living longer than those children will live period.

Vets and their families have not gotten justice--but

why should the courts treat us any different than the military or the politicians? They didn't really care about us when we were dying overseas, and they don't care about us dying here.

We hope for one thing out of all this: unity. During the course of the legal struggle, many of us worked together, fought, and spent our savings together. Now we have to keep and build on that unity for the struggles ahead: after all, we have just begun to fight.

New V.A. Regulations

Agent Orange veterans are in for a harder time at the VA. The old rules were bad enough; the new ones are even worse.

Last year Congress passed the Veterans Dioxin and Radiation Exposure Compensation Standards Act to force the VA to set up new regulations to adjudicate claims related to dioxin and radiation exposure. The VA's new rules are obscure, claiming that evidence "doesn't support a causal association" between Agent Orange and soft-tissue cancer or liver disorders. To top it off vets will only receive benefits for chloracne if problems appeared the first year after Vietnam.

Continued From page 1

Budget Proposal

VA CUTS

money, both of which could be used on patients.

The attempt to bill 3rd party insurers is another smokescreen. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) used to say that the VA could save \$300+ million through this device. Now they have cooled down to \$65 million. In fact most insurance policies exclude payments to the government.

3. The raising of the GI Bill user fee from 1% to 3.8% would wipe out the GI Bill home loan program. Why would vets pay out \$3-\$5,000 with not a penny going to the principle. Yet this is a VA program of particular value to the Vietnam-era vet, and a stimulus to the housing market.

4. The new cuts would wipe out 8,000 healthcare staff jobs.

This will happen at a time when the DAV reports a quarter of a million vets a year are being turned away at VA's across the country. We wait 45 days for an out-patient appointment. A 70% increase in staff is needed in the next 15 years.

5. The new Senate budget freezes the construction of 2 new hospitals and 320 new nursing home beds. Since 1971 the VA has eliminated 1700 nursing home beds, cuts that aim directly at World War I and II veterans.

6. Not directly related to the budget cuts is the idea by Kemp/Kasten/Reagan to tax service-connected disability payments. Under this plan, the greater the disability, the greater the tax. This proposal, part

of Reagan's tax simplification plan has angered vets as much as any. The country owes a

moral debt to the men and women who fought for their country, no matter what war they fought in. As Reagan said during his first campaign, "Veterans' benefits are part of the cost of war." Seems like more empty words, like those at Normandy.

At present the House version of the budget for the VA would cut nothing and increase healthcare by \$250 million. The budget goes to a Senate/House Conference committee for compromise. Pressure on both Houses of Congress is still needed. The time to save the system of VA benefits and healthcare is now. If cuts absolutely have to be made, make them in the VA's front office!

This nation spends billions on nukes and bombers we don't need, and on wars like Vietnam or Central America. The govern-

ment learned nothing from the experience of Vietnam. Now it wants to discard us like used Dixie cups. Vets are getting to know how it feels to be a welfare mother, a school kid with no breakfast, a homeless person on the street, or an old man with no medical care. We are all in the same boat.

Together our fight can be won. Reagan, Stockman, Senator Kasten--all of them--can be stopped, but we must stick together.

For our enemies in Washington who do not worry about the cost of wars, much less the pain and death suffered by the men and women of this country, I'd like to end with the truth that vets have won these battles before--and we'll win again!

John Lindquist
National Office
VVAW



Please Turn To page 14

RECOLLECTIONS

VVAW invites contributions to "Recollections"--stories or poems describing the military or Vietnam.

I Was Coming To the Horrible Awakening That WE WERE THE ENEMY !

(The following story is reprinted from an earlier issue of THE VETERAN, and from the booklet of "Recollections" put out by VVAW. We reprint it for two reasons: it is a good story with a point we often forget about Vietnam and, second, because we have nothing better. If we could print half the "recollections" that various people have promised us, we could go on for many, many pages. But we cannot print them until you get them to us. Please try--there is no more effective tool for pointing out the nature of the war in Vietnam than some of these "recollections." And high schools are full of youth who should have the chance to read them.)

Our jeep moved slowly along the crowded road. Highway 1 was always crowded. Bicycles, motor-bikes and Lambrettas filled with Vietnamese as well as our jeeps and 1/4 ton trucks and other equipment made for some strange society--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 would be parked off the side of the road a jeep 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

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?"



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 in Phu Loi and headed back. Along the way we decided to stop at a

"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, a little 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 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.

--Bill Shunas



New Music for America

"Jim Walktendonk is an American voice, with a message from an all-too-silent generation. He deserves to be heard and I urge you to listen." --Tom Paxton

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