



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Serving the Children of Vietnam

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

50 years ago, in January 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were signed, and many assumed the war was over. In fact, the US continued the killing for two more years.

Even then, with the US defeat and withdrawal in 1975, the shooting and bombing by the US may have stopped, but the destruction continued.

The devastation of unexploded ordnance and birth defects from Agent Orange defoliation is STILL an issue in Vietnam 50 years later.

Add to this the refusal of the US to recognize Vietnam until 1995, 20 years after the final withdrawal.

Those hit the hardest in the US war are often in the poorest rural areas. VVAW is proud to continue our partnership with the Library of Vietnam Project and sponsor our THIRD library in Vietnam, once again in one of those hardest-hit areas. See the article below for more details about the new library.

Even though the US never made reparations to the Vietnamese people, we feel in this small way, VVAW can help the sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of those whom we wronged decades ago.

Whatever role we played in the war, we are still responsible.

We can proudly look back at our efforts to stop the US war. We can

now proudly look forward to what we are building for current and future generations.

We are still amazed that so many are still writing books about the war and its impact. It is clear many of us are still recovering from the wounds of war, in all the ways they are manifested.

In this issue alone, our intrepid crew of volunteer reviewers covers new and recent books related to our experiences, whether during the war, while opposing it or dealing with the after-effects.

VVAW stalwarts Jan Barry and Bill Ehrhart are represented in the current batch, both wrestling with how to approach and make sense of the current global conditions impacting us all.

Kevin Basland rgcantalupo have books reviewed of their poetry and how wars have impacted their lives as veterans.

George Black's book explores the impacts of the devastation we visited upon the Vietnamese. Scott Harding, Charles Howlett and Seth Keshner look at the impact ROTC and JROTC have on the youth of today.

Rosa del Duca highlights the struggles of a recent woman vet while Patricia Rushton collects recollections of 18 Vietnam nurses.

We certainly are a prolific and well-studied bunch.



Future site of 3rd VVAW sponsored library and learning center - An Nghia Secondary School, Binh Dinh, July 28, 2023.

When we volunteered or were drafted, who would've thought that we would help fight the US war machine and then decades later be helping to deliver direct aid to our war's victims? It's clear that life's journeys are complicated and unpredictable

Advice to Oneself

Without the cold and Bleakness of winter,
The warmth and splendour of spring
There could never be.

Misfortunes have steeled and tempered
Me,
And strengthened
My resolve
Even further.

—Ho Chi Minh



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.

VVAW to Sponsor Third Children's Library in Vietnam

CHUCK THEUSCH

VVAW is continuing its support of the children of Vietnam and the Library of Vietnam Project by sponsoring a third library and learning center at the An Nghia Secondary School, Hoai An District, Binh Dinh, Vietnam.

An Nghia is located in a remote region to the southwest of Bong Son, approximately 50 miles from VVAW's Pho Vinh Library and Hanh Trung Library. As of August 31, 2023, the planning has been approved by the People's Committee, the Hoai An District People's Committee, and the Committee on Culture Information, Tourism and Sport, Binh Dinh Province. There are more, but suffice it to say all approvals are in. This process may sound draconian, but having practiced law in Chicago and dealt with all the bureaucracy regarding land acquisition, zoning variances, and zoning changes, it's similar to building a public building here in the USA.

The site has been selected, and the An Nghia School is there. Still, it requires recertifying the area as free from landmines, unexploded bombs, and Agent Orange hazards. As this would have already been done for the

school, it is a simple but continuing necessity for construction in Vietnam where we must show special care for war legacy issues.

The Library Project will be traveling to Vietnam for its Annual Library Tour, including a day for the groundbreaking in November 2023. The plan is to have the dedication for the completed library in May 2024.

VVAW LIBRARY UPDATES: SCHOOL YEAR 2023-24 PHO VINH

The library at Pho Vinh is the first library VVAW sponsored.

Mr. Duong, the headmaster at the Pho Vinh School, retired in August 2023. Ms. Suong continues to be steward of the library and a shining light in education at the Pho Vinh School.

As VVAW members may remember, the Library Project's philosophy is to include the growth of other donors and sponsors. These not only include international NGOs but also small successful donors inside Vietnam.

A group of Vietnamese born in

Pho Vinh and the immediate environs of Quang Ngai Province has donated five more computers. The gift was inspired thanks to the initial investment by VVAW in building the library and providing its basic outfitting. These students are now the beneficiaries of fellow Vietnamese who, having worked in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, have joined in supporting the VVAW American Project.

The Vietnamese business donations include

1. 5 more computers for the computer lab.
2. Another color photocopier.
3. Portable speaker for addresses and to complement the English Language Program.
4. English language proficiency awards.
5. Book reports contest (yes, just like we had to do way back when!).
6. 3,000 New books.

VVAW can take pride in their investment in Vietnam. This generosity is one of Vietnam's educational infrastructure building blocks. It enhances Vietnamese and American friendship and cooperation.

The Vietnamese leader with whom the Library Project works in Quang Ngai reports the Pho Vinh Library is the finest one in the entire Province—nice to hear.

We recently had a long discussion with Vice-Headmaster Ms. Vo Thi Thanh Suong at the Pho Vinh Library. Their work is awe-inspiring. The VVAW Library has triggered the expansion of Book Days, Library Appreciation, and English Language teaching (pictures on page 8).

A poster in the library translates as "Book Reading and Value of Libraries." This statement is part of the commitment to libraries, their

use, English language proficiency, and philanthropy.

Please bear in mind this is a profound cultural shift dating back centuries. There were no libraries for kids, merely reading rooms, considered by the average folks in these remote regions as little more than "Blow horns for the government."

The VVAW Pho Vinh Library is the practical definition of a successful investment in the future of the people and students of Central Vietnam.

HANH TRUNG

The library at Hanh Trung is the second library VVAW sponsored (the Small Dreams library).

Stanton Brunner of San Francisco joined the Library Project's tour in February to Kim Phuc's Library Dedication. In May, he sent us money for the VVAW Hanh Trung Library. We are sending his donation to them on October 1, with the beginning of the new school year.

Here again, the VVAW investment has led to more support. Thanks to Stanton and Le Ly Hayslip, with whom he traveled. Le Ly is remembered for her work with Oliver Stone on the third movie of his Vietnam trilogy (*Platoon, Born on the Fourth of July and Heaven & Earth*). Stone's *Heaven & Earth* gave Le Ly the money to sponsor the founding of Village of Hope Orphanage in Da Nang, where she is revered, to say the least.

The teachers and administrative staff at Hanh Trung School held their annual organization meeting in the VVAW Library in late August. The idea is to get teachers and students used to coming to the library. After

continued on page 2



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Photos on page 8.

Children's Library in Vietnam

continued from page 1

all, they have never, not ever, had a dedicated building for the library mission until the VVAW saw fit to build this beautiful "Small Dream."

The Mission of the Library Project is far more than just a building—it includes building futures, philanthropy among local people, and ongoing relationships between "once enemies, now friends."

The Library Project's mission continues.

Once again, many thanks for VVAW's continued magnificent sponsorships—An Nghia is next.



CHUCK THEUSCH IS A VIETNAM VETERAN OF THE US ARMY, 4/3 INFANTRY, 11TH INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAN DIVISION, VIETNAM 1969-70. HE IS THE FOUNDER/CEO OF THE LIBRARY OF VIETNAM PROJECT.



Fire Safety by Local Security Official, VVAW Pho Vinh Library, September 4, 2023.



Award winning students of the An Nghia School, who will be able to use the VVAW Library Learning Center once it is completed next year.

Veteran Staff
Jeff Machota
Bill Branson
Joe Miller

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Angel Makishi, Aaron Davis, Hans Buwalda, Marc Levy, Bhavia Wagner, Susan Murphy, Chuck Theusch and others for contributing photos.

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Below is a list of VVAW coordinators and national staff. If you need a speaker or someone to interview, please contact the National Office via email at vvaw@vvaw.org or leave a message at (312) 566-7290 and we will put you in touch with the nearest VVAW member.

VVAW National Coordinators:

Bill Branson Joe Miller
Ann Hirschman Meg Miner
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VVAW National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

What We Can And Can't Afford

RG CANTALUPO (REVIEWER)

What We Can and Can't Afford: Essays on Vietnam, Patriotism and American Life
by W.D. Ehrhart
(McFarland, 2023)

There is a sense of urgency, even sad desperation, in W. D. Ehrhart's new collection of essays, *What We Can And Can't Afford*. It's as if the "world" has reached its limit of stupidity—ignorance, meanness, cruelty, violence—call it what you want. The sky is falling, and if we don't do something soon, it will only lead to the sky—or the "world"—being gone or lost to radical and ignorant American Fascism. There's a genuine melancholy here, a real grief that the "world" as we once knew it is gone, and all that's left is a Trumpian stupidity that will kill us all or corrupt reason and the American promise to the point of no return. Ehrhart's poem at the end of the book tells it all:

A team of misfits, yes, I guess,
that pretty well describes us,
thinking we could find a home,
build a world we could live in,
one that everyone could live in
Peacefully.

That's Ehrhart's hope, his romantic idealism fueled by a progressive philosophy that everything about Trump and Trumpism and where we are politically in America is at a dead end.

This collection is Ehrhart's fourth collection of essays (one published in every decade since 1991), published in various progressive newspapers over the years. The difference here is that many of these essays feel like a call to action today.

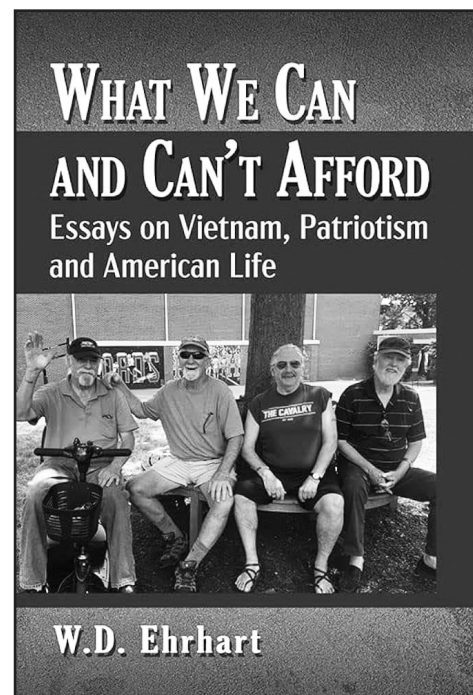
As a progressive—though I identify as an independent and am more radical than most moderate progressives—I identify and support most of the ideas and beliefs conveyed in the essays.

And yet, they often are beside the point. It's ok to argue cell phones

are destroying intimate or worthwhile human communication, but what's the point of discussing this in a two-page essay? Cell phones, Google, Facebook, and the many new mediums and conveyors of cultural discourse ARE, by their very nature, "superficial" and lead to superficial value systems. But, and this is a big BUT, what will we do about it? This is the problem with the book and progressive philosophy in general. Ehrhart knows this. And, at 73, he realizes there's not much he can do about it. That's where the sadness comes in.

We, "baby boomers," are the generation being "replaced" with millennial values that are often opposed to, or in conflict with, many of the values "we" thought and believed were important. From 2007-2011, I taught American Literature, Remedial Reading, and Creative Writing at Mesa State College in Colorado. These were, for the most part, freshman courses taught at most colleges and universities throughout America. Though my students were intelligent and did the assignments competently and sometimes excellently, they were not what some might call "intellectuals" or striving to go on to Harvard Medical School. They were average 19 and 20-year-olds trying to get a BA so they might get a better job. Ten years later, in 2021, I filled in as an adjunct in another college and discovered the students were not motivated to read or write and often couldn't care less about American Literature or American History. They just wanted to complete the assignments however they could with as little time or energy as possible. Nothing I assigned was relevant to their lives. They just didn't care. It felt as if, in ten years, the "world" had changed.

And that is the culture we live in now. Ehrhart may rant and rave about it but can't change it. Can we "afford" it? Can we do something about it? Do we have alternatives and enough people who can commit



to such changes to make it possible? Is there even a tiny constituency who wants to turn in their cell phones for a new Thoreauian lifestyle?

Unfortunately, I don't think so, thus making the whole argument irrelevant. We are old. We are being replaced. And our replacements, for the most part, don't care about what we believe. Take these "new" patriots who want nothing better than to dismantle the constitution, put a dictatorial authoritarian in power, and return to a 1950s world and a pre-World War II racism.

And honestly, I am just as surprised and saddened as Ehrhart to wake up to this 2023 reality.

But let me get back to the book.

There are many excellent and revelatory essays in this collection. I would recommend anyone wanting to read American history—true American history—or wish to learn and debate issues like the 2nd Amendment, 21st Century Luddism, or "what US taxpayers can or can't afford" to pick up or order a copy from McFarland. My wish would be for a group of Millennials or Gen Zers to carry on a discussion about any one of these essays.

However, I can't say the book enlightened or inspired me to do something about the many challenges the book explores. The question

remains: What are we to do? And are we simply too old to do much about it? Shouldn't we just graciously pass the torch to our new replacements—the millennial and Gen Z generations—and live our last years in sentimental bliss?

Sure, we can write about the dilemma we find ourselves in. We can hope that Trump goes to prison or Biden does something that will change how most voters see him. But this is a tough road to walk. I pay homage to Ehrhart for writing what needs to be said and for having the clarity to say it, but, like climate change, I want to do something about it constructively. And again, that's where we hit an impasse.

And that's the torch I want to pass on: the challenge of finding ways to make a better world. That should be our mission, our call to act. Maybe we start with "what we can afford" and create a new value system—and a new world—based on "what we can't."



RG CANTALUPO (ROSS CANTON) WAS AN RTO (RADIO OPERATOR) FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 1968-69. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR FOR COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

A Soldier's View of the War

GLO WELLMAN (REVIEWER)

Want: A Collection of War Poems and Stories
by rg cantalupo
(self-published, 2023)

The poems in *Want* by rg cantalupo very effectively tell the story of a soldier's view of the war, both in the jungle and in the painful aftermath once home. With a deep appreciation for the power of poetry, I willingly agreed to read and review this work. These poems were a challenging read. But the Vietnam War was not an easy war, either. These poems are honest in telling of tragedy, terrors, death, and survival. They illustrate an intense inner battle of the soldier that never eases, constantly "warring against the jungle, the heat... or against ourselves."

rg presents a poignant, gripping

diary, describing his early times as a draftee in 1968, his initial trials deep in the jungles, then into the present day with his persistent questions from those days looming, especially "Why are we here?" Soldiers did what they were told, as in other times and other lands. They are also wedged between two worlds—a longing for the ordinary life of The World at home and the ever-present terrors of the jungle, with "a hand in the doorway between then and now." The relentless demands of this horrific job never eased. Slogging through the rice paddies and jungle, "sometimes the only sound I hear is my breathing, my heart beating against a cage of bone." As the weeks drone on, "the rice, the bamboo, the leaves of the rubber tree grow green on our blood, theirs, yet no one answers why?" They had little

time to think during the fight for their survival, and at the same time, all they had was time. The daily struggles were and still continue to be all too real for many.

If fortunate enough to make it back home, the war continues, never really going away. In one poem, "Nicknames," rg addresses the tragic loss of life and names one of many he served with those many years ago, someone they called "Florida," saying he would have turned twenty but did not. Maybe he would have been "Jeff. Mr. Jenkins, Sir. Father. Friend." but these were not to be.

We are taken to the present day in "Stopped at a Light." rg sees a man weaving as he walks along, holding a sign, "Hungry." rg closes his eyes and can imagine this same man "wading through a rice paddy now, tracers

sparkling, ... a brother..." and he wants to save him, "give him another life." But the light changes, and he realizes, "I can't... There are so many streets like this, and so little I can change by going back." The message for all of us is—we must do better.

Though I am a pacifist, believing war is never the answer, I finished this book of intense, gripping poems with renewed respect for those who serve. And my longing that our country would do more to truly honor those who died and care for those who returned and are still returning. We must do better.



GLO WELLMAN IS A RETIRED TEACHER, THE WIFE OF A VIETNAM VETERAN, AND A FRIEND TO MANY WHO HAD FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE WITH WAR.

Waging Art

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Waging Art: Tackling Grief and Trauma with Creative Arts

by Jan Barry
(Lulu.com, 2023)

Jan Barry is a friend and a wonderful writer, so I looked forward to this book for several intertwined reasons. Jan's insights are always interesting, and his simple, supple use of the English language is often inspiring. He came home from Vietnam, found his way into West Point, but resigned and became a founding father of VVAW. To earn a living, he was an award-winning reporter for Northern New Jersey's *The Record* newspaper. He taught journalism and communications courses at New York University, Rutgers University, Ramapo College, and St. Thomas Aquinas College, and orientation for military veterans at Bergen Community College.

Jan became involved with Warrior Writers from its beginning, and he has steered the Combat Paper NJ Project since its inception, earning a New Jersey Joint Legislative Resolution commending him for his volunteer work with the organization. Those experiences are reflected in *Waging Art* and Jan's caring and kindness when working with traumatized veterans. The Combat Paper project, first offered in Burlington, Vermont, involved cutting up vets' old uniforms and converting the material to paper, then creating works of art upon that paper to exorcize the demons and, hopefully, allow the general public to see the dark, troubled images so many

had brought home from America's wars.

The New Jersey veterans were invited to display their art and read their poetry in classes, at a prestigious papermaking center in New York City, and at a peace concert at Rutgers University that attracted hundreds of students. "To receive another gift of knowledge in understanding is what I received from the week," reported one observer. "In healing one's self there can be calm and patience that is not in abundance in the northeastern United States world that I live in. How do these wounded and those in pain cause such deep peaceful calm while they search for their absolution? It is nothing I can touch, it is of the moment, maybe that is the gift of the revelation...I was touched and have the memory of the beauty of camaraderie and respect, of humor and fun and extreme sensitivity to the other's pain that does not need words."

Waging Art is a collection of essays and observations, a collage perhaps. It is a heartrending portrait of America today, and the harm too many "perpetual" wars have inflicted upon the hearts and souls of our veterans. Jan Barry has gathered and sifted a vast harvest of emotional testimony, hoping this program will spread and help others. But also, I am sure, Jan offers this book as a beacon illuminating the great harm done to the body and soul of participants in the modern American way of waging wars. The title is a bold statement. Having waged war, these veterans

are now creating art with the same intensity and fervor, and it is a patriotic and very humanistic fervor that is commendable and appreciated.

Robynn Murray is pictured at the Academy Awards ceremony, where a movie about her, *Poster Girl*, failed to win the Oscar for short documentaries. Murray is from Niagara Falls, New York. She "recalls entering a home where a family has been shot and killed, and she emphasizes the blood on the walls and mattresses. They got shot in their sleep," she says, then: "There was this piece of bread, and there was this piece of brain on it." An article in the Burlington (Vermont) *Free Press* noted, "Murray discovered that her anguish could be ameliorated by making combat paper (artwork from shredded military uniforms); penning poetry for the Warrior writers...and becoming an activist with Iraq Veterans Against the War, of which she is now a board member."

Excerpts from a poem Strength in Vulnerability by Jenny Pacanowski:

I have blue hair.
I wear dresses.
People ask me if I am a veteran's girlfriend or wife.
I advocate and care so much about veterans' issues and right.
I AM A FEMALE COMBAT VETERAN WITH PTSD...

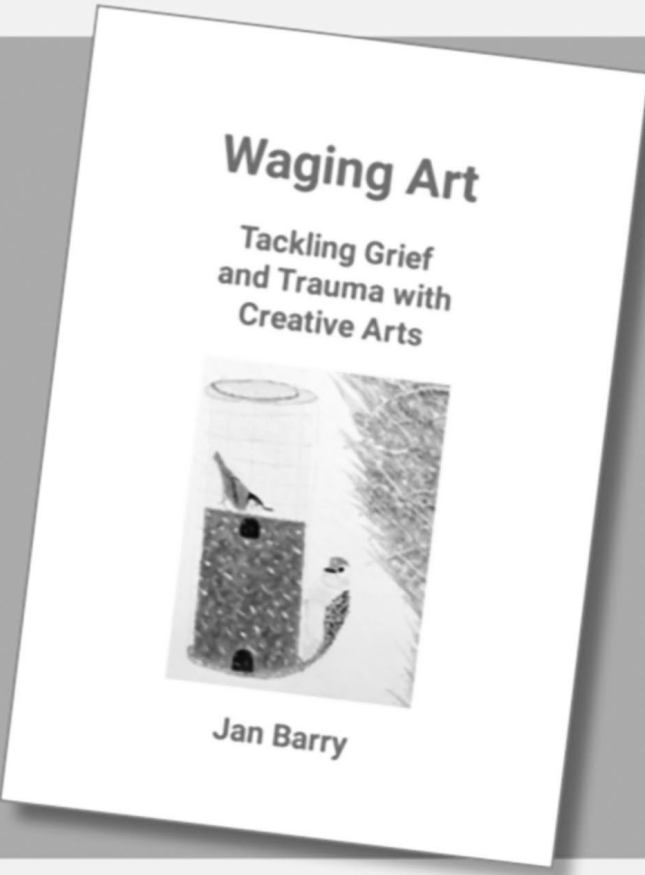
New Jersey's Combat Paper program director summed up an exhibition: "We have something to

say. And when we step out on that scary bridge to express everything inside...you meet us halfway. Thank you." That about says it all.

Jan Barry is aging, like all of us Vietnam veterans, and the accumulated effects of the years, Agent Orange, and the intense caring for others are physically debilitating, but his mind and heart are as strong and vital as ever. He is doing good work. No longer venturing into the backwoods of northern New Jersey to view the vast deposits of dried enamel where the Ford assembly plant had dumped it to hide their toxic mistakes, no longer standing in front of classrooms of young students eager to learn the secrets, no longer marching to Valley Forge, Jan Barry is encouraging today's troubled veterans to express themselves, and he is compiling many of their thoughts and stories into one hell of an important book. Jan has created an array of books, but this one is very special! Buy this book, and read it. If you are a vet, you will find reflections of yourself no mirror can ever show. And, if you're not a veteran, you will learn and understand. You will witness just Jan Barry at work, and it is magnificent to behold!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



Waging Art


is a collection of essays on writing and art programs for military veterans and family members wrestling with the worries and nightmares of war. I believe this book can be of great use to veterans and military families as well as other survivors of grief and trauma.

JAN BARRY is a poet, artist, and author of more than a dozen books of poetry, prose, art, and photography. After an Army stint in Vietnam, he helped organize Vietnam Veterans Against the War; he recently served a term as Veterans For Peace Poet Laureate. New Jersey coordinator for Warrior Writers, his books include *A Citizen's Guide to Grassroots Campaigns*, *Sound Off: Warrior Writers NJ* (co-editor) and *Winning Hearts & Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans* (co-editor).

TO ORDER WAGING ART

Go to www.lulu.com/shop and type in Jan Barry.

Or just scan this QR code:



The Combined Action Platoons: The US Marine's Other War in Vietnam

MIKE PETERSON

I was a member of a team that constituted at most two percent of the Marines' total effort in Vietnam: the Combined Action Program. Nevertheless, we patrolled the individual hamlets twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and formed friendships with the Nghia Quan, or Popular Forces, the lowest of the low as far as the South Vietnamese forces were concerned, and certain villagers.

The CAP Platoons were spread out over the Marines' vast Tactical Area of Responsibility throughout I corps ("Eye" corps), principally along

Route One ("The street without joy," as Bernard Fall put it) and adjacent areas. They lasted from 1964 to 1970 when the Marines largely withdrew from Vietnam. For example, my CAP platoon was stationed between Phu Bai and Hue City in Houg Thuy district.

As such, we were offered a unique version of the war: Bottom line: I was "gungy" pro-war when I began duty with the CAP platoons (we were no more than 14 Marines, plus a US Navy corpsman). I ended up anti-war, at least as far as how we

were fighting that war: US Army and Marine grunt outfits raising all kinds of hell with the Vietnamese peasantry.

Richard McGonigal, one of the "twin gods" of the Program, referred to it as "an armed Peace Corps." I am no pacifist: there are real toads out there, such as Idi Amin and Pol Pot. That would involve the United Nations, rather than US support, in future campaigns.

When I returned home, I went to UC Riverside for my BA. One of my professors was Mel Gurtov, and, besides speaking fluid Mandarin,

was responsible for turning out the first chapter of what was to be known as *The Pentagon Papers*. The facts behind that war opened my eyes. No matter what the CAP Program was, we couldn't win that war.



MIKE PETERSON LIVES IN EUGENE, OR, WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER AND HER FAMILY. MIKE IS A RETIRED COOK (NOT CHEF, DAMMIT!), AND JAN IS A RETIRED CPA.

Thanks to those who have put VVAW in their wills. These gifts have helped VVAW keep on keeping on and have contributed to the building of libraries in Vietnam we are sponsoring. If you would like to put VVAW in your will and don't know how, contact the National Office at vvaw@vvaw.org. VVAW is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

VVAW 1973-2023: 50 Years Ago

MOSES MORA

1973 was a good year to be in prison. I mean, if you had to go to jail, the early and mid-1970s were unlike any time before or since.

The primary reason was because of the many political activists who took their revolutionary politics seriously enough that they found themselves in unlawful and criminal situations. Those who went to prison saw themselves as political prisoners; some defined themselves as prisoners of war.

Some of the politics originated in the Civil Rights Movement and all the subsequent movements it spawned.

I can't make such grand claims; I was sent to prison on criminal charges: drugs.

When I returned from Vietnam and out of the military, to say that I was damaged goods was an understatement. Society wasn't waiting for me, and I was not ready for society anyway. I joined a community of hurt people and drug abusers. I was constantly in and out of the County jail, doing life on the installment plan.

In 1972, I had felony charges brought against me. One morning, someone I knew called me and asked if I would score some heroin for him. I agreed. He came over and drove me to a dealer's house. He handed me \$25. I went into the house and, scored the heroin, went back to the car; he drove me back to where I lived. He gave me a small amount for the favor.

I did not know then that when he called me earlier that morning, the police were listening and recording the call. The police witnessed the entire transaction.

I was arrested a few days later. The police report described me as a drug dealer. I saw myself as a "go-between"—scoring for people was part of my hustle. By doing that, I wouldn't have to do other crimes like burglaries and robberies to get money

to buy drugs. Nonetheless, it was a crime, and I was charged with a felony.

The trial judge, the prosecuting attorney, the public defender who represented me, and the jury members who found me guilty did not know that I was a Vietnam veteran. I am not blaming my military or war experience for my actions, but I can't help but wonder if my fate would have been different had anyone along the line known. I guess it's naive of me to expect any mercy when veterans of the era hardly got a kind word or acknowledgment anywhere.

The judge sentenced me to five years to life in prison and wrote an accompanying letter suggesting to prison authorities and the parole board that I be kept for more than five years.

I was sent first to San Quentin prison in the Bay Area of San Francisco, CA. Upon arriving, I thought back to my first night of combat in the Mekong Delta area of Vietnam when we destroyed a village in the middle of the night, leaving no survivors. I was shocked and traumatized by my first night of combat, and I remember thinking that now I knew what I could expect the rest of my year in Vietnam to be like. I had similar feelings with a strong dose of helplessness in San Quentin, and I couldn't even predict how many more years of imprisonment I would have to endure.

Vietnam and San Quentin have destroyed a lot stronger men than me. I had to learn how to live with that sense of bewilderment of going from an 18-year-old fresh out of high school to a battle-fatigued veteran and a convicted criminal in what seemed like no time. I was still an adolescent and wondered how this happened to me.

With my prison sentence, I had a lot of time to try to make sense of it all. Those political prisoners I mentioned

above—I naturally gravitated towards those types, and I received a great revolutionary education.

War and prisons share something in common—hatred, racial hatred might be more accurate. Usually, the prison system could easily keep the various races apart yet antagonistic towards each other.

Solidarity is at the core of revolutionary thinking. So, it was easy for us to interact in prison with Black Panthers, Chicano Brown Berets, the American Indian Movement, the Prisoners Union, white prisoners who held politics similar to the SLA (Symbionese Liberation Army) and the Weather Underground, such as Berkeley's Revolutionary Army who had and have members still in prison.

I spent one year in San Quentin and served the rest of my time at Soledad prison. I did time with and knew most of the San Quentin 6 and the Soledad Brothers.

At the same time, another quiet phenomenon was going on in the United States that was largely unnoticed: the large number of Vietnam veterans who went rather quickly from one institution (the military) into another (the prison system).

I was by no means the only Vietnam veteran who was caught up in this madness. There were lots of us. What we had in common as young prisoners with undetermined futures was the option to plug into the Movement or the madness. By and large, we plugged into the Movement; we had already been plugged into the madness, that's how we ended up in prison.

Hartnell Community College in Salinas, CA was near Soledad prison and offered evening accredited college classes to the prisoners.

A veteran amongst us suggested that we apply to the Veterans

Administration for college benefits. We did, and we were successful in getting them. We started receiving monthly checks while in prison. The VA check sure beat the \$1 a day the prison system paid us to work. Part of that \$1 was taken and put into a fund for victims of crimes.

Our minds were on justice beyond punishment as we took advantage of our situation and turned our lives around. We were clear-minded and sober and had remarkable teachers serving time with us.

We began understanding and practicing fundamental tenets of restorative justice. We helped ourselves to lessons that the prison system was not even aware that they helped create in this unique merging of politically minded prisoners and Vietnam veterans looking to heal and serve on a whole other level previously unknown to any of us.

I can say for myself, and the ones I could keep in contact with, was that none of us ever returned to prison after our release dates—anti-recidivism at its best. I also started practicing indigenous Native spiritual ceremonies like the Sweat Lodge purification ceremony, the Vision Quest, and the Sun Dance. Those are the practices of Peacemakers.

Prison in the early and mid-1970s was unlike any time before or since.

I spent two years of my life as part of the war machine and the rest of my life working for peace.



MOSES MORA SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM MAY 1968 UNTIL MARCH 1969, IN THE MEKONG DELTA AND THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND CURRENTLY LIVES IN VENTURA, CA.

Holes

Out in the boonies of Vietnam while on patrol, night after night you'd dig a new fighting hole, every night in a different place, every night another hole like a grave, but not as deep.

On a company sweep, you're talking two hundred fifty holes a night. Battalion operation a thousand holes each night. Night after night after night.

And if you had to take a crap, and everyone did, you dug a little hole and shit in it. We called them cat holes.

You also needed to dig a hole for your garbage, mostly C-ration cans, as if, if you buried your trash, the Viet Cong and the NVA wouldn't know you'd been there.

The Americans dug these holes for seven years, more or less. Hundreds of thousands of holes. Night after night after night from the DMZ to the Mekong.

That's a lot of holes, a lot of garbage, one hell of a lot of crap.

—W. D. Ehrhart

The Ducks on the Hoi An River

drift on the slow currents

plucking insects from the shallow reeds—

floating so gently on the river's rippling surface—

Oh, how I wish

I could glide so lightly on the water,

and then dive down, down, down—

almost 50 years now

since mortars fell here and green tracers

tore thru men hiding in the reeds—

beneath the surface,

silver minnows flash and flicker—

tiny fish so like the ones

I caught for bait as a boy— and so, so many, undulating their little bodies

through the thick, green water— a flicker, a flash, and gone—

why am I here?— what did I come for?—

ducks gliding on a rippled mirror—

silver flashes flickering

in and out of the light— swimming so fast, so fast

and then gone— my old/young face

dimming

in the slow ripples— the failing light—

in the night rising— in what

I've come to be—

—rg cantalupo

Okinawa: Where Semper Fi Meets Semper Peace

AARON M. DAVIS

Charles Douglas Lummis is a quiet and unassuming 86-year-old retired College professor of Political Philosophy from the International University of Okinawa. But put him in front of 17 young active duty Marines waiting to tour "Hacksaw Ridge" (where young pacifist Army Medic Desmond Doss won the Medal of Honor for rescuing 20 wounded comrades in WWII), and Doug emphatically speaks about American imperialism and his experience as a Marine Corps Platoon Commander in 1961.

"My company was waiting in the South China Sea to be deployed into Laos," Doug powerfully begins his impromptu speech directed to the young Marines. His WestPac cruise on the APA Paul Revere was deployed in the West China Sea "with a reinforced battalion fully combat loaded," he added. The Communist Pathet Lao in the country were fighting the US-supported Royal Lao government forces. The NVA were also fighting

along with the Pathet Lao. President Eisenhower, advised by Marine Corps Commandant General David Shoup (Medal of Honor on Tarawa), decided to pull the Marines out of the area. The "spill-over" effect of the Civil Wars in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam would eventually result in Marines landing at Da Nang, Vietnam, in 1965.

"Even in the Marine Corps, I had my doubts about what we were doing in the world," Doug continues.

After his active duty and reserve time, Doug used the GI Bill to get his Doctoral Degree from the University of California at Berkeley.

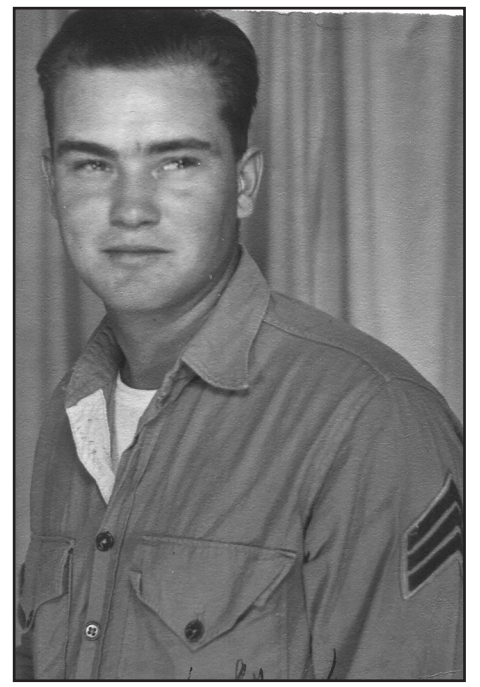
His journey led him to Japan for 25 years and finally to Okinawa for the past 20 years, where he retired.

In 2010, a USMC CH-47 helicopter crashed on the grounds of his university, which is very near Futenma Marine Air Station. He is the Veterans for Peace Chapter Leader 1003 (Rock), where he marches, protests, and educates for peace on Okinawa.

"The last thing I said to the young Marines at Hacksaw Ridge was our wish that no one should harm them, and that they shouldn't be put in a position that they would have to harm someone else," Doug concluded with a soft touch that would make General Smedley D. Butler (for whom all the bases on Okinawa are named) very proud.

With Smedley, my dad Walter C. Davis Jr., Doug, and I, Semper Fi has met Semper Peace on Okinawa!

P.S. I met Doug in April as I was visiting battle sites where Dad fought 77 years ago as a Marine. Doug graciously accompanied me everywhere I wanted to go. My favorite place on the Southern tip of Okinawa was the Peace Memorial Park, which is a beautiful place and contains the names of all US, Japanese, and innocent civilians killed on Okinawa.



The author's dad, Walter C. Davis Jr. He was a Sgt. prior to being sent to Okinawa, where he was a Platoon Sgt.

AARON DAVIS IS A FORMER MARINE AND ARMY OFFICER, A LIFE MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE, AND FORMER VVAW CONTACT IN UTAH. HE LIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES, 3 KILOMETERS FROM WHERE GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR LANDED ON LEYTE IN 1944.



Protesting at Henoko Bay.

No Regrets

I'm always amazed when people say they have no regrets. Robert Redford, for instance; Ingrid Bergman, Elena Kagan, Drew Barrymore, Susan Gale, Jennifer Aniston, William Schreyer. Henry Kissinger, for chrissake! Are they serious? Lying? Delusional?

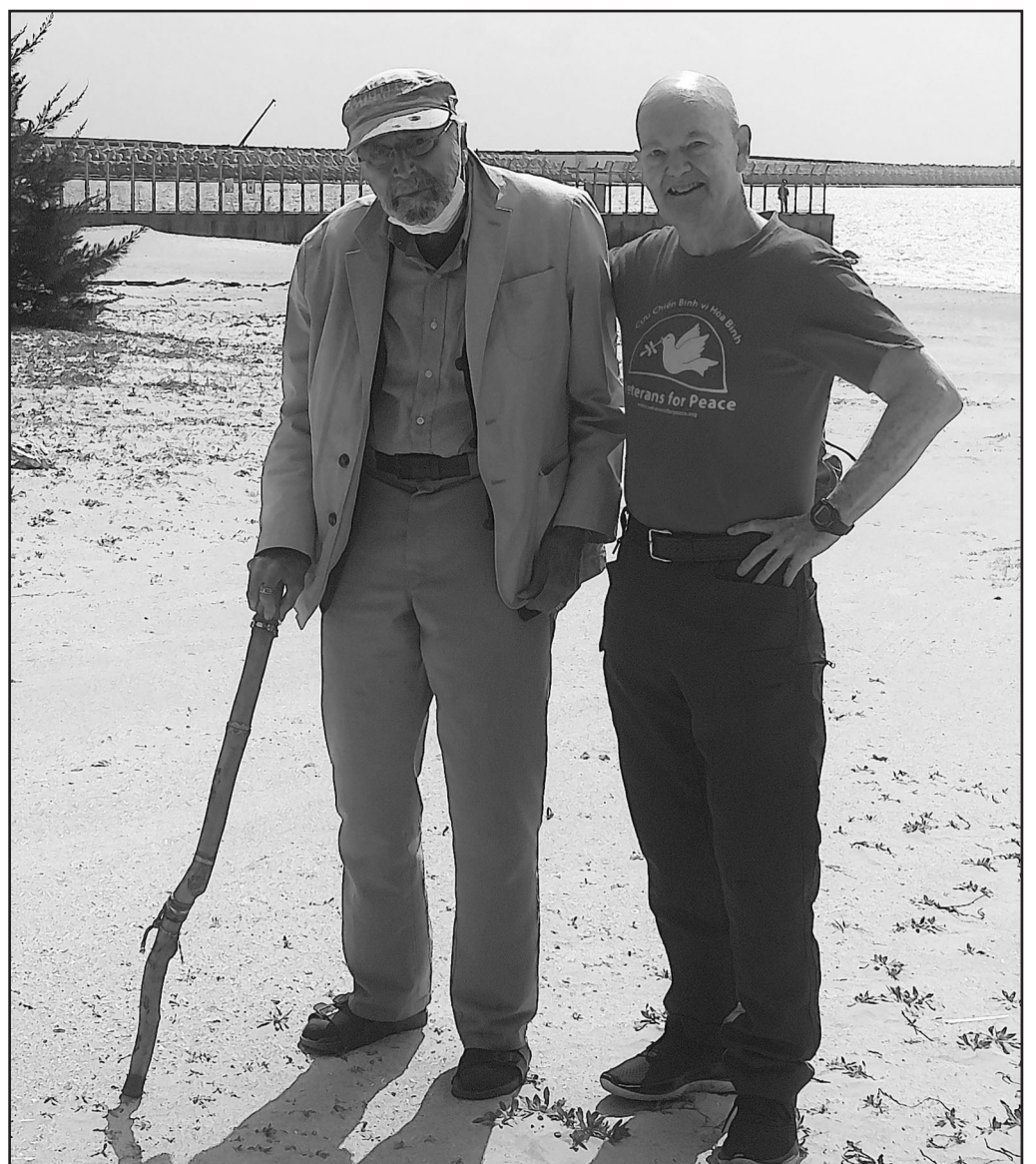
I've got more regrets than I can count: taunting David Smits to the point of tears, calling Barbara Kaufman "Barn" for years, putting my father out of the car on US309 (how he got home I never asked), blowing up frogs with firecrackers, killing a pregnant snake.

That and a whole lot more, and that was before I even got out of high school. Then I joined the Marines. You want to talk regrets? How much time do you have? Blood on my hands for killing people who didn't deserve to die; helping to turn a country into a graveyard, receiving medals for doing the bidding of leaders who should have been doing time.

Heard enough? I'm only warming up. Making my mother cry for giving me a tie at Christmas with a Liberty Bell motif (none too keen on the USA after that war). Kicking my wife out of the car in Carolina. Throwing up drunk in front of my daughter.

How do you live a life with no regrets? St. Francis maybe, Mother Teresa, Gandhi. Henry Kissinger? Certainly not me.

— W. D. Ehrhart



Doug and Aaron at Hacksaw Ridge.

Love Among the Ruins

MARC LEVY

"I was wounded during the morning sweep of the 8 arch'69 LZ Grant battle—had my lower jaw blown off—and spent the next five years in and out of Fitzsimons Hospital. It was not all downtime, as I was able to finish college, get my fixed-wing licenses, and eventually returned to flying full-time."

So begins a May 2023 email from Richard Magner, CW2, US Army Retired (Medical), call sign Tiger 38, assigned to D/229th, the Smiling Tigers, 1st Cav 68/69. Since his retirement from fifty years of flying helicopters (the last 40 as an air-medical pilot) and a subsequent month-long return to Vietnam, he has assisted the Vietnamese government in locating American-dug mass graves of NVA and VC at over one hundred battle sites. He is researching LZ Ranch in Cambodia, overrun in June 1970 when my grunt unit had perimeter guard.

Richard has partnered with two Americans and two Vietnamese civilians in his unique countrywide scope. Nguyen Xuan Thang is an architect in Ho Chi Minh City. He is well respected in the grave search community and an expert in Google Earth layovers. Lam Hong Tien is a civil engineer and friend of Thang's. Thang, Tien, and Richard collaborate online.

Bob Connor served in the Air Force security police. On the night of Tet '68, he spotted, detected, and located incoming fire at the water tower in the center of Bien Hoa. His mass grave work began with a granddaughter's school project in 2016 when he noticed a mass grave comment on the Bien Hoa air base location on Google Earth. He contacted retired NVA Colonel Trung Hieu Che, who had written the post. The interview led to Bob's February 2017 return to Bien Hoa, as featured in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the eventual discovery of the grave site. In addition to many other battle sites, Bob concentrates on Bien Hoa Tet '68 and is a mass grave identification advocate.

Bien Hoa burials encompass several locations from the Tet '68 assaults: Initial east inner perimeter 150 remains (discovered in 2017 by Bob Connor); outside east perimeter 424; Gate 2, 75-100; outside NW corner near the bomb dump 400 remains estimated to have been brought in from the City by truckloads;

101st south berm 673, south side of Rte 1 not far from Long Binh's Base NW corner 900; Hoi Nai west edge of the village and north of Rt 1 200. A grave of 900 NVA near the southern border of the base is rumored to be located in a private cemetery. Information provided by the 1st Division, 16th Infantry's 1st and 2nd battalions 5-year VN Tour document gave detailed locations for 125-130 grave sites and approximately 1,600 NVA/VC KIA. As a result of this and the team's other successes, DOD contacted Bob, asking if he, Richard Magner, Lam Hong Tien, Nguyen Xuan Thang, and Bob March would assist in searching for US MIAs. Bob immediately accepted the invitation, and the team reported five probable US MIA locations.

Bob March manages his Delta 1/12 First Cavalry Division website, catrack6india.com. His broad research contributed to the 2022 excavation of LZ Bird, where a December 1966 battle resulted in US 27 KIA/67 WIA, and 267 NVA officially estimated KIA.

Using Google Earth and other sources, the team constructs overlaying drawings, grid maps, and aerial photos to locate potential mass graves. Finding and corresponding with Vietnam vets who know of mass burials is equally important. Over the years, Richard has developed an extensive library of United States Geological Survey (USGS) satellite images.

Before LZ Ranch, he investigated LZ David and LZ Brown, each the site of a major battle in Cambodia. Though the number of NVA buried on LZ Ranch is relatively small, they and all NVA/VC MIA are essential to their families and loved ones. In Vietnamese culture, the spirit of the dead cannot rest until the body is made whole and properly buried.

Richard noted several discrepancies in the recollections of survivors regarding LZ Ranch, which he found on my website, *Medic in the Green Time*. Were there one or two mass graves? Were they in bomb craters or trenches dug by a bulldozer flown in by Chinook? Were the bodies doused in diesel fuel and burned or covered by dirt and lime? In either case, the Vietnamese desire to locate remains is undiminished.

Using data supplied by the Americans, Vietnamese teams excavate a grid of trenches six feet deep. A change in substrata

indicates possible disturbance from the natural soil, leading to more precise trowelling. Richard and his online team hope to overcome the Vietnamese reluctance to use ground penetrating radar (GPR). He asked his Vietnamese counterparts their opinions about this unwillingness to use modern technology.

Thang felt there were many reasons. "The first is that senior management is not fully aware of the effectiveness of GPR equipment," he said. "And subordinates do not have enough expertise to use them effectively. They are using it to directly detect anomalies at the scene locally. They don't work systematically to survey the entire area, then analyze the results and draw 3D maps. Then, only exploration and excavation. In short, they don't have a process to work with GPR."

Tien responded, "I don't really understand why. I don't understand the thinking of military agencies. It is kind of like a taboo topic to discuss. I asked the commander of the search team in Binh Phuoc. His answer is very difficult to describe to you. I have discussed with a doctor of radar, very close to GPR, but he has not found the reason. The story of the use of GPR is long. We will definitely need your help in the near future!"

From Richard's lengthy list of bases, more than a dozen have no significant overgrowth or development, making them good candidates for GPR. There are rumors USAID may fund GPRs and tech training, but progress is slow. LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), an even more advanced method used to examine the Earth's surface, may also apply to mass grave detection. Richard is presently exploring the use of cadaver dogs to assist in locating NVA/VC remains.

Of the 125 sites Richard and his colleagues have worked on, only a few excavations succeeded in finding remains. Many require additional details from American vets. Successes include Bien Hoa AFB (approximately 100 remains), the Special Forces base at Kam Duc (approximately 30 remains), and secondary finds at bases in Ba Long and Duc Lap.

Tien relates that from March 23 to May 21, 2021, after a 17-year search, the Martyrs' Grave Gathering Team of Division 968 excavated 40 sets of remains in Tan Xa village, Ba Long commune, Dakrong district, Quang Tri province. At present, all 40 remains

cannot be identified. In addition, due to various American and Vietnamese records of multiple large and small battles in the area, it's uncertain if the bodies are those of the 6th Regiment of the Tri Thien Military Region. The excavators also uncovered a photo of a young girl and an open vase with the word "Trung" on it. These items may be helpful in the identification process, informing next-of-kin that a loved one has been identified.

There is a feeling among the team that the Vietnamese are less concerned about VC graves. Even with NVA burials, without sufficient data, there may be reluctance to initiate a search, as in the case of FSB Crook, where the 3rd/22nd Infantry and 7th Bn 11th Field Artillery battled the NVA on June 5-8, 1969. The Vietnamese showed little interest in the base until word reached NVA survivors that Richard's team had located a probable burial site. In June 2020, the northern rim of a 500lb bomb crater near the possible grave site was discovered on private property. The area is supposedly awaiting government reimbursement before excavation.

In May and June 2023, Richard contacted several LZ Ranch survivors via Medic in the Green Time, hoping to pin down where NVA sappers were buried on the base. He conveyed their information to Nguyen Xuan Thang, who, in June 2023, told Richard that Binh Phouc province army Lieutenant Colonel Dinh would very soon conduct a field survey of LZ Ranch. Colonel Dinh expressed his gratitude to the Vietnam vets who provided valuable information. He asked all Vietnam vets to help locate mass war graves throughout Vietnam.

If you know of the LZ Ranch graves, have aerial photos of the base, or know of other NVA/VC graves sites on American bases, you can contact Richard Magner at rwmagner@gmail.com.

Richard said, "Time has long passed for these soldiers, our former enemy, to be recovered, their spirits laid to rest, and solace given to their families and loved ones."



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 FIRST CAV IN VIETNAM/CAMBODIA IN 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDICINTHEGREENTIME.COM.



In 2020, two relatives pray for the dead at Patrol Base Frontier City, 25 clicks southeast of Tay Ninh.

VVAW Library Project Updates



Dedication of the Small Dreams Library at Hanh Trung Primary School, May 25, 2023.



Ms. Suong Sounds the commencement of the 2023-24 School Year, VVAW Pho Vinh Library, September 4, 2023.



Instilling the "Value of Libraries" at VVAW Pho Vinh Library School Year Opening Day, September 4, 2023.



Mr. Duong's Retirement at VVAW Pho Vinh Library July 31, 2023.



The Long Reckoning

ELAINE ELINSON (REVIEWER)

The Long Reckoning: A Story of War, Peace, and Redemption in Vietnam by George Black (Alfred A. Knopf, 2023)

This article originally appeared in the Los Angeles Review of Books and is reprinted with permission.

The walkway to the Mine Action Visitors Center in Quang Tri is lined with lush grasses, swaying palm trees, and blooming flowers in basins. As we drew closer, I noticed something unusual. The plants grew in hollowed-out bomb casings and rusted artillery shells—swords to plowshares.

There could be no more perfect place for such a memorial. Quang Tri province, an area the size of Delaware, was subjected to the most intensive aerial assault of the American war in Vietnam and in addition to carpet bombing by B-52s, which dropped 750- and 500-pound bombs on villages, farmland, and forests, raging land battles left the earth littered with a countless number of cluster bomblets, artillery shells, hand grenades, rockets, mortars, and landmines.

This small rural province in the Central Highlands was subjected to more bombs than Germany in World War II, making it the most bombed place on earth. One Vietnamese journalist called it "the country of the apocalypse."

Though the Visitor Center serves to memorialize the destruction that rained down on the people of Quang Tri, it is much more than a memorial. Its primary goal is to educate local farmers, residents, and schoolchildren about the dangers that still lurk beneath the surface more than half a century later.

The Center is one of the efforts of Project RENEW, an organization that also clears the myriad remnants of unexploded ordnance, which have injured or killed tens of thousands of people since the end of the war: farmers plowing their land, children mistaking the shiny remains of cluster bombs for toys, and residents, impoverished by the destruction of their farmland, seeking out abandoned weapons to sell for scrap metal.

Three people whose lives had been deeply touched by the war guided us through the Center. Chuck Searcy had been stationed in Saigon conducting military intelligence and returned to Vietnam in 1994 and helped found Project RENEW. Manus Campbell is a former Marine whose Delta Company was in Quang Tri's A Shau Valley during one of the most intense bombing raids in the war. Ngo Xuan Hien, a sweet-natured young man (his given name means "Gentle"), grew up in the nearby village of Cam Lo, where he remembers playing in bomb craters as a child and is part of the Project RENEW team dismantling ordnance that remains in the ground.

The experiences of Searcy, Campbell, and Hien are central to George Black's penetrating new book, *The Long Reckoning: A Story of War, Peace and Redemption in Vietnam*. Black delves into their histories and reveals why each of them returned to the area to pursue the work of eradicating—or at least ameliorating—the deadly legacy of unexploded ordnance and Agent Orange. Reading Black's well-documented, vivid descriptions of the war and its aftermath stirred the

same grim memories I had walking through Project RENEW's Mine Action Center. It's that powerfully written.

Black traveled widely in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and interviewed scores of veterans, scientists, doctors, and aid workers. He skillfully weaves together their insights with in-depth documentation of the war and its medical, social, and diplomatic aftermath.

I was in Vietnam with a delegation of US veterans, organized by Veterans for Peace Chapter 160, composed of US veterans who now live and work in Vietnam and the Vietnamese Veterans Association. These men and women had fought on both sides of the conflict and were now coming together in peace to heal the wounds of war, literally and figuratively. We shuddered as we wandered through the Center's well-executed, multimedia displays documenting the tons of bombs, napalm, and toxic herbicides the US military dropped on Vietnam.

Black explains why the Central Highlands provinces, remote agricultural areas far from the major cities of Hanoi or Saigon, were subjected to the most ferocious attacks. The region, which lies just below the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), was a key hub of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the carefully constructed network of roads that allowed the People's Army of North Vietnam to bring supplies and materiel to their forces throughout the country, all the way from the port of Haiphong to the outskirts of Saigon. Black describes in intriguing detail how this grassroots engineering marvel, which had to be constantly repaired because of the bombing, was crucial to the Vietnamese victory. It was a "vast spiderweb of all-weather roads that included tunnel complexes, bridges that could be hidden underwater in the daytime, storage areas, truck depots, wireless relay stations," and a continuous telephone line.

Manus Campbell arrived in the A Shau Valley as an FNG (Fucking New Guy) just as General William Westmoreland determined that this was the time and place for a new offensive. The recent New Jersey high school graduate witnessed the gruesome deaths of his fellow Marines and survived many close calls himself.

When the aerial bombing started, Manus's unit set up a landing zone for the helicopters to evacuate the dead and wounded. He remembered the chaos that followed: there were "so many aircraft in the skies that they interfered with artillery strikes, helicopters flew into the line of fire without warning, radios were knocked out and men were wounded by friendly fire." It took him decades to recall the horror of it all: "It's all locked away, the sights, the sounds, the feelings. My youth. The screams of the dying and the screams of my own dying."

While Manus was on one side of the barricades in Quang Tri, Hien's mother, Phan Thi Hanh, was on the other. As a teenager, she had been imprisoned and tortured—including being waterboarded and having snakes put inside her clothes—for protesting the Diem regime. On release, she joined the Peoples Liberation Armed Forces and was assigned to clandestinely carry weapons to the frontline. Her son Hien, born after the war, played with bullets he found in the hedgerows after a rain

and witnessed villagers blinded or severely wounded when they stumbled upon unexploded ordnance.

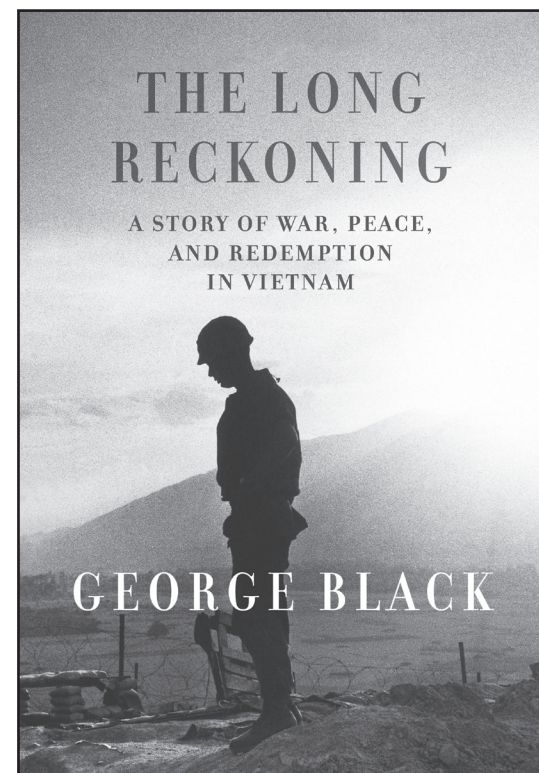
Black calls the US military's use of a rainbow of toxic chemicals—Agent Blue, Agent Purple, Agent Orange—a campaign "without precedent in history, using all the tools of science, technology and airpower to lay waste to a country's natural environment."

From 1961 to 1971, the US dropped 20 million gallons of herbicides on Vietnam, covering 3,000 villages in 1/6 of the country, affecting between 2 to 4 million people. Agent Orange, containing dioxin, one of the deadliest chemicals known to man, was the most widely used. The defoliants were aimed both to clear forests and jungles around the Ho Chi Minh trail to destroy cover for Vietnamese troops and to poison rice paddies and other crops, forcing farmers from their villages and into government-run "strategic hamlets."

Vietnamese scientists began studying their effects on the land and people as early as 1965. Hepatologist Le Cao Dai, who one American scientist dubbed "the Albert Einstein of Agent Orange and dioxin research," set up a field hospital in the heavily sprayed Central Highlands. Using scalpels fashioned from salvaged American aircraft parts and stethoscopes from remnants of flare tubes, he treated local residents and became alarmed at the high rates of liver cancer and birth defects. Several Saigon newspapers defied government censors and published his reports of the impact of the spraying of toxic defoliants, including "pictures of hideously deformed fetuses, one that had three legs wrapped around its head and half its face missing. The papers were shut down."

In time, American scientists joined Le's efforts. Matthew Meselson, a leading molecular geneticist from Harvard Medical School, analyzed samples of fish and crustaceans, breast milk, human hair, and jars of fish sauce bottled in different years from the areas that were most heavily sprayed. Meselson concluded that the dioxin in Agent Orange was "100 times more poisonous than the most powerful nerve gas. An evil genius could not devise a toxin with more evil properties."

One of the only ways dioxin can be excreted from the body is through breast milk, which meant that mothers were passing on dioxin to their babies when they breastfed. Scientists determined that babies in this area had a daily dioxin intake twenty times higher than the maximum safe level set by the World Health Organization. The most life-giving substance had



become the most poisonous.

In Saigon's Tu Du Hospital, dedicated doctors care for severely disabled children—now three and four generations from the war—whose families cannot cope. The hospital also houses a room with rows and rows of shelves with jars containing fetuses that could not survive because they were born without brains or other vital organs.

Black juxtaposes his description of the children of Tu Do, many missing limbs, eyes, and other facial features, and unable to speak or walk, with the refusal of the US government to address—or even talk about—the impact of Agent Orange, until decades after the war. Only after the Veterans Administration acknowledged that cancers and birth defects in the children of US veterans were connected to their exposure to Agent Orange. "Agent Orange proved to be a scientific, political, cultural, emotional, and ethical minefield of unique complexity, a kind of symbolic surrogate for people's feelings about the war," he writes.

Black, a British journalist based in New York, is a former columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, foreign editor of *The Nation*, and the author of seven previous books on India, China, Iraq, US foreign policy, and the environment.

This meticulously researched book would have been helped by including a glossary to decode the arcane terminology of war. The military—both the brass and those on the ground—are infamous for their use of jargon and acronyms, and it's easy for the reader to get lost among the UXO, FNG, TCDD, DEROS, and other alphabetic verbiage.

The deadly history of the US war still lies beneath the earth in Vietnam. Organizations like Project RENEW, veterans like Searcy and Campbell, children of liberation fighters like Hien, and others continue to do everything they can to make sure this history is unearthed, exposed, and not forgotten. Black's *The Long Reckoning* is an excellent addition to that crucial effort.



ELAINE ELINSON IS CO-AUTHOR OF THE AWARD-WINNING "WHEREVER THERE'S A FIGHT: HOW RUNAWAY SLAVES, SUFFRAGISTS, IMMIGRANTS, STRIKERS, AND POETS SHAPED LIBERTIES IN CALIFORNIA." DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, SHE TOURED WITH THE ANTI-WAR FTA SHOW IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. SHE WAS A MEMBER OF THE VETERANS FOR PEACE DELEGATION TO VIETNAM IN 2013.

The Wall

LAWRENCE MARKWORTH

My warrior self has been with me most of my life; my awareness was absent for years, but there were hints of consciousness in my childhood. As a kid, we'd play full-scale war games in a neighborhood full of kids. Every soldier had a gun, ¾ plastic toy, a stick, or a baseball bat. We'd choose sides, the good and bad guys, then run ramped up through the block, over front lawns, jumping back fences, killing each other. "Bang, you're dead." "No, I'm not. You missed." "Did not." "Did." These short skirmishes would end, and we'd start all over again.

When I was seven, my parents added two additional bedrooms to our meager two-bedroom track home in West Los Angeles. I was fortunate to get my own room. My parents asked me what colors I wanted in my bedroom. I requested a red linoleum tile floor, a bright white ceiling, and dark blue walls. My room was like a womb of the American flag. I mounted photos of old Navy and Air Force prop and jet fighters on the walls. I was proud to be an American.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis in the fall of '62, six months out of high school, in a patriotic act to save the world from Communism, I joined the Navy. Years later, I realized I joined the Navy because I had nothing else to do and wasn't safe at home. A close friend pointed out to me recently the irony in that act: how insecure I must have felt at home to take such a drastic step by choosing the military in a time of war. The warrior arises.

The awareness that I was a warrior opened up to me in early 2016 at the Pacifica Graduate Institute in Carpinteria, California. I attended an alumni event entitled "Warrior Returns." Ed Tick, Director of Soldier's Heart (Soldier's Heart was the Civil War term for PTSD). Ed spoke on holistic healing methods for returning warriors. It opened my mind to the warrior archetype, something I had denied as soon as I was discharged from the Navy.

In the late '60s, very few people were proud of what we were doing in Vietnam. I started college on the newly minted GI bill in 1966. Only my close

friends knew I had served in Vietnam. I told no one in college, especially the young women who caught my eye and interest—denial at its finest or worst. Within six months, I was deeply entrenched in the anti-war movement. I marched with Vietnam Veterans Against the War and dabbled in more radical organizations. While attending UCLA, I went to a few meetings of an ultra-radical group called Venceremos. At one particular meeting, some idiot began preaching the violent overthrow of the United States government. In hindsight, he could have easily been working undercover for a government organization.

Agents of all kinds infiltrated the campus. This isn't just another conspiracy theory. This was the real deal. I know firsthand, but that's another story. Venceremos was way too far left for me, and although I hated the war and my participation in it, I was too much of a patriot to use violence to cast aside our Constitution.

After the war ended, I graduated with a Master's Degree in Library Science from UCLA, again funded by the GI Bill. I began my professional career and had a family. The war was behind me, or so I thought. However, the war dreams and nightmares continued, but I pushed them down and never considered that I fit into the warrior archetype.

The Thomas Fire destroyed 500 homes in my hometown of Ventura, California, in December 2017. The run-to-the-danger mentality of military, veterans, and first responders, my Navy training in fire-fighting, a courageous friend, and a brush fire unit of the Lompoc, California fire department saved our home. The month before, my wife and I traveled to Vietnam with vets, therapists, and fellow travelers. The group Soldier's Heart, led by Ed Tick, sponsored the trip. It was my first time back since 1965. There were five vets, and I never met any of these fine warriors until we all gathered for the first time in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon).

I was apprehensive about returning. In retrospect, my fears were unfounded, but my imagination had Vietnamese jumping out in front

of me on the sidewalks of Hanoi, yelling, "Baby killer!" or "Yankee go home." Our reception was just the opposite. Wherever we were and whoever we met—ex-Viet Cong, ex-North Vietnamese Army, current army officers of the Republic of Vietnam, or civilians they all said the same thing. "We're all the same, warriors, fighting for what we thought was the right cause." "Don't feel bad or ashamed of what you did. Your leaders led you into a bad situation." "Don't have PTSD, it's not worth it." (My personal experience: easier said than done). Many warriors told us, "I had the American in my rifle sights, but I couldn't pull the trigger." That one, I felt, was a stretch, but it was just another way of expressing their humanness and forgiveness.

The highlight of the trip was when our group joined me on a beach in Da Nang. We put together a ceremony honoring those sailors, friends, and shipmates I served with who have passed on. These I honor: Craig Buchanan, David Nagai, Mark Graham, and Blade Underwood. All four have died in the last fifteen years from complications of exposure to Agent Orange, the carcinogenic herbicide the US military sprayed in Vietnam. My ship, the USS Castor, was exposed to Agent Orange while anchored in Da Nang Bay in 1965. I asked Ed Tick the big question, "Why am I here, alive and well and they are not." His answer has been the best response to my question that began haunting me since the time my friends and shipmates first started dying. "You're here to represent and honor your fallen brothers." And that's what I did on that trip to Vietnam.

It's difficult to explain the bond we recent travelers to Vietnam had developed with one another. It's like we served together in the war fifty years ago. Lots of laughs and tears, amazing bonding emotions. One of the vets from the trip offered to sponsor a one-year reunion of the group during Veterans Day weekend 2018 in Washington, DC. We all traveled together in DC in a ten-passenger van driven by our host, George, a US Army combat veteran. We stopped at

the Lincoln Memorial, then walked just a few hundred feet to the Vietnam Memorial. I knew the Wall would be overwhelming, so I asked my wife, Sue, to hold on to me. As I walked the Wall and read the names, the "why am I still here, alive?" invaded my psyche like a dark cloud. Honor and representation is the answer. Then I had the epiphany: all these vets here today at the Wall are thinking and feeling the same thing as me. We are not alone.

Then, a strange thing happened. Young men appeared at ground level at the top of the Wall. They were dressed in all white with masks covering their faces. They carried a strange-looking red, white, and blue flag. Their leader had a megaphone and began preaching, "White nationalism is the answer to our nation's problems." I was stunned, frozen in my tracks. Many of the vets not in our group began yelling at the young men, "Take those masks off you cowards." "Get out of here." "We're coming up there to kick your ass." The anger and rage were palpable and quite frightening. I heard a middle-aged woman say to her vet, "I wish I had a permit to carry, I'd blow those guys away."

Racism should have no place in our nation, but of course it does. The white nationalists have a constitutional right to protest. I remember thinking: You're in the wrong place preaching to the wrong people. Why here on this sacred ground, in front of those who served? It did not make any sense to me.

So, this is where we are as a nation? This is what we fought for? Meet hate with hate? Meet bigotry with bigotry. Meet violence with violence? Vets, especially Vietnam Vets, should know this did not and will not work for our nation. Where's the rational discussion, the compassion, the forgiveness? Perhaps we have a lesson to learn from the Vietnamese people.



LAWRENCE MARKWORTH IS A US NAVY VIETNAM VET. HE IS A WRITER, DREAM TEACHER, AND A WARRIOR FOR PEACE, HELPING HIM HEAL FROM HIS PTSD.

What Does a Soldier Really Die For?

ALLEN "SOMERSET" MEECE

I wondered if anybody called Meece died in the Vietnam American War. I searched the list of surnames on the Vietnam Wall in Washington DC. I found one Meece name on that polished gray monument to pitiful politics: Mac Hughlen Meece.

An internet search showed he was shot and killed in the door of a helicopter flying a hundred and ten knots at thirty-five feet high near Cu Chi, Vietnam. It was a week before his twentieth birthday.

He was from a rural Kentucky community called Drum in the foothills of the Appalachians off State Route 80 east of Somerset, where I

was born but did not reside. He was undoubtedly related to me. I enlisted in the Navy in 1962, and he enlisted in the Army in 1963.

I served comfortably aboard a destroyer, the USS Edwards, DD950, doing naval gunfire support from five miles offshore. He was camped in an Army hooch with the 5th Cavalry of the 25th Infantry Division doing helicopter recon in the Iron Triangle near Saigon.

We served our best and believed the bootcamp political bullshit that said the Vietnamese were hard-core members of a communist monolith of nations that wanted our '56 Chevys

and our girlfriends and was going to land on the beaches of Malibu to take them away if we didn't kill them in the jungle; half a world away from California. (It turned out they just wanted socialism and independence from foreign domination, which everybody deserves.) We sailors and soldiers meant well and deserved respect for our bravery but not for our political astuteness.

After the Paris Peace Accords, we abandoned Vietnam without apology for all the atrocities and without any celebrations about the glory of an unnecessary war that accomplished no good. We left Vietnam worse than we found it.

Mac Meece's family received a stone tablet for Mac's grave in Barnesburg, Kentucky, but unfortunately, it has an error about his Army Division; it says he was in the 28th, not the 25th. That made the marker less impressive.

The lesson of Vietnam was ignored by Congress when they voted in 2003, thirty years after Vietnam, to approve George Bush's second invasion of a sovereign nation—First Afghanistan and then Iraq. American Big Shots hated President Saddam Hussein for nationalizing his oil away from the Big Oil corporations. (After they hung him, they returned Iraq's oil industry to capitalism. We

left Iraq worse than we found it.) Congress' ignorant vote made the lesson of 58,000 deceased Americans in Vietnam less important. Those who live for profits don't worry about wars because they don't go to them. They don't forget; they ignore the lessons of war.

I could not find Drum on any map. It never became a township, was never more than a few farmhouses in the Kentucky hollers with beautiful hills and creeks, and where people lived without a store and a post office.

I am very sorry he is gone. Although I love and respect Mac's honor, the tragedy of the Vietnam War and the fading of his old Drum, Kentucky home make his death less worthwhile.

So, I support Vietnam Veterans Against War. The rational voice of war-fighters themselves is a significant reason we have any peace today. Humanity will always need veterans who cannot ignore it and will not give the profiteers a free path to gore.



ALLEN "SOMERSET" MEECE IS THE AUTHOR OF "TIN CAN," A NOVEL ABOUT A TONKIN GULF INCIDENT IN 1964, AND "BRAVE NEW MARS," A SCI-FICTION NOVEL ABOUT THE CORPORATIZATION OF MARS IN 2084.



July 4, 1974, Washington, DC.

Breaking Cadence

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Breaking Cadence: One Woman's War Against the War
by Rosa del Duca
(Ooligan Press, 2021)

Breaking Cadence is one hell of a book! It's a memoir of the author's relatively short-lived military career and the horrible experiences she endured as she was trying to confirm her status as a Conscientious Objector, a self-reliant adult, a woman, and a human being, all at the same time.

The author was just seventeen years old when a good-looking young recruiter for the National Guard spoke to her high school American Government class. She came from a broken, abusive family with no resources or opportunity. Rosa wanted desperately to go to college, but no money was available to make it possible. However, if she joined the Guard, she would earn enough bonus money to cover her tuition, meals, and maybe even a dilapidated used car. She took the bait and convinced her mother to sign the enlistment papers.

Vietnam veterans will recognize most of the rest of this book. It will make you remember many of the attitudes and experiences you had while

in the military, and maybe that's why I enjoyed it so much. It is a nostalgic trip, but it also tells us that today's military hasn't changed from what we experienced half a century ago!

During basic training, she has begun to give up her self and become a soldier. "I couldn't help but grin up at the ceiling. For three months I'd dressed like a man. I'd rolled around in sand and mud and sweat through my uniform and hocked up phlegm so I could breathe and gulped down food like a cretin and yelled guttural yells and dug holes out in the woods to bury my shit. Yet, while I'd been feeling ugly and crude and masculine, a bunch of boys had conferred and agreed that I was a sexy girl. Holy crap!"

Or this: "Imagine you are an ant going about your ant business as part of your colony. Imagine the Army is the sun. It's blinding and powerful and you can't look right at it, but it's not always in the sky. You get a reprieve every night—enough to regroup and tolerate the sun long-term. Enter therapy. Therapy is the magnifying glass some cruel kid sticks between you and the sun, to burn off your exoskeleton. Within a few seconds, your shell is destroyed."

She sought advice from a trusted officer. "All you have left is LDAC, your MS4 year, BOLLOK 2, then your officer basic course and your branch training. After a tour in Iraq, you'll come back and go to captain school. By then you can move on, having fulfilled the requirements."

"If this was supposed to be a pep talk, it was having the opposite effect. Staring at the paper, I imagined all those hours dressed up to be someone I wasn't."

"I knew I couldn't follow through. Deep down, I'd known it for weeks, maybe months... I was ready to admit I was a traitor. I had to acknowledge my mistake, own my regret, and find a key for the lock on my cage. No one else was going to open the door for me."

She went through the motions, but she was desperately looking for a way out. It was a long struggle, and I don't want to be a spoiler. Rosa del Duca is a great storyteller, and she describes every step of the way and every emotion that surges over and through her. "Who do they think they're fooling? Waves and waves of soldiers have come home and shared their horrendous stories of fighting a

dirty war. Many came home broken, only to be faced with a broken system. Some brought back a violent nature. But far more returned without the will to live. An estimated 18–21 veterans kill themselves in this country every single day."

Rosa del Duca is a survivor, writer, journalist, teacher, and musician. In 2011, she and a friend formed the band Hunters, which produced three albums. Her most recent solo album is *Love Letters*. She lives in California with her husband and two children. She was and continues to be, a war resister. The fire burns deep in her soul. She values morality and humanity, and she could not stomach the Army. She could not morally participate in today's American way of waging war. She has moved on but carries that disillusionment like a burning ember in her gut. She has moved on but left behind one hell of a book!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

The Ghosts Are Still There

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

Vietnam War Nurses at the Ready: Seventeen Personal Accounts
edited by Patricia Rushton, RN
(McFarland, 2023)

A decade later comes a second volume of personal witness to human costs of warfare, edited (once more) by Barbara Rushton, a retired professor of nursing and a veteran of both Vietnam and Desert Storm. She only edited her publication and did not give witness to her service within this volume, having authored a piece in her first publication: *Gulf War Nurses, Personal Accounts of 14 Americans*, 2010.

There is no haunting in these seventeen sketches, no ghosts—as there are in the stunning *365 Days* published half a century ago by Doctor Ronald Glasser. Yet, as we all know, ghosts will always remain—until the last of us is gone. A maquette of the projected women's memorial was on display at The Wall during the 1991 Veteran's Day ceremony. Emotion was on many faces gathered around the sculpture, forming three nurses attending to a soldier wounded from combat. The completed memorial was dedicated two years later, and one still wonders—the service of medics under combat—in reflection, has their devotion been taken for granted?

Most of the stories are given by members of the Naval Nursing Corps describing service in Europe, stateside, in the Philippines or Japan, directly below the Marble Mountains near Da Nang, and aboard hospital ships along coastal South Vietnam. Those with far greater resonance are recollections of the latter. Drama abounds aboard either the USS *Repose* or the USS *Sanctuary* as nursing personnel became mothers and sisters to those in agony, despite protective mechanisms employed—to quote one writer: "You know how there's a curtain that goes up in your life." Casualties during Tet were so high that she wouldn't learn that US forces had prevailed until years later. Another writer feared seeing a young man die and declared the wrong code. Things immediately got put into perspective when she was confronted with, "The only thing we can give this guy now is a good death." There is the jangle of chains at night with men in traction

trying for a comfortable position for sleeping. Pseudoma bacteria rented the air in trauma wards until new medicines were developed. Senior corpsmen were taught to debride wounds to supplement when surgeons were hard pressed. One doctor yelled, "Why does everything have to be multiple trauma?"

Dressings were replaced twice a day. Patients would say with a smile, "Hey, nurse, I have pain." even though some wanted to go back into combat. Such sentiments desisted as the war deepened. And there was "influx"—the sound of dustoffs approaching, mainly on the 3 to 11 shift. Patients were taken aboard off of Quang Tri only in daylight. A dustoff had previously crashed on the landing pad in darkness. Discipline was meted in the orthopedic wing at Subic Bay when patients returned from liberty without whatever plaster casts they'd been wearing upon being released to have fun. Medical corpsmen are lauded with great marks across the board.

One story in particular includes resentment over celebrities visiting Hanoi. An ironic sensibility regarding violence in southeast Asia is implied by two nurses attesting to having been or knowing individuals being spat upon upon return stateside (always at airports, it seems). One of these two writers served aboard the USS *Sanctuary* yet does not mention a single medical case or battle injury. But she otherwise speaks of the "many" veterans who got spat upon after arrival back in the world. Another writer had been engaged to a guy who enlisted, went through jump school, and later was severely injured in combat. Get this, people: she visits him in a VA hospital and gives him back his engagement ring. Unfortunately, most of the writing concerns (repetitive) shop talk and the paths of individual stateside careers.

A nurse assigned to the NSA Hospital at Marble Mountains alludes to her stained shoelaces and surgeons working forty-eight hours straight. The ancient Marine vs. Army antagonism surfaced whenever an Army casualty was brought aboard the ships. There was limited space in triage back then. After the dustoffs departed, the flight deck would be utilized for intake of

heavy casualties. Multiple trauma victims required three surgeons working at once—neurologic, general, and orthopedic. Patients with the deadly form of malaria had to be cooled in the showers to control dangerous temperatures. Predictably, the ship's captain would complain about the vessel's supply of fresh water being consumed.

After recovery, no negativity was expressed by combat personnel, healed and ready to be lifted back to the greenery. Whether corpsman or grunt, they'd sit reading, distracted with comic books while waiting for transport by Slick. Still, there was fun: off of Quang Tri, the lifeboats would be lowered for a "hull inspection." The lifesaving craft were then piloted round and round the hospital ship. Officers drank cocktails. Enlisted personnel were restricted to beer, and no one should doubt which craft led the parade.

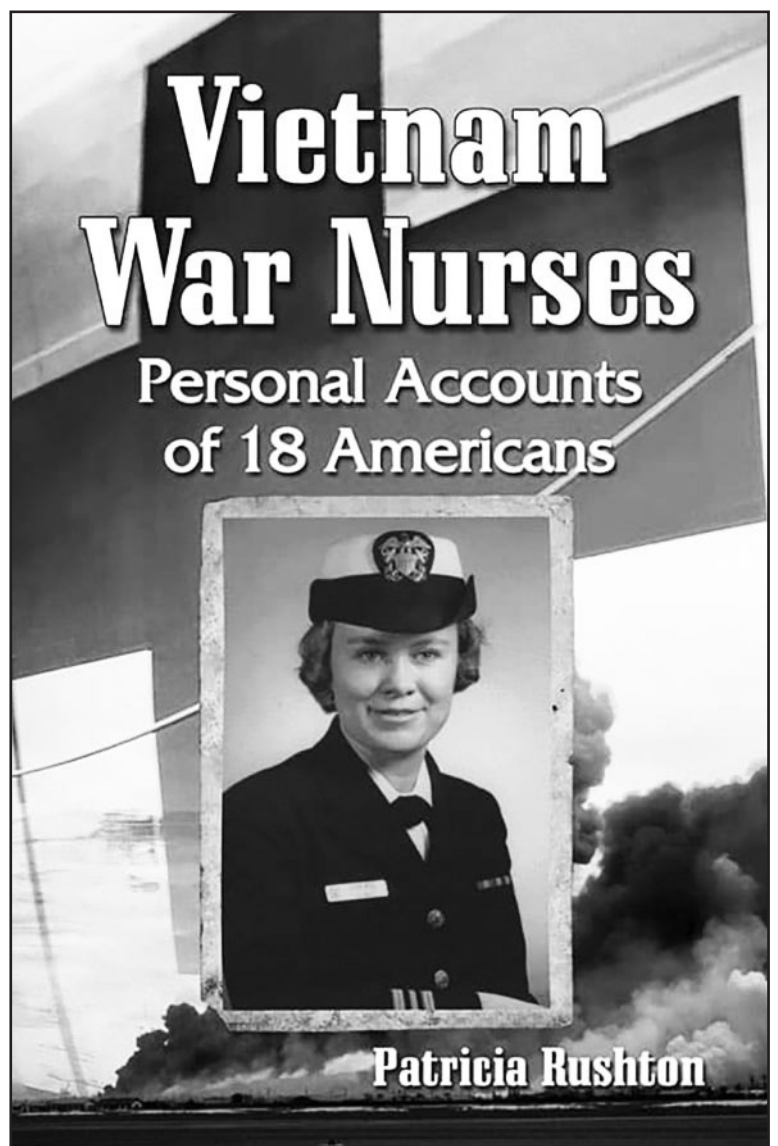
Finally, we learn of a corpsman medevac'd from Iraq to Joint Base Andrews bused to Bethesda and off the bus, walked away from the group, and was accosted. Then he dropped to

the ground and kissed the earth back on American soil. Still, I wonder about the location of that sculpture in the light of an indelible memory of one surgeon on the edge of breaking down standing at my window at Camp Enari in II Corps.

The importance of that story was that it could not become about him; it had to remain about his patients, period. Therein laid the rub in serving others. Whether nurse, surgeon, corpsman, or medic, let them—as King Henry said at Agincourt—"be in their flowing cups, freshly remembered."



JOHN CRANDELL SERVED IN II CORPS WITH THE 4TH INFANTRY IN 1969. CAMP ENARI, THEN THE DIVISION'S BASE OF OPERATIONS, IS NOW SOLIDLY COVERED WITH UNIFORM ROWS OF TEA PLANTS. ONLY THE FAINT TRACE OF THE BASE PERIMETER REMAINS. ANY READER OF THE VETERAN WHO SPENT TIME AT THE ARMY'S 4TH INFANTRY BASE CAMP CIRCA '69-'70 PERHAPS MAILED A PACKAGE OR GOT A MONEY ORDER AT CRANDELL'S WINDOW AT APO 96262.



Anti-war Protest Aboard the USS Truxtun DLGN 35

MUSHROOM MONTOYA

In July 1973, I stood at muster on the USS Truxtun DLGN 35 helo deck. My Navy dungarees flapped in the wind, fanning the anger that raised the hackles on my back when the Chief told us that our ship would return to clean up unfinished business in Vietnam. Business? Bullshit. We were going back to continue the senseless killing of people who were no threat to the US. The Vietnam War had been declared over in March. I had already spent my time on another ship, bombing Vietnamese villages, killing children, their mothers, and fathers, the year before. I didn't want to return; no one on the ship did.

We were told we would be back in early November, in time to be with our families for Thanksgiving. I had my doubts. The Truxtun was stationed between the aircraft carriers and the Vietnamese shoreline. We were too far away to see the carriers and too close to the Vietnamese beaches for my comfort.

Several times a day and night, choppers landed on our helo deck. I was the fire scene leader, with a crew of firefighters ready with charged hoses in case of an accident. The Marines would jump off the chopper as soon as it touched the deck and come running to me to tell me what they had just done and witnessed. I hated being their sounding board, their "father confessor."

Every night, I witnessed the choppers whop, whop, whopping over the trees, shooting their machine guns like death rays in the dark. "The war

is supposed to be over," I would yell into the darkness.

In early November, they told us we would sail to Japan and then home for Thanksgiving. We were given a bunch of new restrictions and orders for inspections, the need to have polished shoes, clean white hats, and regulation haircuts. The Captain imposed a new rule forbidding anyone to be outside the skin of the ship between ½ hour after posted sunset and ½ hour before posted sunrise. We were not given a reason for the new rules other than to be ship shape when we returned to our home port in Long Beach, California.

When we were about 100 miles from Okinawa, we were told that the ship was ordered to return to Vietnam and that we would not be home for Thanksgiving or Christmas, either. None of the new rules or restrictions were lifted. Needless to say, the crew was pissed off.

A large number of the crew got together and decided to have an anti-war protest on the helo deck the next night. They chose me as the leader. After I accepted, the seriousness and ramifications hit me squarely. However, I had already accepted the leadership role. I was not going to back out. The next day, several of the "lifers" and "warhawks" were talking about this being an opportunity to throw some of those "peacenik hippies" overboard. That got me very concerned.

After dinner, well before sunset, a large number of the crew assembled

on the helo deck. We chanted, "Hell no, we won't go!" and other anti-war slogans. We sang anti-war songs. Some of the "warhawks" started harassing us. I went inside the ship to talk to the Executive Officer (XO) to ask him to come out and speak to us. He told me that what we were doing was technically a mutiny, and the penalty for mutiny in a war zone was death. I was hoping that he was saying that just to scare me. He told me that the ship would not disobey orders and that he could not lift the new restrictions. I told him about my concerns with the "warhawks" and the danger of sailors being thrown overboard in the dark. He agreed to follow me and talk to the protesting sailors.

The Master at Arms force had secured the doors. Those inside could not get out, and those outside could not get in. The XO walked out onto the helo deck. I stood next to him. He ordered everyone to go back inside, telling them that a ship is not a democracy and that they were disobeying orders. No one moved. One of the sailors yelled, "You can't send us back to the fucking war without lifting these stupid restrictions! What the fuck! We won't be home for Thanksgiving or Christmas!"

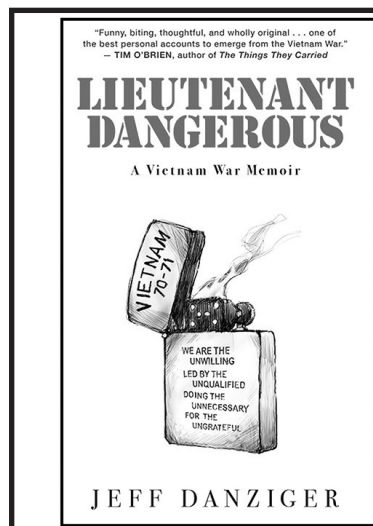
The XO repeated his order for everyone to go back inside. He said no one would be sent to Captain's Mast (prosecuted) if we obeyed his orders. Still, no one moved. I stepped in front of the XO and told the crew that the XO would have to talk to the Captain. It was obvious to us that we were

returning to Vietnam. If no restrictions were lifted, we would return tomorrow night to protest again. The XO, again, ordered the men to go inside. No one moved until I asked them.

The following morning, a few of the restrictions were lifted. But all those protesting were sent to Captain's Mast and charged with violating the rule restricting us from being outside ½ hour after posted sunset. The Captain was not about to admit that he lost control of his men and that they held an anti-war protest on his ship. Each sailor was charged and fined or reduced in rank, or both. When I stood before the Captain, he asked me how I pleaded. I said, "Not guilty. I was inside, talking to the XO." The Captain threw a fit, calling me all sorts of expletives. He asked the XO what he could do to me. The XO told him he could only give me an oral reprimand. The Captain threw another fit, and now that oral reprimand sits proudly in my Navy record.



MUSHROOM MONTOYA SERVED TWO TOURS OF DUTY IN VIETNAM. THE FIRST WAS ABOARD THE USS TRIPPE DE 1075 IN 1972 AND THE USS TRUXTUN DLGN 35 IN 1973. HE WROTE VIETNAM BODY COUNT, A FICTIONALIZED ACCOUNT OF HIS FIRST THREE MONTHS IN VIETNAM ABOARD THE USS TRIPPE. HE WAS DISCHARGED AS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR. HE IS A RETIRED ARCHITECT. HE IS NOW A SHAMAN, HEALING THE PLANET ONE PERSON AT A TIME.



New Vietnam Memoir by Cartoonist Jeff Danziger

LIEUTENANT DANGEROUS

A Vietnam War Memoir

"Funny, biting, thoughtful, and wholly original . . . one of the best personal accounts to emerge from the Vietnam War."
— TIM O'BRIEN, author of *The Things They Carried*

STEER
FORTH
PRESS

An Enigma

CC BARRÓN

The beauty of the flora and fauna, the plethora of marine life, and common folk tilling the earth to feed themselves amid a civil war and unsolicited guests. These were my first impressions of a land I had never heard of or could have imagined growing up as a street urchin East of the Los Angeles River in a community of immigrants.

The humidity that hit me like a ton of bricks exiting the aircraft that delivered us to Tan Son Nhut air base, was only secondary to our reception of mortars and rockets while deboarding our C-130; at that moment I longed for the dry heat of East Los Angeles and the Vatos (Caló for homeboys) shooting off cherry bombs just for laughs.

Saigon reminded me of most large metropolises; populated with small cylinder motor bikes and choking exhaust that left a taste of petroleum and dust in your throat. It was only a matter of time before that taste would include the blood of combatants.

My destination was due South and West of the 17th parallel — Hon Tre Island in the Bay of Na Trang.

Crossing the Bay on an LCU to Hon Tre was filled with razzing from Special Forces, Marines and Airmen; a welcome to really "bad duty." Since we all were going there together I figured the poor duty wasn't personal

and we'd all have the same objective— to get back home in one piece.

Upon disembarking we all went in different directions. Special Forces went deep into the center of the Island; we knew they were around by the sound of their ordnance. The Marines became ghosts and vanished into the bush never to be seen again.

My CO on the Island was a good old boy from Arkansas who immediately directed me to the "Black Man's Hooch." I didn't mind, the music was better and besides I took my orders from 5th TAC and Hon Tre would only be home base between missions.

Diving in the Bay of Na Trang on Hon Tre Island revealed a shared harmony with barracuda, mana rays and eels unlike the encounters with species of my own kind.

I had made peace with the pit vipers resting in the sandbags and the rats seeking sustenance while we slept during the monsoons. While on mission, the occasional purr or snore of tigers of the four-and two-legged kind in the bush didn't alarm me as much as Charlie Victor or worse yet North Vietnam regulars on the prowl.

I told my psychiatrist at the VA that I often felt safer in the bush than back on the island where we'd plan and launch our offensives. I had only one objective and I was always determined to complete it at all costs — there was

no room for failure. Everything was perfectly timed from its execution to our escape and rendezvous at our appointed LZ.

Little did I know that the monsoon rains were filled with Agent Orange, which would become the curse of my life after thinking that coming home whole was success in and of itself.

Or the Napalm we targeted would be restricted only to the Ho Chi Minh Trail without collateral damage to the villagers in its vicinity. What did Laotians and Cambodians have to do with our mischief?

I couldn't help but recall my own family. They too worked the land in central Mexico when the Mexican Revolution forced them to choose a side over ideas that had never crossed their minds.

Small in stature, dark and indigenous to the land they worked to feed themselves their only crime until they were forced to leave their beloved homeland to somewhere much safer and begin again.

At this point, a volunteer not drafted who responded to the clarion call, "ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country," caused me to enlist and later to acknowledge that I had been duped. Was it my naivete as an eighteen-year-old from the barrio or the assassinations of our Catholic

President and his brother that made me believe that our country was without fault or duplicity?

When asked to disclose the worst experiences of my in-country deployment, I speak about the super-size mosquitoes that attacked with resolve, the centipedes the length and breadth of a man's forearm, and leeches that rained with the monsoon to tax our every step. I remain ambiguous about my military service. Whose side was I on? I returned home happy to be back in the world, only to be greeted by anger and hate for my service. In my youth, an alleyway was the preferred escape route when the odds were against you. In the bush, filled with beauty, mystery, and its teeming inhabitants—the mugginess gave no quarter. America remains uncertain about our Vietnam Veterans—ask any of us what our sacrifice was for—a policing action predicated upon a lie on 18-year-olds who could not vote but could go to war.



CARLOS C. BARRÓN, USAF 1968-1972. HE COMPLETED HIS UNDERGRADUATE AND POST GRADUATE DEGREES AT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CALIFORNIA. HE'S A RETIRED EDUCATOR.

Busted: A Vietnam Veteran in Nixon's America

JOE MILLER (REVIEWER)

Busted: A Vietnam Veteran in Nixon's America

by **W. D. Ehrhart**

(McFarland, Revised Edition, 2021)

I first became aware of W.D. (Bill) Ehrhart through his poetry in *Winning Hearts and Minds* (1972), published by 1st Casualty Press. At the time, I was in the Chicago chapter of VVAW. My next "encounter" was when I picked up the paperback of *Marking Time* (1986) published by Avon Books. [Later republished as *Passing Time* (1989, 2023).] That brought me back to *Vietnam-Perkasie* (1983), published by McFarland & Co. So I was catching up with Bill and his story by 1987.

In the spring of 1988, while teaching political science at the University of Northern Iowa, I was invited to present a paper at an international conference on "Vietnam and the West" at the University of Swansea in Wales. The most important event at that conference was my chance to meet Bill Ehrhart. And, it was by chance.

One of the plenary sessions that opened this conference was a presentation and discussion between Bobby Muller, formerly of VVAW, and some right-wing Vietnam veteran author (I cannot remember his name). The discussion got rather heated, and this right-wing guy attacked Muller as a "traitor." Then, some guy in the audience stood up, long-haired, mustache, wearing a plaid shirt, as I recall. With a passionate, high-pitched voice, he identified himself as Bill Ehrhart. That got my attention—oh, that's Bill Ehrhart! He then attacked this right-wing vet in the strongest terms and defended Muller's activism.

Bill and I connected during those couple of days through our VVAW experiences. Eventually, when I returned to teaching at the University of Illinois in 1989, I got him invited to the campus to give a presentation on "The Politics of Poetry: Life After Vietnam," the first of many visits to our campus over the years.

If you have not read the two earlier books, you can still jump in on this one. Bill references much of his background/experiences throughout the book as guideposts. That alone should whet your appetite to read *Vietnam-Perkasie* and *Passing Time* in succession.

The overarching timeline for this "streamlined" (in Bill's words) story begins on March 6, 1974, and ends on September 9, 1974. There are no chapters here. From page one onwards, Bill takes the reader on a ride through Ehrhart's life experiences and memories, reveries.

It begins with the drug raid on the oil tanker S.S. Atlantic Endeavor, a ship Ehrhart had worked on since August 1973 after graduating from Swarthmore. He was trying to "outrun" America after his experience in Vietnam and his anti-war work with VVAW in the early 1970s. The war, anti-war organizing, and negative public responses to the anti-war movement had driven him "off the beach." The seagoing life was preferred. You did not have to deal with the bullshit in Nixon's America.

This all changed on March 6, 1974, when the Captain and a group of men on that raid pushed his cabin door open.

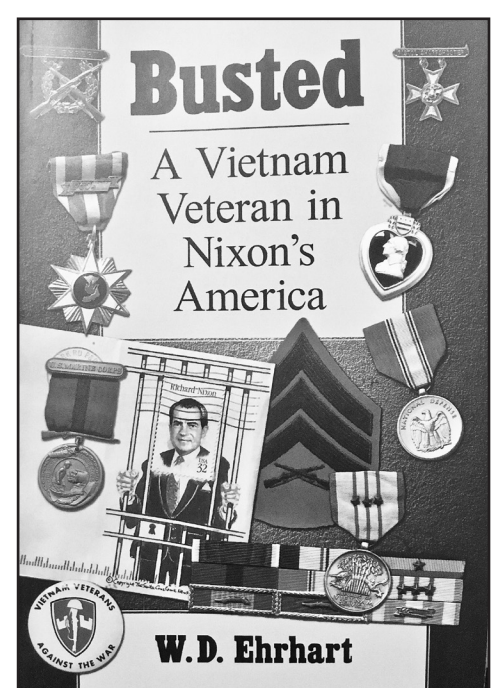
"Holy fuck, I thought, I'm going to prison. I'm duckshit...After years of

looking, I had finally found a place where I belonged. I was going to spend the rest of my life floating around on the margins of the world. They couldn't touch me here, I'd thought. Now, it was gone in the snap of a tripwire. Nowhere was safe." (pp. 2-3)

Bill was booted off the ship, and very soon, the case against him was brought by the Coast Guard. This case's very complicated ins and outs run like an iron cable throughout this book, but this is not a simple "Law and Order" episode. This threat to his work life and personal freedom becomes the basis for many serious vignettes about Bill's life before the raid and all during the period between the raid and the ultimate end of the case, which I will not detail here.

We are faced with his time before joining the Marines in June 1966, time in Vietnam (1967-68), including the Battle at Hue City, and coming home to a country he no longer felt comfortable in. In fact, the country was not "comfortable" with most of us, either. We learn about his early involvement with VVAW, speaking at public gatherings and getting ignored or attacked as a "traitor." Various episodes with the police ensue because of the way he looked in Nixon's America. He writes about friends in the Gainesville Eight (always careful to use pseudonyms). He struggles with what he did during the war and his inability to get people (even his family) to listen.

At many places in the book, Bill is accompanied by three "spirits," or voices, of dead comrades from the war. Bobby, Ski, and Frenchie allow Bill to "talk through" what he has seen and felt since returning home. They



become almost "advisors" and, for purposes of the book, one might call them editorial guides for the reader. They help tie things together.

As we follow the twists and turns of Bill's case, he also comments on the news of the day, especially the Watergate investigation that took place during this period. The end of the book, the end of his case, is also the end of Watergate. And, in fact, the day the judgment came down in Bill's case, September 9, 1974, was when Gerald Ford pardoned Tricky Dick. Bill's commentary on that sequence of events is classic Ehrhart.

You should get this small book and be introduced to W.D. Ehrhart if you are unfamiliar with his work.



JOE MILLER IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.

Safe Return

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Safe Return: Inside the Amnesty Movement for Vietnam War Deserters
by **Michael Uhl**
(McFarland, 2023)

Michael Uhl is a familiar name, although I couldn't place him when I saw his book on the VVAW list of titles needing reviewers. I looked him up on Amazon; he has authored a dozen books! Three are about his Vietnam experience and anti-war work; I had to respect that. The others are tourist guides to Chicago, and I don't plan to visit there anytime soon.

Safe Return is a fascinating book, and Michael Uhl is a good, effective writer. From the very first page, this is a gripping story, a memoir of his experiences in the years after he returned from Vietnam. Together with a trusted friend, Tod Ensign, who was not a veteran, Uhl created an organization called Safe Return and worked tirelessly for years to seek total amnesty for "draft resisters" and deserters, most of whom lived overseas to avoid arrest or interference from FBI and CIA spooks. Mr. Ensign is no longer with us but would approve of this book. Michael Uhl worked tirelessly at a time when amnesty was definitely off the table. Although they worked closely for several intense years, there is not a single negative word or hint of disapproval of Ensign's actions anywhere in this book. Slowly, carefully, they moved the idea of amnesty toward the center of the table, attracting attention with events that drew the mainstream media. When a few exiled guys came home, Uhl and Ensign attracted a lot of media by addressing the GI's record or history and staging public events that would shine the spotlight on wives and families affected by the situation. In one case, they shepherded a deserter back, saw him sentenced to seven months confinement, and helped him be released in time to catch a flight to Sweden and attend the birth of his son!

If there is one thing I felt was missing from this history; it might have been more impactful if he told us a little about what the deserters and draft refusers have accomplished since the amnesties. Were they able to return to mainstream American society and raise families that have contributed? Where are they today, and what lasting effects did their traumatic separations from home and family have on them? They drop out of sight in Uhl's book once they achieve their pardons or serve their sentences.

What makes this book worthwhile are the intense stories of human beings who have turned their backs on the American military's institutional violence. Surprisingly, *Safe Return* received a lot of grief and opposition from other organizations that were also seeking amnesty for Vietnam War deserters. Very few were doing this work, especially at first, and it is tragic to read about other organizations in Canada, Sweden, and England, including VVAW, who seemed to be opposing *Safe Return* to gain publicity and appear as the most effective group addressing this problem. These revelations were especially moving for me, as I have been treated this way. It is sad to find that other groups want to "use" you in some way to attract attention is untimely or off the subject, but that might lead to attracting donations of money or additional publicity. I have told some of them, "I was used by the military, and I won't allow myself to be used again." Still, as the head of a desperately needed international organization, Michael Uhl had to swallow his pride at times and utilize all of his diplomatic skills to work together with other organizations to do what he could to right a terrible wrong.

As the Vietnam War neared an end, America's cruelty and barbarism were coming home to many cities, towns, and college campuses throughout the American landscape.

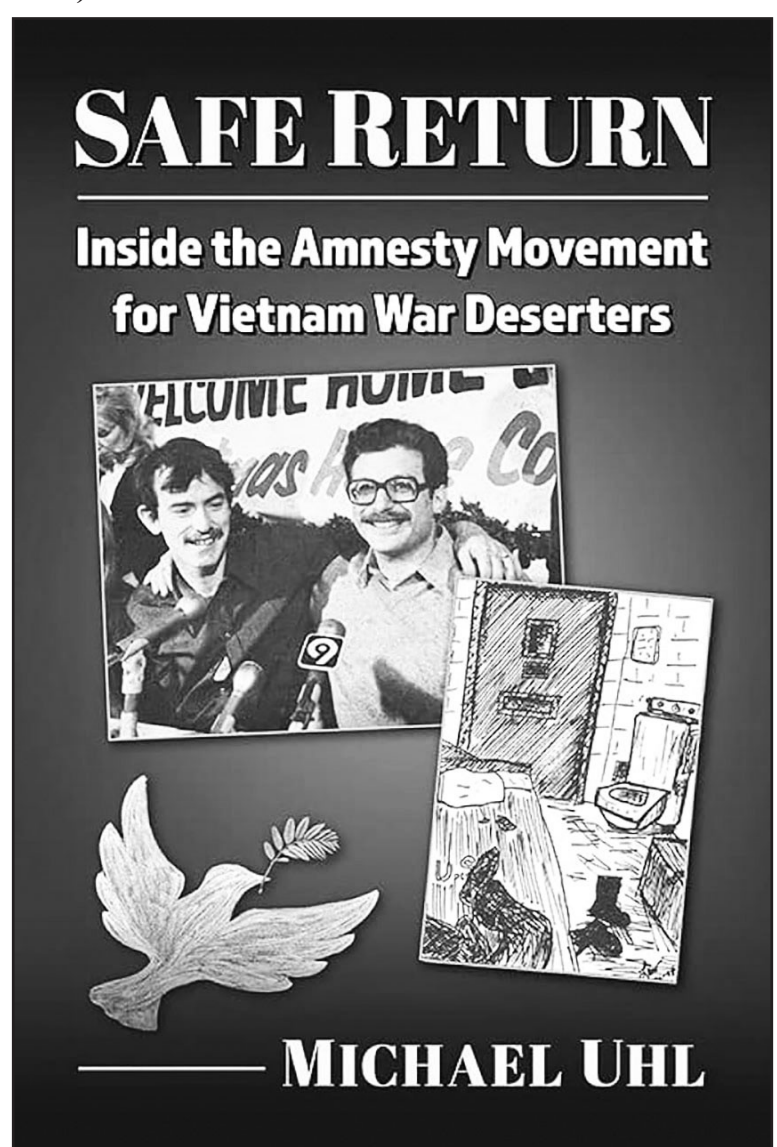
The FBI pursued anti-war activists with terrifying methods, and there were no more effective activists than the young men who went into self-prescribed exile overseas. They knew they could never return and visit relatives or friends. Some have never returned, but the desire to come home won out for many. But, they did not want to go to jail for acting upon their moral beliefs.

American "authority," the frightful entity we called The Establishment, had come into full bloom, and anyone who questioned or refused to participate was treated with unthinkable harshness. Michael Uhl saw the terrible extent of this institutional cruelty up close, and his book records the history very movingly and effectively. Of course, in the end,

President Jimmy Carter granted full amnesty to Vietnam-era deserters and draft resisters, but the sad history of those times must never be forgotten. The way the government treated a few of its dissenting individuals reveals much about the political atmosphere of the times. *Safe Return* presents an insightful look at a neglected tidbit of American history. It is a good read and recommended.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



Crazy Vet

EVERETT COX

I once had the diagnosis of paranoid or paranoid schizophrenic.

A psychiatrist gave it to me. That was a year after I returned from Vietnam.

"Progressive and incurable," he said, "You will get progressively worse, never better. You will end your days in a mental hospital."

That made me mad, horrified, angered, depressed. It crushed me. I had been suicidal before. I was suicidal in Vietnam, praying for a rocket to kill me. I had tried opium, maybe smoked heroin, too.

First Sergeants, you gotta love 'em. Just kidding. But, yes, sometimes you do. "I'll ok an early out," he told me. Early out! That's what I was praying for, didn't I already say that? A rocket, a mortar, a bullet, even friendly

fire, for God's sake. Early out!

Instead, it was to be a college acceptance. Ha! That lasted a couple of weeks. The nightmares lasted decades. The drugs, well, I'm sober now, but who's counting?

Can a diagnosis make you sick? Can a diagnosis kill you? Forty years after the first diagnosis, after I had tried suicide with electricity and drugs, a Vet Center counselor said, "It is PTSD." I refused to believe him. My fate had been made clear to me. It was terror. I was doomed. There was no escape. I could run, but I could not hide.

But, and this is important, I did not accept my diagnosis. I said it was a mistake. I said it was a prophecy or a curse. Yes, it's a curse. Maybe karma when I learned that word. I was rejecting the diagnosis, but not

completely. After all, it had been a psychiatrist, a doctor. I would never, even to this day, stop considering the possibility he was right. The demon continues to lurk.

One day, I was interviewed by a VA psychologist for my PTSD medical claim. "Do you know," he says, "most Vietnam vets with your diagnosis killed themselves a long time ago?" I didn't know. But I wasn't surprised. Incurable and progressive. Never better, only worse. You'd have to be nuts not to kill yourself or live immobilized by depression or drugs. My two best friends were Jack and Jim.

I like to think what saved me was intuition and experimentation. But mostly, it was luck. Pain helped, too. Botching a suicide attempt gives pause. What really gave me my life

back was words. Forty years after Vietnam, I began to speak about Vietnam. Then write. Then cry. Cry for years. It still brings me to tears.

Now, I can look back on the time I was incurable. I am happier than ever. Call me crazy.



EVERETT COX WAS BORN AND RAISED IN THE HUDSON VALLEY. HE ENLISTED IN THE US ARMY IN 1966. HE SERVED AS AN AERIAL CAMERA SPECIALIST AT MARBLE MOUNTAIN AIR BASE IN 1969. HE WORKED AS A LABORER MOST OF MY LIFE. FROM 2014 TO THE END OF 2021, HE WORKED AS A VETERAN PEER FACILITATOR FOR THE NEW YORK STATE JOSEPH P. DWYER VETERAN PEER PROGRAM. CURRENTLY, HE LIVES IN PARIS (FRANCE).

Midnight Cargo

SUSAN DIXON (REVIEWER)

Midnight Cargo: Stories & Poems by Kevin Basl

(Illuminated Press, 2023)

I had been an anti-war activist in college, had settled into a sad grief about what the Vietnam War had done and meant, and through a combination of chance and apathy, had little experience hearing the stories of veterans. So when a two-tour infantryman gave me a large manuscript to edit, I had questions. Often, I turned to Vietnam veteran Jim Murphy, whose life we celebrate in this issue. I would email Jim, and he would respond with the date, time, and place of a bi-weekly breakfast gathering of veterans. I would show up, socialize, and sometimes be invited to ask my question. It was at one of these meetings that I met Kevin Basl, poet, author, artist, musician, Iraq veteran, and leader of the Ithaca Warrior Writers Workshop, which developed out of those conversations over eggs and coffee. I came to know and admire Kevin's work, wrote a review of his jointly-authored chapbook, *Coal, Corn, and Yellow Ribbons* (see Spring 2023 issue of *The Veteran*), and now hold in my hands his collection of stories and poems, *Midnight Cargo*.

And holding this volume is a pleasure. *Midnight Cargo* just feels good in the hand. Published by Illuminated Press in Trumansburg, New York, each copy is hand-sewn and numbered, its endpapers made from pulped military uniforms. One sees the stitching as the pages turn and then, at rhythmic intervals, the sturdy thread. Together with the stories and poems it holds, the book as an object becomes a metaphor for the physicality and immediacy of war.

As participant, witness, and interpreter, Kevin occupies the liminal space where cultures and intentions clash, things go wrong, nothing can be done, and the mundane meets the grotesque. He notices details and shapes them into words. He fills his stories with foreshadowings, some of which he leaves unresolved so that they echo in the reader's mind. What happened to the young men we now

care about in "Occupations"? We want to know, we won't find out, and the tension of not knowing makes us feel the missed opportunities, unresolved misunderstandings, and helpless tragedy. Kevin's stories and poems resonate because they concern deeply human experience.

In the poems, Kevin plays with how the words are laid out. Word clusters and voids interlock. Lines are sometimes flush left, sometimes centered, sometimes undulating. In "God Mode," short lines are spread across the page, and the resulting lines are justified, which pulls the short lines apart, making them spasmodic and abrupt—a visual expression of the imagined thoughts of an unmanned military drone. "The Fog," an anguished poem about burn pits and breathing, explodes off the page, which folds down to accommodate it.

Two poems interlock in "The Agency's Mark." One comments on the painting "Horse Dance" by the Iraqi artist Faeq Hassan; the other on the CIA's role in promoting American modern art to demonstrate capitalism's positive effect on creativity. The CIA also promoted Arab artists within the United States, probably without the artists' awareness that "they were being used as content creators for the US government's culture war." Each commentary calls the other into question, and for me, trained as an art historian, the dialogue deftly undercuts any illusions about the non-political nature of art.

A rider sallies the frame:
CIA secretly funded
exhibitions in the USA

in white cloaking
in the 1950s and 60s
spotlighting Iraqi painters.
a mirage in the dust
Abstract expressionists like
Pollock, de Kooning, & Rothko
those flashes of flame
received agency funding too,
fashioning American culture
smoke on the wind
to counter the Soviets' promotion
of "socialist realism"—

The poem's last line—"The program, of course, supplemented / other—more belligerent—operations"—reverberates, the poem's imagery lingering in the mind so that the deathly world of weapons merges with the hushed, polite world of the museum.

"The Bugler," an often bitterly hilarious story about the funeral of a WWII veteran, explores the tension between what is said and what is left unsaid, who should hear—who can hear—what veterans have to say. Not all buglers, it seems, are trained in the instrument. They may be doing a form of lip-synching, playing a trumpet that has been fitted out with a miniature speaker, as happened at this funeral.

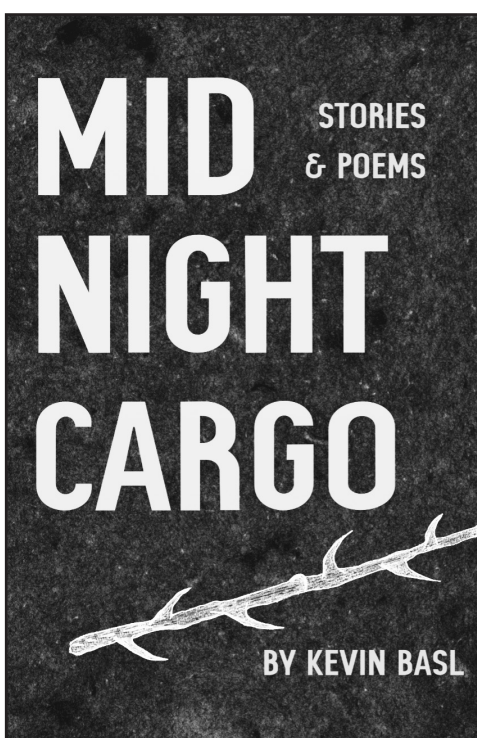
Afterward, the widow approached Jenkins. She leaned forward on her walker and, in a gentle voice, said, "You're a very talented musician."

Was she serious? She was. Jenkins could see it in those grandmotherly eyes. Her husband's flag, passably folded, sat in a basket attached to her walker. It would be mean to tell her the truth. Her husband just died. She could be deaf. Let her believe."

The deception, however, is later discovered by a friend of the deceased (himself a Vietnam veteran) who is not only amused but coaches the hapless bugler to try the trumpet for real. The story ends with a poignant invitation, one that is always available:

"Good," Dave said. "Give it another try—but really let it rip this time." Then he motioned to [a] couple, now intrigued by this impromptu music lesson, to come and see what the noise was about, to come learn the truth for themselves.

Midnight Cargo is a brave book, exploring territory often considered controversial: imagining a story from another's point of view. It is a risky venture, especially when he imagines the minds of Iraqis, for how can we, Americans, ever understand Iraqi reality? It is a legitimate concern that could also excuse an evasion of responsibility. "The Red Keffiyeh," which opens the collection, expresses Kevin's taking that responsibility:



I took out the scarf and put it on, surprised at how the checkered fabric had frayed, gazed in the mirror at my weary face and, still gazing, went on to consider sadly its beauty and how old the boy now would be ...

To those who would say how dare we try to imagine the reality of lives that differ from our own, this collection replies, how dare we not? How dare we enter the country of war without even attempting to understand its terrain? How dare we think of war only in terms of grand absolutes—including those in opposition—and not as the stories of people whose lives war so profoundly affects.

Purchase a copy of *Midnight Cargo* at www.illuminatedpress.org



SUSAN DIXON IS CO-AUTHOR WITH VIETNAM VETERAN MARK M. SMITH OF *SEEKING QUAN AM: A DUAL MEMOIR OF WAR AND VIETNAM*.



May 4, 1980, Kent State, Ohio.

We Are All Sisters and Brothers: A Protester's War and Moral Injury, and Service

EDWARD TICK

Like millions, I felt angry and betrayed by our country over the pursuit of the Vietnam War. So, like millions, I protested the war, went to college, had a deferment for my freshman year, and afterward drew a high lottery number. So, like most of the generation, I did not serve.

Though safe, I continued to protest the war. I had known it was immoral and illegal, even genocidal, since my early teens. I never turned against the troops. My first teenage encounters with returning vets protesting or homeless on New York City streets opened my eyes and heart.

But military service to one's tribe or nation has been the rite of passage into adult manhood for millennia. Those of our generation who did not serve or find some form of alternative passage live with holes in their souls.

I felt a hole for not having served. And I felt a hole because the war in our names was so wrong. And I felt it because our generation had splintered, and too often, we turned against each other. I wanted to know what warriors

had experienced and earn my place in the brotherhood without going to war. Was this possible? These forces combined in my soul to become my moral injury. I had to address mine. But I am a healer of invisible wounds. We can make amends. We can atone. We can give alternative life-affirming service. I had to serve. I could not serve in our military or an immoral cause. Had I gone to Vietnam, I could only have served as a corpsman. My uncle and godfather was a corpsman at the Battle of the Bulge. He returned unscratched but severely traumatized. I grew up with both the legacy and the wound. Through "chance and circumstance" and much searching and seeking, my life evolved so that beginning in the mid-1970s, years before the PTSD diagnosis, I became a psychotherapist for vets suffering the invisible wound. My life's calling became to serve as the best "home front soul doc" I could possibly be.

I have served in that role ever since. I have worked with thousands of veterans, researched and worked with

worldwide warrior traditions, applied them to our healing, written books, led 19 healing and reconciliation journeys to Vietnam, built schools, helped Agent Orange victims, and adopted family there. I've run a non-profit for veteran healing, conducted training and retreats all over the country and overseas, served the military chaplain corps as a subject matter expert on PTSD and Moral Injury for a decade, and now work with both Ukraine and Russia as well as our deployed chaplains on helping heal their invisible wounds. I could never have imagined this career, and I am not crowing. Instead, I feel humbled and awestruck that a young, confused war protester could evolve to offer such service and be in lifelong solidarity with both veterans and the Vietnamese. I am grateful and at peace with it. Yet the war wounded us all. I share the depths of collective war wounding that we all suffer. We can never do enough and yet never must rest in our efforts.

This work of almost half a

century began with my youthful protests of the war and first encounters and concerns for homecoming vets. It grew as I addressed my version of the deep, invisible wounds we all carry as American men and women who came of age during this tumultuous and conflictual time. Through my alternative service, I became initiated into the Vietnam veteran world. It filled my holes and matured and changed me forever. This service became my life's work, and the Vietnam War was my shaping life influence. I cannot be a veteran, but I am not a civilian. I am a home front doc, a bridge, a soul guide. I am in the brotherhood and cherish it. All this has been my great honor and has gifted me the dearest friendships of my life.



"HOMEFRONT DOC" ED TICK, PH.D., IS A PSYCHOTHERAPIST, INTERNATIONAL GUIDE, AND AUTHOR OF *WAR AND THE SOUL*, *WARRIOR'S RETURN*, AND OTHERS, SPECIALIZING IN HEALING WAR'S INVISIBLE WOUNDS.

One Nation Under Blackmail

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

One Nation Under Blackmail: The Sordid Union Between Intelligence and Crime that Gave Rise to Jeffrey Epstein (Volumes 1 & 2) by Whitney Webb (Trine Day, 2022)

Over the years, I have reviewed a long list of books for *The Veteran*. I can't recall a more difficult book (or books) to describe. I have the highest regard for the people who read *The Veteran*, and I am inclined to respect authors and the folks who produce books. In the spirit of full disclosure, the publisher of this mammoth work was also the publisher of my second book, *Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter*. No matter how I present this review or these reviews, I'm afraid I won't be enticing anyone to purchase and read these books. And that would be a shame. Every American should read this non-fiction story in two parts because they are one book that documents and exposes much of American and world history throughout the last seven decades. Volume 1 is 530 pages, and Volume 2 comes in at 417. If you should dare to read these books, be prepared to be completely overwhelmed. Within the combined 947 pages, you will find hundreds of famous characters and the names of amazing numbers of countries, international intelligence organizations, and thousands of businesses and corporations set up to camouflage the nefarious deeds that are the troubling core of the stories. Governments, banks, shipping companies, booze and drug traders, organized crime at all levels, communications giants, newspapers, and TV networks are all exposed here, and their "covert" activities are amazing. "Power tends to corrupt," Lord Acton famously asserted, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely." If you have the fortitude to read these two books completely, you will probably come away traumatized and convinced that our country cannot be saved and doesn't deserve saving. You will be amazed.

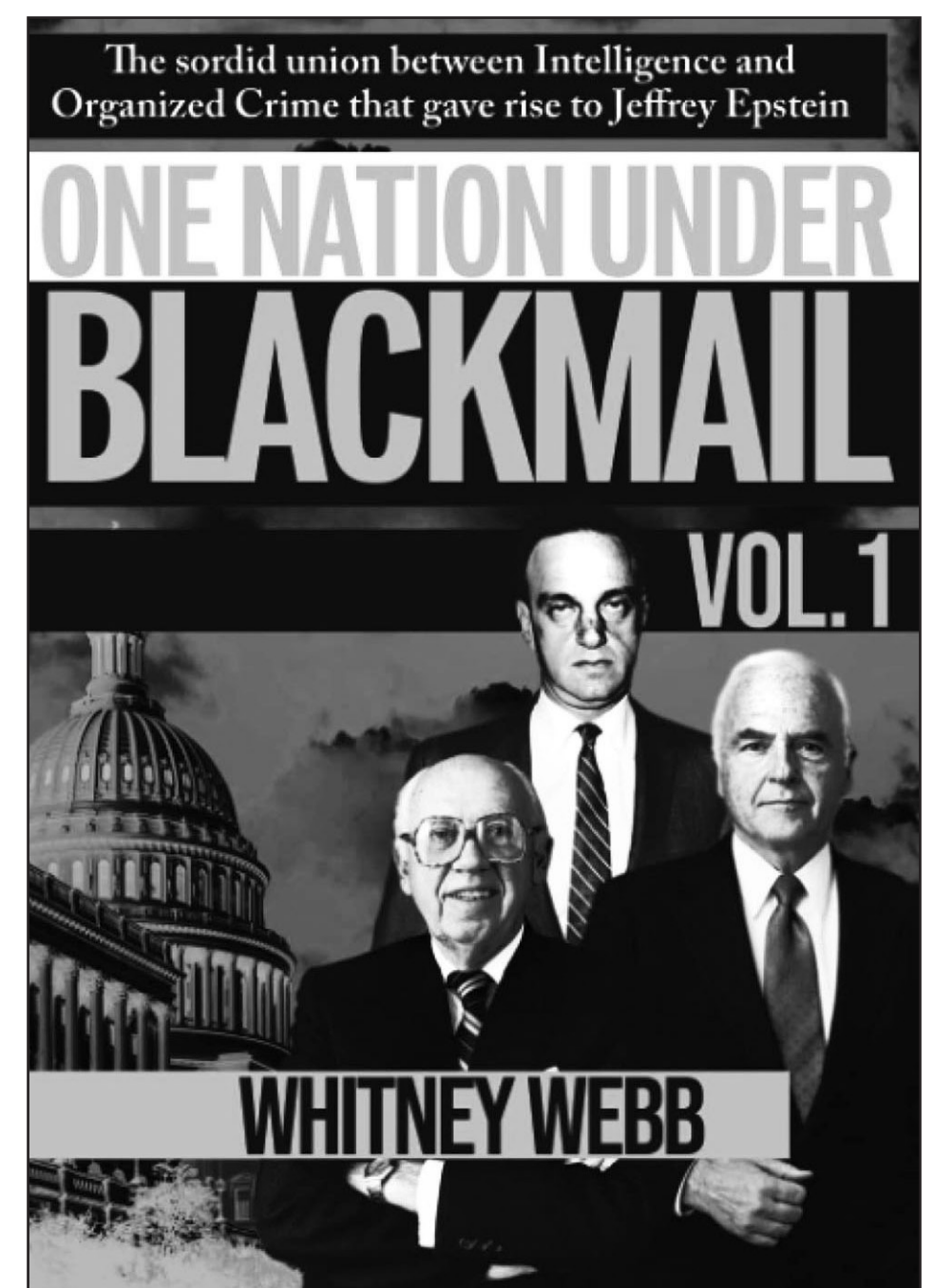
Reading these books is like witnessing a terrible traffic accident—multiplied by about a thousand times! No matter how knowledgeable or skeptical you may be, these two books will multiply your skepticism and demolish any faith or hope that America will overcome corruption and become the shining example we

want our grandchildren to inherit. Instead, if you read both books completely, I predict you will feel like a truck ran over you. I suggest you keep a notebook handy to record all the people and company names, but that would only result in writer's cramp. The subtitle of this collection is *The sordid union between Intelligence and Organized Crime that gave rise to Jeffrey Epstein*. There are two different groups of characters on the two covers, with the US Capitol building in the background of both. I am troubled that I only recognize Jeffrey Epstein, who is featured in Volume 2. I take comfort from the knowledge that if they are pictured on the covers of these books, they are villains.

I was surprised to learn that Ghislaine Maxwell was a charmer who learned her craft from her father, and her sister, Isabel, was equally nefarious and influential. I was shocked at the constant references to names in Jeffrey Epstein's two address books and the fantastic cast of characters who flew on his jet or visited his many extravagant palaces. I was surprised to learn how many times Jeffrey visited the Clinton White House and the many ways the Clintons participated in the tragic, utterly corrupt events. I must point out no less than the Bushes, Richard Nixon, and Barack Obama. No one in American politics is clean, and no one is spared in these two incredible books.

Author Whitney Webb has done an awe-inspiring job of researching the enormity of American history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the dirty underbelly of the American political and business activity across the planet, and the many personalities, foreign and domestic, who have played a part in those histories. If I describe the contents of these books, you will think I'm exaggerating. If I quote a sentence, a paragraph, or even a page, you will not begin to comprehend the sheer volume of information contained within these two volumes. Every shocking revelation is fully documented, and you will wonder how so much disturbing history has eluded you all these years. How in the world did this author discover all this and fit the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle on such an awe-inspiring scale?

Whitney Webb was interviewed in the American media when the book was released, and death threats soon made it necessary for her to move her family out of the country. She has done



an breathtaking job of researching the enormity of this situation, this underbelly of American political and business activity. She has thoroughly documented her sources at the end of each chapter. If you read these books, you will become a fan.

Early in Volume 1, we learn that the Plaza Hotel in New York City had a special "blue suite" where men of city, state, and national prominence went to party with young men, many of them teenage male prostitutes. Supercop J. Edgar Hoover was a regular patron dressed in female attire. This newspaper does not have enough pages for me to name all the names revealed in these books or the many companies created to camouflage or hide what was going on. Suffice it to say that the FBI and CIA's long history of "covert" deeds is not unique. They have made history by blackmailing the most powerful, and many of the most powerful have observed all this and done plenty of their own.

The first pages of Volume 1 make clear that blackmail using photographs or information of

intimate encounters, often among gay men, was typical. What was more common were blackmail operations involving foreign governments and their agents and prominent American businessmen, especially those trading in state-of-the-art weapons. Does the term Iran-Contra ring a bell?

Throughout 947 pages, author Webb carries on a strong-armed assault upon the reader's imagination. Sadly, sometimes, the editing does not equal the author's inspiration or knowledge, but that is a minor obstacle easily overcome.

These are reference works; summing up, I can only say, "Holy cow!" Don't buy just one volume because they are one continuous story, and you won't want to miss any of the sordid details.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

Students in Vietnam's Remote Highlands Need Our Help

BHAVIA WAGNER

Ha Giang province is located in the far north of Vietnam, bordering China. It is one of the poorest areas in the country. There are 22 ethnic groups, including Hmong, Tay, Dao, and Kinh.

More than two-thirds of the area is mountainous, making transportation difficult, especially during the rainy season. There is a shortage of land suitable for cultivation. During the dry season, there is a shortage of water for daily living and food production.

Most people are subsistence farmers, growing just enough to feed themselves. They grow rice, corn, and soybeans and raise buffaloes, cows, and goats. The weather is extreme, and crops are often lost due to freezes and floods. The average annual income is about 5.4 million Vietnamese dong (about \$225).

In August of 2023, the readers of *The Veteran* supported 31 school girls in Ha Giang province whose families are facing hardships. Your donations are helping these girls stay in school through 12th-grade graduation. Each student is given \$100 each year. Most of the students chosen for support are in the 9th grade. Their teachers and the school principal select students experiencing the most significant difficulties. Girls are chosen because they are more disadvantaged than boys.

Funds are awarded through the Vietnam Women's Union, whom we have worked with since 1992. It is a grassroots agency with a reputation for impeccable honesty and integrity.

The students use the funds for school supplies, school clothes, and food for their families. More children need our help. Please consider supporting one or more students at \$100 each.

A letter of thanks from a school board member:

These precious gifts help the students reduce difficulties at home and stop worrying so they can concentrate

on their studies. It also creates a more vibrant learning atmosphere among students throughout the school by arousing their love for other people. It gives them examples of overcoming difficulties and rising in life. The recipients feel very lucky and proud that the program's sponsors awarded them the help.

On behalf of the school, I would like to thank with warm gratitude all of the sponsors. I wish you lots of joy, good health, happiness, and success.

*Thank you very much,
Luc The Thang*

Letter of thanks from a student

Note: The thank you letters from the students in the highlands will arrive after this article. The following letter is from a Ho Chi Minh City student who received your support last year when we responded to the COVID crisis.

My name is Tran Thi Thanh Ngan, and I am a student in 12th grade. Previously, I lived with my father, mother, and younger brother. My father is a builder, my mother was a worker at a company, and my younger brother is in primary school. My family situation was difficult, but very happy because we had a father and a mother. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, it took many lives of people, including our mother.

The Covid-19 took away our dearest person. We lost our mother's love, care, and protection. Now, my father has to work harder to bear all our living expenses, food, housing, and school fees. My family's life before the epidemic was difficult, but now it is even more difficult.

My father takes care of the family with a monthly income of about 7 million VND (\$290). There are days when he has leg pain, cannot go to work, and cannot earn money. Many times, I see that my father cannot sleep at night because he is worried about paying the house rent, buying food, or paying school fees. I love him so much.

Today, I am very happy to receive a scholarship from the Women's



Student hoeing the family corn field.

Union. I was very touched when I received the scholarship because it will help me have more energy to continue my education. I will use the scholarship for my studies and will try my best to do well. My determination is to go to university so that in a few years, I can work to help my father and share his burden. I will take care of my brother on behalf of my mother. I also want to help other children who are in the same situation as me.

This scholarship is a great gift that is not only a source of material support but also a source of encouragement and spiritual consolation. Once again, I would like to thank the leaders of the Women's Union and sponsors for your great support. Thank you.

Tran Thi Thanh Ngan

Dear readers of *The Veteran*,

kindly consider supporting one or more poor students in Vietnam at \$100 each. It will be a huge help to them, and they will be forever grateful. Donations are tax-deductible. You can send your check to Friendship with Cambodia, PO Box 5231, Eugene, OR 97405. Or donate online at friendshipwithcambodia.org. Thank you!



BHAVIA WAGNER LED FRIENDSHIP TOURS IN VIETNAM FOR GLOBAL EXCHANGE IN 1992 AND 1994 AND HAS BEEN VOLUNTEERING TO HELP POOR CHILDREN IN VIETNAM EVER SINCE. SHE ALSO WORKS TO HELP CAMBODIA AND IS THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF FRIENDSHIP WITH CAMBODIA AND AUTHOR OF SOUL SURVIVORS: STORIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CAMBODIA.



John Stubbs, hands out the awards to the ethnic students who are wearing their traditional clothing. When it came time to depart for home, they quickly removed their beautiful outfits, revealing track pants and t-shirts, and hopped onto the back of their family scooters.



Education award ceremony to ethnic minority students in Quang Binh district, Ha Giang province, Vietnam. Pictured are students, teachers, the school principal, our representative, and staff of the Vietnam Women's Union.



When Johnny Comes Marching Home

VVAW

Reprinted from the May 1973, Volume 3, Number 3 issue of Winter Soldier.

In his speeches, President Nixon has time and again said how much respect and admiration he has for the Vietnam veteran. Time and again he has told America how much he intends to help the Vietnam veteran. Employment bills, more benefits, vocational training, and better educational benefits have all passed between his lips in an orgy of rhetoric, all intended to show how grateful America is for the "great sacrifices" of the veteran. With all this praise one would think that the whole country is just looking for a veteran to help. However, what are the real conditions of the Vietnam veterans, all veterans, of this country? Where do they really stand? The following is a small glimpse of the answers to these questions; a glimpse of the truth.

One would think, listening to the government's propaganda, that a vet could just walk off the street and right into a great, fulfilling job. No such luck! First, most men enter the service right after high school, which leaves little room for on-the-job experience. Besides, most poor and minority vets would never have been able to go to college in the first place because of the chains of poverty around their necks.

60% of the enlisted men in the military have never gone beyond a high school diploma, and these are the men who end up in the combat arms. While in the military, the training that the men receive has little relation to work in the civilian world (would you hire a doorgunner as a TV repairman?). Employers do not consider military job experience when looking at an employment questionnaire because the military does not use machines nor techniques like those in civilian work (except for law enforcement). What they want is civilian job experience, and several years of it. So where do you find the vet? As janitors, or pumping gas, or pushing a wheelbarrow.

Then there is the problem of finding a job. The general unemployment rate of American workers is roughly 5.5%. The rate for Vietnam veterans is about 10%. For minority vets, the figure is an incredible 14%. These figures are taken from the Department of Labor, so they are conservative. They show the blatant disregard of employers for the supposed "great sacrifice." What the figures also show is the economic reality of workers in America. Unemployment is essential to big business because it forces working people to compete with each other and against vets for the few good jobs and the many bad ones, thus allowing

businessmen to hire at unbelievably low wages. By forcing a split amongst working people, big business can keep the pressure off their backs, pressure to improve the wage, the conditions of the work place and increase workers benefits.

What about the fantastic GI Bill? Again we find a sham. Try going to college full-time, eat a couple of meals a day, pay rent, pay tuition, and buy school books all on a flat \$225 a month. Impossible for most people. The GI Bill after WWII was paradise compared to today's. Then they got \$75 per month spending money, books paid for and tuition paid for. The GI Bill for vets today is an ugly joke.

The oppression of minority vets is incredible. Words are a poor medium for describing the everyday hassles of these people who also laid their ass on the line. Drug addiction is rampant amongst them. Unemployment is triple for them. They are shuffled right back into the ghetto and barrio of filth that has dragged them down since birth. 80% of all combat deaths were minority peoples, yet they are the last to benefit from their service.

What does all this mean? The answer can be found in our own back yards. It's the same reason the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. It's the same reason that the economy is so

screwed up. It's the same reason America got into Vietnam. The oppression of the Vietnam veteran is only a magnified picture of the same oppression that all poor working Americans are facing. The huge corporations, owned by a small minority of incredibly rich ogres, do not care about people, only profits. These ogres own or control the top 200 corporations, which control 50% of this country's wealth; but they want more. As big business grabs for more wealth as they move into other countries to grab new resources as they are doing in Indochina, the American people will lose more.

VVAW will not demand more for the veteran without demanding more for all Americans. The same good health care that veterans should get should also be given to all Americans. The same right to full employment that veterans want VVAW believes should be accorded all Americans. As VVAW demands a complete education for vets, we also demand it for all Americans. We must fight together with all our brothers and sisters to not only better the lives of veterans, but also to better the lives of the people we live and work with.



VVAW marching on Labor Day in Milwaukee, September 3, 1973.

Nixon Attacks Veterans: Assistance Cut

VVAW

Reprinted from the June 1973, Volume 3, Number 4 issue of Winter Soldier.

In the last issue of *Winter Soldier*, the plight of the returning Vietnam-era veteran was explained in general terms. The article accused President Nixon of using the veteran for his own propaganda purposes while at the same time he is cutting money meant for veteran's assistance from the federal budget. This article will give an exact picture of what is happening to funds meant for veterans assistance, but under Nixon are receiving massive cuts.

1. Medical care for veterans is being reduced by arbitrary reductions in the average daily patient census in Veterans' Administration hospitals. The difference between the patient census mandated by Congress this fiscal year (85,500) and the Nixon Administration proposal for the coming fiscal year (80,000) is the equivalent to closing eleven 500-bed Veterans' Administration hospitals.

2. Nixon has scheduled a 1.8% reduction in medical employment for the VA while it is commonly

known that VA hospitals are vastly understaffed.

3. Medical research funds are being decreased by almost \$6 million or 7.5%, even though an increase of \$5 million is required to maintain the present level of research activity.

4. Hospital construction has been slashed in Nixon's budget by almost \$81 million.

5. One of the hideous cuts, one that has been only tabled not dropped, is the reduction in disability payments to disabled vets of \$160 million. This means that physically disabled vets will receive less money per month to live on even though the cost of living has risen drastically. Individually, this means that a brother who lost a leg would be paid \$169 less per month.

6. Veterans' Cost-of-Instruction grants are not provided for in the new Nixon budget. This program would provide financial assistance to colleges which engage in outreach efforts to recruit Vietnam veterans as students and provide special remedial programs for dudes who need tutoring. Nixon's Office of Management and Budgets has already impounded \$25 million meant for this program during the

current fiscal year.

7. Finally, Nixon proposes to cut \$1 billion from the Public Employment Program under the Emergency Employment Act. 38% of the people in the various PEP programs are Vietnam vets.

There are several measures that have been passed by the Senate to further benefit America's 29 million veterans. One, S. 59, is a health care expansion bill with provisions for peace-time veterans and dependents that are currently ineligible for treatment at VA hospitals. The bill is intended to increase the staff-patient ratio at VA hospital where needed.

Bill S. 284 mandates the VA administrators to set up comprehensive drug and alcohol abuse programs. Currently the VA has no independent funding allowances for setting up drug abuse programs.

Besides the programs and funds being kicked around the by the Federal government, the local state governments are also pushing various legislation to give benefits to vets from those states.

What does it all mean? Looking at Nixon's proposed cuts, it is obvious

that his administration does not intend on carrying out the grandiose words of Dick, but rather talk a good line while cutting the throat of the veteran. As the revelations about Watergate develop we can see how the Nixon Administration has lied to make America think that he is doing a good job. We can see that his concern is not for the truth or for good programs, but for his own "good" image.

VVAW/WSO believes it is imperative that the government which sent men off to war must further its commitment to those men after their service is done. VVAW/WSO does not believe this country needs to spend \$81 billion on military needs. That money is needed by those programs already promised the Vietnam-era veteran. That money is needed here in America to better the conditions Americans live under. This country must re-affirm its commitment to its veterans by stopping Nixon and his Office of Management and Budget from destroying the existing vets' programs.



The War Comes Home: Post-Vietnam Struggle

VVAW

*Reprinted from the June 1973,
Volume 3, Number 4 issue of Winter
Soldier.*

The war in Indochina has produced many casualties. Over 50 thousand Americans are dead, over 300,000 were wounded, 45,000 of them permanently disabled from their wounds. For the people of Indochina, the death toll is still rising as the United States continues to bomb the countryside of Laos and Cambodia. The ravages of war on ex-servicemen can be clearly seen in their torn bodies and the numbers of the dead. However, some of the results of the war are not visible and hard to see, and hard to understand once seen.

Steven Hawkins, an ex-Airman, had what most people would consider a "cushy" job. Steve was stationed in Okinawa, and all he had to do was assemble the components of the bombs that went into the bellies of B-52s and other fighter-bombers. He did not have to see the results of those bombs, the shattered bodies, the burned faces, and the ravaged countryside. But Steve suffers as if he had seen it, as if he were right there on the ground when the bombs exploded. Steve has to face himself, face that casualty of the mind that destroys one's self-image: guilt. America told Steve that he was fighting Commies, and he was making bombs so that the Vietnamese could be free. However, Steve, like millions of other vets, learned that he was lied to and that his own government was

suppressing freedom. He must now struggle with his mind, with his own guilt, to overcome the feeling of being used for murder.

Rickey Ditch is 22, an ex-Marine, who received many medals for service to his country, including 4 Silver Stars, 5 Bronze Stars, and 2 Navy Crosses. Rickey is at times on the verge of suicide because he has nightmares about the times when he cut out people's hearts, and cut the ears from the head of a 15 year old girl.

Don Kemp came home from Vietnam in 1967 blown out from his work as a member of the Army's Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon (LRRPs). Don's job was to fire on his own GI friends or the enemy if the two formed a local truce with each other, just to keep the war going. He also murdered villagers if they became passive about the war. Upon his return home, Don kept guns under his pillow, in his car, knives in his boots, and a GI first aid kit thinking that he was still in Vietnam. One night, during one of his frequent nightmares, his wife tried to wake him and he shot her dead with the gun he kept under his pillow, all the time thinking he was defending his position in Vietnam. Don Kemp is in jail for life.

Post-Vietnam Struggle (PVS) is the veteran's attempt to re-integrate into society after undergoing the most intense, conflicting experience of his life. If society does not understand that experience, then the struggle after returning home is harder, sometimes

impossible. America has shown little concern for the truth behind Vietnam and this is reflected in the treatment and lack of concern for the troubles of the Vietnam veteran. America's "John Wayne" image of GIs and the military's own dehumanized image of what is a man leaves the veteran with a contradiction: Believe what America and the military tells him is reality, or believe his own real-life experiences which are opposite to the "official" reality.

Dr. C.F. Shatan, a New York psychiatrist, has described PVS as having several different ways of manifesting itself. These points are similar to what any individual might undergo, but different in the context of the Vietnam war. Guilt, self-punishment, no outlet for bitterness or hatred, feelings of being a scapegoat, psychic numbing, alienation, inability to express love or trust, and confusion from never really knowing who the "enemy" is.

Dr. Robert Lifton, who has been working with Vietnam veterans for several years, states that the veteran's "overall psychological task is that of finding meaning and justification in having survived, and in having fought and killed." Body counts, free-fire zones, carpet bombing, and search and destroy missions all leave the GI with the notion that his job is to kill as many people as possible, and feel patriotic. Then to return to a society that sees no honor in his having served, to not come home victorious as in

WWII, to see that no one really cares if he lived or died; these things totally alienate the Vietnam vet from the rest of America, until he looks for a hole to hide in (like drugs) or he begins to re-live Vietnam again and again.

In a study done by Cecil Peck, he found that 23-27% of Vietnam veterans have attempted suicide. If this study is accurate, it would mean that over 500,000 Vietnam veterans have attempted suicide. To top off the problem, the Veterans Administration does not recognize PVS as a real problem or that it is service connected (an important point when a vet needs VA help), and has done little in this area. In fact, the VA has spent more time in trying to show how it was really early childhood that is responsible for these problems, and has spent little time in assisting those people who are actively researching PVS in the hopes of helping the veteran.

The majority of the membership of VVAW/WSO has also lived through the experience of Vietnam and the military. We did not trust the VA nor our families, and so we came together with other vets to help each other. VVAW/WSO has rap groups in several states in which veterans help veterans understand what has happened. Although VVAW/WSO has political objectives, our rap groups lay no trips on anyone, unlike the VA. Pro-war, anti-war, or don't give a shit; the groups are there to help.



The Wheel of Law

The wheel of law turns
without pause.

After the rain, good weather.
In the wink of an eye

The universe throws off
its muddy clothes.

For ten thousand miles
the landscape

spreads out like a beautiful brocade
Light breezes, smiling flowers.

High in the trees, amongst
the sparkling leaves

all the birds sing at once.
People and animals rise-up reborn

What could be more natural?
After sorrow, comes happiness.

—Ho Chi Minh

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The Vietnam Run

STEVE KRUG (REVIEWER)

The Vietnam Run
American Merchant Mariners in the Indochina Wars, 1945-1975
by Michael Gillen
(McFarland, 2023)

"A page of history is worth a volume of logic" - Oliver Wendell Holmes.

This could be said for Michael Gillen's book: a well-written, thoroughly researched, and annotated history of Merchant Mariners in said time and place. If there was ever a book that clearly sums up how the US got involved in Vietnam, this is it.

The book is divided into three parts:

Part One - The First Indochina (French) War.

While FDR was clear that the US was not fighting WWII so that the

British and French empires could be re-established after the war, Truman was far more pliant with the idea, especially once the Cold War and its simplistic worldview took shape. FDR knew France needed ships to reinsert itself into its old colonial holdings, and FDR postponed any real help. Many former colonies hoped the US would stand by its wartime statements that, in the future, self-determination would rule the day. The people who had Truman's ear had different ideas about who should run the world and self-determination. Transport of French troops back into "Indochine" on US ships began even as US troops waited to be shipped back home after the end of WWII. The US Merchant Marine protested this action. Soon, ships were given to the French, along

with increasing amounts of arms.
Part Two - The Second Indochina (American) War.

After the defeat of the French in Vietnam, the US started looking for someone to support and came up with Diem, a Catholic in a Buddhist country. Choosing Diem only makes sense when viewed through the lens of anti-communist hysteria. Self-determination for former colonies was the farthest from US policymakers' minds, as was any semblance of democracy and free elections.

While I am sure most VVAW members know this part of US involvement, Gillen supplies us with much info on how the Merchant Marine factors into it. It is impossible to summarize this part of the history, reading the book is well worth the time.

Part Three - Aftermath.

This section deals with "Boat People" and MIA recovery efforts, emphasizing the involvement of Merchant Mariners. Once again, Gillen provides us with the area's history and explains how ethnic Chinese became unwanted in Vietnam and fled.

As current US policy shifts to strengthen its ties with Vietnam as an ally against China, Gillen's book explains how the area's history plays into current geo-politicking.



STEVE KRUG IS A RETIRED MERCHANT MARINE CAPTAIN, WAS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR DURING THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM AND IS A VVAW MEMBER.

And You Think Sisyphus Had A Problem?

ED WHITE (REVIEWER)

Breaking the War Habit: The Debate over Militarism in American Education
by Scott Harding, Charles Howlett, and Seth Kershner
(University of Georgia Press, 2022)

This book is a multi-authored short history (139 pages) of the uphill battle against military instruction and drill in our colleges and high schools in the United States. It is a subject not reported in the press or written about by many American historians.

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) operates in colleges and universities. Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) operates in high schools. Overall, the Pentagon spends \$1.4 billion to enlist those going into military service. Currently, 1,700 colleges offer ROTC. Three thousand three hundred high schools offer JROTC with 550,000 cadets, costing \$400 million. The good news from the authors' views is that only 40% of JROTC cadets join the military. In Chicago, where I am writing this review, there are 37 schools with JROTC, plus six service academies. There are 151 high schools in the Chicago system.

The idea of ROTC came after the Spanish-American war when the military needed a supply of officers for "imperial ventures." Later, in New York, Jewish neighborhoods and socialist-spirited students reminded those who would listen that "rejecting school militarism was a part of a long tradition of opposing the military meddling in civil affairs." They brought up our colonial history of civilians being superior to the military. By the way, they also said to remember that the founding document mentioned

housing the Army against our will. The Land-Grant College Act of 1862, the Morrill Act, specifically required colleges to do military training for male students. After the Civil War, military officers were part of college life. After the United States became a world power after the Spanish-American war, the country needed officers. The National Defense Act of 1916 created a military preparedness for the upcoming war. At this time, the language of "discipline" and "moral qualities of good citizenship in youth" came to enter the discussion. And let us not forget that "military drill develops the fine art of being a man." It was from this time and the 1920 National Defense Act that the ROTC became established.

After World War I, the pushback to military influence in schools and colleges came from many sources. The peace movement had its beginning. The War Resisters League (WRL) was one such group. Also, the Committee on Militarism in Education (CME) joined the peace movement.

The pamphlets of CME were of particular influence nationwide. Currently, organizing a national coordination with many peace activists has gone lacking. However, individual spokespeople like Reinhold Niebuhr, John Dewey, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and Jane Addams captured the national conversation. They stressed the purpose of education, critical thinking, and teaching peace, not war. The clergy joined in with the Federal Council of Churches, 30 Christian denominations demanding an abolition of ROTC. In part due to the Great Depression, lobbying Congress, petition drives, and campus

meetings accelerated throughout the United States. The War Department and veterans organizations pushed back, particularly in the 1930s when war clouds were developing, and CME had financial problems. After World War II, CME dissolved. Peace activism did not rise again until the 1960's with the opposition to the Vietnam War.

With the Vietnam War in the '60s and '70s, the opposition to ROTC grew with protests on campus, leading to fire-bombing on some campuses. The emphasis was on ROTC, not JROTC.

A significant expansion of JROTC came in the Reagan era when the concept of patriotism and instilling discipline in youth was offered as a way to solve the country's problems. The American Friends Service Committee was a stalwart throughout this period, together with the National Campaign to Demilitarize Our Schools (NCDOS) later in the 1990s. This group created a more significant national coordination of peace activists.

The Gulf War, which brought coalition forces and the largest deployment of American troops since Vietnam, started the "cultural veneration of the US Military." Parades, banners, and ribbons on trees seemed to pop up nationwide—however, new coalitions developed with Blacks and Latino youth against school militarism. At the same time, after the "swift victory" in Iraq, the Pentagon asked to double the number of JROTC units nationwide. General Colin Powell, an ROTC graduate, pushed expansion to prevent urban unrest and emphasized the benefits to society of "high school soldiering." And by the way, in the Bush legislation of No Child Left Behind of 2002,

high schools must provide military recruiters access to campus and student information. And so it goes...

In more current times, the Pentagon has been creative in its approach. One example is programs like March 2 Success, a website designed to help students be better test takers. Also, the Army created STARBASE, which brings 5th graders to military bases for a week of hands-on science instruction.

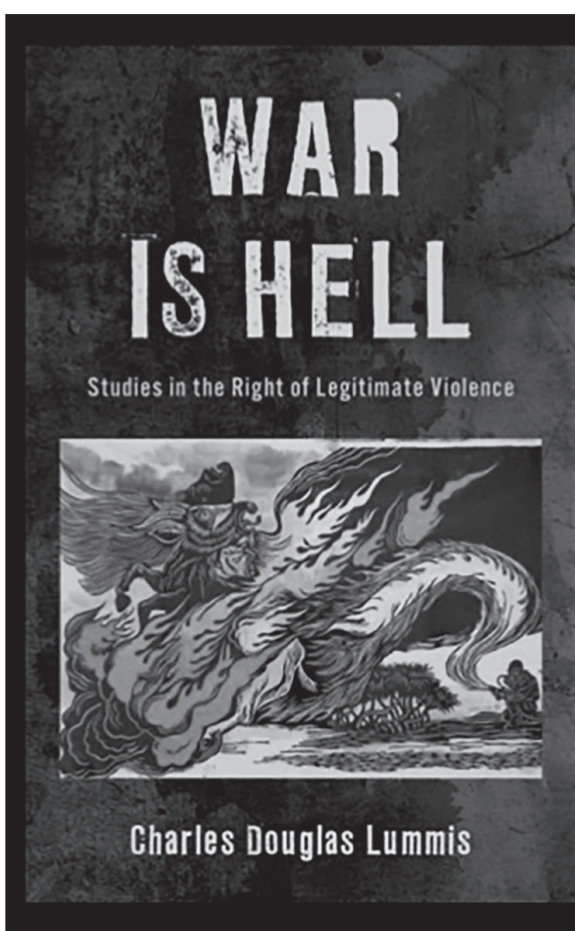
Senator Bernie Sanders has hailed this program as beneficial. Huh? Oh, and by the way, then President Obama advocated greater military presence in prestigious universities. Double huh??

The authors have updated the history of school militarism since Pat Elder's *Military Recruiting in the United States* (2016). The authors have an impressive bibliography of manuscript collections, dissertations, reports, books, articles, and interviews. If you are in the anti-recruitment campaign, I would also suggest a short edited work by Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg entitled *10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military*, 2006.

The myth of Sisyphus in the world of militarism in colleges and high school is real, but as someone said, if you don't understand the world, you can't change it. Reading this book is one way of changing it.



ED WHITE IS A MARINE VIETNAM COMBAT VET WITH MEMBERSHIPS IN VVAW, VFP, AND VVA. HE HAS TAUGHT COURSES ON THE VIETNAM WAR AT TRITON COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS.



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Praise for the Book
"Lummis's masterful combination of scholarship, grace, passion, and common sense gives us new ways of thinking about war and peace."
—Frank Bardacke, author, *Trampling Out the Vintage*
"From Dante and Hobbes to Arendt and Walzer, from the scorched earth of Atlanta to the ashes of Tokyo, this book takes us on an intellectual and political journey that energizes us to think tougher thoughts about building peace."
—Cynthia Enloe, author of *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging Persistent Patriarchy*

About the Book
Unlike the fiends of hell, humans, in order to carry out the work of war effectively, need to be changed, as any military drill instructor – DI – knows. The book examines the various ways of enabling essentially peaceful humans to carry out the work of war: invoking the authority of the sacred, dehumanizing the enemy, attempting to limit war by just rules, asserting that there is no other way to establish order.
About the Author
Ex-Marine **Charles Douglas Lummis** has written extensively on the topic of US foreign relations, and is a vocal critic of US foreign policy. Susan Sontag has called Lummis "one of the most thoughtful, honorable, and relevant intellectuals."

Unseen Scars from Fifty Years Ago

DOUG MASON

I always have nightmares around the holidays—usually recurrent dreams related to "The Christmas Bombings" of North Vietnam conducted for twelve days beginning on December 18, 1972. Bearing witness from Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base's 388th Combat Support Group, I was not physically in harm's way, but the takeoff of each aircraft signaled one of the most savage phases of the Vietnam War.

Over fifty years ago, Operation Linebacker II was a "maximum effort" bombing campaign that saw the largest bomber strikes launched by US military forces since World War II. Besides nighttime raids by strategic forces, tactical aircraft such as the F-4 Phantoms and F-105 Thunderchiefs at Korat would continue to press daytime attacks. The roar of jets lifting off the Thailand runway was seemingly continuous.

History shows that Linebacker II was unjustified politically or militarily, except to serve the partisan purposes of President Richard Nixon. While USAir Force planners carefully shaped a list of "lawful" targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, there was significant civilian collateral damage.

Every time I left the base for my hooch in town, I saw human scenes in Nakhon Ratchasima province that mirrored life in nearby embattled Vietnam. It was impossible to avoid thinking of the innocent victims of terror from the sky and the part I played in supporting that horror. Self-medication with marijuana, opiates, and alcohol seemed the only way to ease my spiritual pain short of suicide (a religious retreat provided little relief to my "soul wounds").

My troubles were compounded when I was honorably discharged after my year in the Indochina Theater of War (while American hostilities in Vietnam ceased in January 1973, the air war continued in Laos through April and Cambodia until August). My experiences in Southeast Asia led to high levels of anguish, anger, and alienation. Reflecting on perceived transgressions filled me with sorrow and bitterness. I now take responsibility for inappropriate behaviors leading to failed marriages and other shattered relationships. When I was fired in 1989 from a dream job, the boss suggested psychological counseling, and I have been in therapy since taking that advice.

I was misdiagnosed with clinical depression for years, and though I was, thankfully, still alive, internally, things were in turmoil. Then I read the 1994 book, *Achilles in Vietnam*. Author Jonathan Shay coined the term "moral injury" to define the damage done to one's conscience or moral compass when a person perpetrates, witnesses, or fails to prevent acts that transgress one's moral beliefs, values, or ethical codes of conduct. Philosopher Nancy Sherman, journalist David Wood, and Vietnam veteran/peace activist Camillo "Mac" Bica, among others, have further focused on this issue in multiple books on war and moral injury.

Though the publications of the US Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA) recognize the existence of moral injury, it is not a currently accepted diagnostic category. One can receive compensation from the VA for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) but not for moral injury. Shame, guilt, and anger at the self or others' betrayal of basic human values are central to moral injury. These emotions may occur with PTSD, but they are not key to its definition. PTSD is generally regarded as a fear-

based disorder. Moral injury is guilt and shame-based. And PTSD fails to account for despair responses, while moral injury does.

War is not the only thing that can cause moral injury—abuse, rape, and violence lead to similar damage. The VA has begun to take the concept seriously. Last year, I joined a moral injury support group convened by a team from the Altoona VA Hospital. I am grateful and am moving steadily on the path of self-forgiveness. I have forgiven those who called Vietnam vets baby killers or cry babies. I have pardoned the enemy in the jungles and presidential administrations in Washington, DC (although I remain critical of their political legacies).

I hope this column helps someone else who may be afflicted with moral injury. I am especially concerned for veterans of the Middle Eastern Forever Wars. Healing builds bridges over scarred chasms.



DOUG MASON SERVED AT KORAT RTAFB IN 1972-73. HE IS A NATIVE OF PHILADELPHIA, A RETIRED SOIL SCIENTIST AND LIVES WITH HIS WIFE SONJA IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA.

The Tragic Mistake and PTSD are Facts

TOM GERY

Fifty years ago, I graduated from college. Four years earlier, I "graduated" from Vietnam. I flew home with bad baggage and worse habits. The former was stuffed into a dark place, the latter on prominent display. In 2019, the VA determined I was disabled. I had written my account of war, shared my story with the psychologist, and described drinking and drugging out of control in my retirement years.

While in college, I gravitated toward other veterans. There was a club. We met regularly at the Red Velvet Saloon, which specialized in beef and beer. Some were married, most single, all men, all drank, some liked weed, and none shared war stories. It was not a hot topic. Some guys didn't have any, others had too many, and on campus, it was not a popular subject. I knew nothing of VVAW!

The two things we had in common were the date our GI Bill checks arrived in the mail and avoiding the subject of US foreign policy and military adventurism. The prevailing attitude was detachment. Our personal journeys focused on classes and cumulative grade point averages. The Vietnam War was in our rearview mirrors, or so we assumed. For me, there was baggage and habits.

W. D. Ehrhart wrote in *Passing Time* about the war that by 1973, no one cared anymore. The troops were coming home; conscription ceased, and America was moving on. But do we ever just move on, or does history hold us accountable? Is there a moment when we hold ourselves responsible or hide behind alternative facts?

Arnold Isaacs, in his June 19, 2023 *Salon* piece, *How the Trauma of the Vietnam War Led to the Age of "alternative facts,"* described "perceptions and opinions on both sides of the argument" about the US role in Vietnam, offering reference points of "tragic mistake or noble cause." Was the war lost because Congress cut off funds, or did one side of a civil war never really have the will to fight? The writer closes his discussion by highlighting the current political environment in the United States: very divided; facts don't matter.

For me, at the center of any debate about Vietnam is the quote by Daniel Patrick Moynihan from a *Washington Post* column on January 18, 1983: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts."

The US Government's 172 months of war in Vietnam is a fraction of the region's geo-political history. The French exercised colonial adven-

More than a century later, historians continue to bring revelations to the Civil War narrative. Public monuments and Federal military posts' names are understood to be forms of psychological domination and consequences of negotiations between political jurisdictions. Statues of slave owner generals placed for all to see during the Jim Crow period sent

with the various bureaucracies in government and corporate sectors, the US political leadership knowingly sent and supported the country going to war. Strong beliefs form national values: "Better dead than Red"; profits over people; ribbons, medals, and rank are woven into the fabric of American society. We portray ourselves as peaceful and freedom-loving while harboring war-like tendencies. US military involvement in other peoples' affairs is part of our heritage. I found 106 conflicts. Google: "List of Wars involving the United States."

My story is told through A.J. Moore's *Warpath*, previously reviewed in this publication. We were in the same Scout platoon. There are no alternative facts revolving around our own experiences in Vietnam. Those who saw the horrors know it was a fact, not an opinion. Counting bodies as if they were Friday night touchdowns is haunting. Requesting combat because it tested one's courage is a moral hazard. Emulating the comic book WWII hero, Sgt Roc of Easy Company, leads to guilt, regret, bad baggage, and worse habits.

My PTSD diagnosis made VA counseling available. The psychologist challenged me to remove the steamer trunk from the dark storage place. My self-medicating with Demon Rum and Devil Weed was a bandage on an ancient wound. I began unpacking, discarding the bad baggage and habits. Moral injury is real. In 2020, I started the sobriety journey, one day at a time. Now I think about Vietnam without war. Birth defects from Agent Orange and dangerous munitions are facts, not opinions. I am aware of VVAW's mission and success. I help a little when letters about the libraries arrive in the mail. In a way, it helps with the healing. And that is a fact!



TOM GERY SERVED IN THE US ARMY FROM JANUARY 1968 TO SEPTEMBER 1969 WITH A TOUR OF DUTY IN VIETNAM '68-'69. HE IS A RETIRED SOCIAL WORKER, MARRIED WITH TWO ADULT CHILDREN AND TWO GRANDCHILDREN.

Individuals who lived through the Vietnam War are telling their stories. Motivations for writing are as varied as the authors. . . All contribute to the narrative.

turism with accompanying economic exploitation and cultural domination. Depending on perspective, we cannot omit the Roman Catholic influence, which was potentially culturally subversive. China's imperialistic designs go back centuries. Japan, too, brutally dominated Southeast Asia.

Although facts matter in all histories, opinions too can have an influence. Our own Civil War, 1860-65, is an illustration. There is a controlling narrative. History offers slavery as the predominant issue. There is a counter-narrative. A dedicated student of Confederate history who holds overt or even implicit racial bias will say, "States' Rights, it was a war of Northern Aggression."

Much of the Vietnam War story includes first-person accounts by those who lived it. The categories are numerous:

- Active participant, one of 2.7 million who were in-country.
- The anti-war activist.
- The unaffected, ambivalent citizen.
- The living victim of jungle warfare or campus violence in Vietnam or America.
- The Gold Star Mother.

Over time, primary sources, many with strong opinions, cease to contribute to the narrative. The scholarly work of accurate fact-finding continues. The facts come out!

a message to Black Folk. Similarly, the bargaining between the Federal and State governments for land and honor resulted in military bases for one glorification of "The Lost Cause" for the other. Names like Fort Polk, Fort Bragg, and Fort Hood rendered credibility and honor to the South.

Individuals who lived through the Vietnam War are telling their stories. Motivations for writing are as varied as the authors. Self-discovery, reconciliation, legacy, money, and celebrity serve to inspire. All contribute to the narrative. The thirty thousand books include many facts and entitled opinions.

For me, an opinion in 1965 became a fact by 1975. Accepting the Domino Theory of Communist global conquest, in reality, was a judgmental error of enormous proportions.

Under Secretary of State George Ball said: "Once we suffer large casualties, we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot—without national humiliation—stop short of achieving our complete objectives. Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives—even after we have paid terrible costs. . . ." - in Neil Sheehan et al., comp., *The Pentagon Papers* (Boston Beacon Press, 1971).

The national story of Vietnam is factually on the record. In conjunction

The Making of an Army Psychologist

CARLOS C. BARRÓN (REVIEWER)

The Making of an Army Psychologist: From Fighting in Vietnam to Treating Fellow Veterans
by Bob Worthington
(McFarland, 2023)

This book is a memoir and autobiographical vita of a combat veteran and career Army psychologist of the Vietnam War. His illustrious military career is impressive, and his commendations and accolades tell the story of an undaunted and empathetic member of our armed forces.

An autobiographical piece of literature can't be critiqued like most non-fiction texts since, by its definition, it is written from personal knowledge or special sources, and his special sources are very well documented. Three areas would interest a non-veteran, veteran, and particularly a Vietnam Veteran. First, his contention that all Vietnam Veterans identified with PTSD is a media myth. He wrote his Ph.D. on this assertion and later revised it with a postdoctoral research study that disaggregated his data and identified 11 variables that supported his initial contention that military service in Vietnam did not constitute the assumption that all returning combat veterans suffered from some degree of PTSD.

Second, he states that higher education treated the affected veterans through theoretical psychology practices with clinicians without military backgrounds or experiences that might better reflect their clientele. Further, they would have been better served through methodologies utilized in the behavior sciences and, if possible, veterans with behavior science backgrounds. Hence, his arduous mission was to correct this

deficiency by becoming a psychologist and training those addressing the mental health needs of Army veterans through his many commands and practice as an Army Psychologist.

Finally, after retiring from the Army in his late 40s and becoming a successful entrepreneur and professor, he puts forward an off-color vindication of his initial contention. It begs the question of his motive to seek a Ph.D. program and become "his own boss," wherever he might find himself in the Army and civilian workforce.

Considering his initial studies on PTSD and returning veterans, I found it disappointing that all his research was completed before the DSM III (Diagnostic Statistical Measure III) recognized that PTSD affects Veterans and others who experienced traumatic episodes in their lifetime.

Having some experience in this kind of research, I would question the validity of his data since the American Psychological Association had yet to agree upon a working definition. He could have extrapolated a definition from terms used by the Veterans Administration of past wars/conflicts, i.e., shell shock, combat fatigue, etc. But I found no evidence in his writings that would affirm this kind of speculation.

When he became an Army Psychologist, he became one of the lead psychologists to interview, test, and write reports on RPOWs (Returning Prisoners of War) at the end of the Vietnam War. At this time, he softened his initial contention that if anyone could be assumed to suffer from PTSD, it most likely would have been RPOWs.

His resolve to reform the Army Mental Health Corp from within and have higher educational institutions

consider the use and recognize the value of the various methodologies in the behavioral sciences is evidenced in his countless publications, presentations, and teachings both in the military services and civilian mental health clinics. He is highly esteemed for his contributions to the field of Behavior Science, his practicum and leadership in the field, and his successes with those he counseled and mentored.

In 1984, Congress mandated that the VA evaluate its readjustment programs. The evaluation was titled The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). It took four years to complete, and many results indicated that only 15.2% of Vietnam Vets experienced PTSD. The author considered this a vindication of his primary contention. However, I believe it was a vindication of his disaggregated data, which supported his initial contention to some degree.

Scholarship aims to examine an assumption and prove or disprove its validity. Anyone who does scientific analysis knows that over-generalized assumptions are usually faulty and misleading. I would like to learn more about his 11 assumptions and their direct correlation with a recruit's potential to succeed in a wartime military environment. The author would have brought more profound weight to his study now that he was at the cusp of contributing organizational input to a new all-volunteer military. The comparisons may have resulted in a more scientific methodology for recruiting and retaining military personnel.

Autobiographies sometimes include everything but the kitchen sink. This one consists of the kitchen sink and much more. It jumps from

a serious consideration of data to personal anecdotes of family life and entrepreneurial undertakings. If I had read another iteration of his combat experience and commendations or reiteration ad nauseum of "One of the best jobs I ever had," I would have retitled his autobiography The Making of an Entrepreneur on the Army's Dime: From Fighting in Vietnam to Crafting One's Own Profit Driven Destiny.

I did find his case studies very interesting and an insight into the man and his drive to serve veterans in the military. I wish he had more than one case study of veterans with PTSD that he counseled other than the RPOWs he only interviewed. I was impressed that he mentioned some of his failures, which included one that resulted in suicide. This inclusion authenticated his sincere and empathetic concern for his patients.

Only veterans can decide what motivated this author's crusade of a lifetime.

I recommend that those of us who are affected with PTSD, whether diagnosed by the institutions that purport to serve us or passed over by its incompetence, consider reading this autobiography in the hopes that we may find insights into a lingering condition we know too well and find some peace in the madness of war.



CARLOS C. BARRÓN, USAF
1968-1972. HE COMPLETED HIS UNDERGRADUATE AND POST GRADUATE DEGREES AT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CALIFORNIA. HE'S A RETIRED EDUCATOR.

G.W. Bush's Lies

BILL POTVIN

It has been just over twenty years since the Iraq Invasion, generally recognized as one of the most genuinely catastrophic military adventures in the history of the US. We were lied into a war by the Bush Cheney Administration, under the pretense of "weapons of mass destruction" and the imminent danger of Saddam Hussein. We were told that he had significant connections to Al-Qaeda and, thus, the terrorist attacks of 9/11. All false! What resulted was the virtual destruction of an important Middle Eastern country, its society, and its people. Civil war, chaos, suffering, and over 300,000 deaths resulted, and about two million refugees fled to neighboring countries. Horrendous consequences resulted, most of which are still with us today.

Prior to the attacks, a busload of us left Willimantic and made the trip to New York City to protest on February 15, 2003, joining close to 1 million others. Around the globe, there were similar protests. More global citizens protested than had ever protested in the history of the world. Our government ignored all of this. Our media downplayed it. Why did this happen? What effects did it have on our country and other nations? Was anyone ever held accountable?

In his book, *The Case Against George W. Bush*, Steve Markoff documents the number of times President Bush spoke of the importance of Iraqi oil, starting one week after his inauguration. (A full 23 months before the Iraq invasion!) Markoff also states that the push or sell of the war consistently involved different forms of fear: ninety-one quotes from administrative officials were gathered containing fearful descriptions of the threat of Saddam Hussein (8 times,) the presence of weapons of mass destruction (40 times,) and the connections to Al-

Qaeda (43 times)—all meticulously documented. Throughout Bush's presidency, at least thirty-five references from various meetings, press briefings, news articles, and television interviews, including the State of the

"look forward" instead of holding these perpetrators accountable. Bush, Cheney, and other administration officials were allowed their horrific war crimes in Iraq without recourse. How can you build a strong foundation

War is extreme and should always be the last resort. I believe that we are all responsible for the consequences of our actions.

Union Address in January 2007, Bush discussed seeking or rationalizing the importance of Iraq's oil.

The case against Bush is clear: "Intelligence" was manipulated to support the invasion and regime change goal. When the attack finally occurred, I was wearing a button that said, "What's our oil doing under your sand?" The invasion flaunted US power, and the explosions and destruction were officially titled "Shock and Awe." Bush's popularity soared, and only a handful of United States politicians voted against the preemptive invasion. The cost to our respect around the globe was staggering, as nobody likes a bully. The cost to our economy was huge, perhaps three trillion dollars. We gave up any moral high ground we might have had and eventually dabbled in government-sanctioned torture, calling it "enhanced interrogation" instead. Throughout the war, the reporting consistently presented the phony unity of the aggression, always describing the actions of "coalition forces," 95% of which were United States and British units. The real coalition of nations was vehemently opposed.

When Barack Obama was elected president, he decided to

as a respected world power on top of a mountain of blood? Today, as we maneuver against China's growing power, our standing in the world community has faded (China is taking on new roles in negotiations that used to be ours alone.)

Following Donald Trump's un-presidential style and unprecedented bizarre actions, Bush is somehow now viewed by many as a diplomat by comparison. However, suppose you tally the consequences of deaths and suffering that Bush has generated. In that case, it is, in my view, vastly beyond any consequences attributable to President Trump, even including the stain of the January 6 insurrection. Simply count the deaths that occurred. Bush should be hunted down as a war criminal and tried under International Law. He most likely created the template for today's actions of Russia regarding Ukraine.

The Bush name got him much in life, including entry and degrees from Ivy League Universities, a position in the National Guard that allowed him to avoid deployment in Vietnam, and even further avoiding duty by going AWOL during his service time, all with no consequences. He now has a presidential library and an institute named after him. He has retired to a

life of leisure, enjoying his wealth and expanding his artistic talents by painting benign objects, like vases of flowers. He should be forced to paint grotesque pictures of maimed and deformed Iraqi children that he injured by his decisions in the Iraq War, followed by the unmerciful sanctions against many innocent and nonthreatening civilians in Iraq.

As a Vietnam combat veteran, this is my opinion, and it may come across as extreme. War is extreme and should always be the last resort. I believe that we are all responsible for the consequences of our actions. Until this is rendered properly and justly on our leaders, any pretense about the United States as a beacon of democracy and good is false. This is what true morality means to me. The more suffering you cause and immorality you have exhibited, the higher the price you should pay! Bush has not paid a price commensurate with his actions. Not even close. His lies and the horrendous consequences that ensued have had devastating effects on Iraq and our country as well.

The march to war in Iraq was, in Bush's own words, "a totally unjustified and brutal invasion." This is precisely what Bush recently said in public about Vladimir Putin. In addition to Iraq, the damage has been incalculable to our country's reputation, status, and moral standing. Citizens around the globe see this clearly, even as many American citizens cling to the concept of "American Exceptionalism."



BILL POTVIN SERVED ONE TOUR IN 'NAM (MAY 1970 TO MARCH '71), WITH THE 65TH ENGINEER BATTALION 25TH INF. DIV., AS A SP 5 DEMOLITION SPECIALIST FOR THE 2ND HALF OF HIS TOUR.

50 Years After Vietnam War's End, It's Time to See Its Role in Spawning MAGA

JERRY LEMBCKE

Originally published by *Truthout*, April, 2023.

Lost-war angst over Vietnam quietly pooled into a political resource that white nationalist movements have tapped into.

The 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War's end and the return of American prisoners of war (POWs) from Hanoi has passed with little notice. While independent media outlets like *Truthout* reported on the war's ongoing legacies of trauma, with the exception of a *USA Today* series in late March that included Vietnam veteran portraits, nearly all major news organizations opted not to cover the anniversary.

The inattention to the anniversary is surprising. In 2012, President Obama announced congressional funding for commemorating the war's turning points upon their 50th anniversaries. The President's initiative inspired conferences and newspaper columns recalling the 1965 landing of Marines at Da Nang, the 1967 March on the Pentagon, the 1968 My Lai Massacre, and the shooting of Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard in 1970. The Paris Peace Accords signed in January 1973 and the POW's homecoming in February and March would surely bookend the half-century remembrances. But that did not happen.

The notice of that gap in news coverage notwithstanding, the displacement of the war's end from the news cycle has the consequence of eliding from memory the uneasiness left by its loss: worry that failures on the home front had robbed the military of victory metastasized into suspicions that subversive activism was to blame.

Lost-war angst quietly pooled into a political resource that white nationalist and militarist movements would tap decades later. Yet, when Donald Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement escalated racist and authoritarian sentiments in 2015, many efforts to explain its popularity failed to address the role of the war in Vietnam.

Continued inattention to the fountainhead of Trumpism cradled in the Vietnam War's wake portends a post-Trump life for the MAGA movement.

Trumpism Before Trump

Postmortems on the Republican Party's failure to deliver the expected "red wave" in the 2022 midterm elections focused on Donald Trump and the personalities of his coterie. They drew on themes from *The New York Times's* Maggie Haberman's book *Confidence Man*, a coda for her attribution of Trumpism to the perverse magnetism of his arrested development, and Robert Draper's *Weapons of Mass Delusion*, which psychologized his followers' plunge "into a Trumpian cult of compulsive disassembling and conspiracy mongering."

These books' insights on the personalities of Trumpism were descended from Nicole Hemmer's earlier book, *Partisans: The Conservative Revolutionaries Who Remade American Politics in the 1990s*. It was the Rush Limbaughs and Pat Buchanans, Hemmer said, who had realigned the staid GOP with "partisan punditry and political entertainment." It was the 1990s, wrote *New York Magazine* writer Gabriel Debenedetti in his *New York Times* review of Hemmer's book, where responsibility for today's political turns will be found.

However, in his December 2022 *Times* piece titled "How the House of Trump Was Built," Carlos Lozada cautioned against the Great Man theories of history that credit media influencers like Limbaugh and Buchanan and even Trump himself for the rise of Trumpism.

The POW flag and its slogan became a kind of political prosthetic adopted by a growing right-wing revanchist movement claiming a "forgotten" America as its constituency.

But if the Trump phenomenon is more than just personality-driven and conceived and nurtured in the 1990s, where might we look for its origins?

The clues are written in the tropes that constitute the MAGA movement's identity, beginning with MAGA itself. If "Vietnam" isn't part of the answer to the question implicit in MAGA—when did America lose its greatness?—the trees are obscuring the forest. And the other Trumpian tropes, the Deep State and Americans Left Behind? They, too, trace back to the war in Vietnam and the revanchist political culture spawned by its loss.

Make America Great Again

Make America Great Again appropriates Ronald Reagan's assertion that it was "Morning in America Again," that the country was moving on from its Vietnam War nightmare. Reagan declared the war "a noble cause" in 1980, hoisted the POW-MIA flag over the White House in 1982, and proclaimed May 7, 1985, as Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day.

From Reagan, the thread of American preoccupation with Vietnam is continuous, running through President George H. W. Bush's declaration that we had "kicked the Vietnam Syndrome" in the Persian Gulf war of 1990-91 to Barack Obama laying the loss of the war at the feet of the anti-war movement in 2012, to Donald Trump's insinuation that US pilots like John McCain shot down over Vietnam signaled mission failure, not heroics.

But if Reagan was about moving on to a new day, MAGA is distinguished by its "back to the future" thrust. Its followers would have us return to a prelapsarian Edenic way of life that they believe was lost along with the war in Vietnam.

By their reading, the urbanization of life in the post-World War II years had broken the father-son bonds characteristic of rural work. With fathers pulled into factory and office work, moms raised boys in an effeminizing home environment. The specter of "momism," as historian Elaine Tyler May wrote in *Fortress America*, averred that America had sent a generation of sissified boys off to fight the war; not up to the task, these softies were also receptive to pacifist appeals often voiced by women.

The adoption of traditionally feminine attire by young men in the 1960s and 1970s—peace symbols as necklaces, bellbottom pants with blousy tops, and long hair—signaled rejection of the military "high and tight." By the late 1960s, home-front countercultural styles had made their way to Vietnam, where they became a flipped finger to military authority by unruly troops.

Meanwhile, women played major roles in the anti-war movement. Women Strike for Peace initiated outreach to the Vietnamese people, sending representatives to Hanoi in 1965; scores of activists and celebrities followed in their footsteps in the coming years. But the fault-finding climate that followed the war's loss demeaned and even vilified women's work for peace.

The Deep State

"[Trump] is the battering ram that God is using to bring down the Deep State of Babylon." — Charles Pace, Pastor Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Waco, Texas.

The loss of the war in Vietnam was a turning point for Americans because of the disparity in the perceived military power of the United States and Vietnam. How could this tiny, agrarian country of outgunned peasants have defeated Earth's most powerful military force?

The answer embraced by pro-military conservative leaders was that the United States had not lost to the Vietnamese. Rather, it was civilian fifth columnists at home who had tied one hand behind the back of the military: Liberals in Congress had refused to fund tactics that could have won the war, and communists, socialists, and campus radicals had opposed the war with tactics that demoralized American forces and gave aid and comfort to the enemy.

Pastor Charles Pace's connection of MAGA's retribution themes with the religious dimensions of Deep State imaginings fits with a revanchist narrative of the movement's origins.

In 1971, a 234-page treatise, "The Viet Cong Front in the United States," was read into the Congressional Record of the 92nd Congress by California Congressman John Schmitz. Schmitz was a member of the John Birch Society and a coauthor of that document, which exaggerated the roles of the Communist Party and Socialist Workers Party in anti-war organizations, forming a precursor of the deep state myth that MAGA would promote 50 years later.

Belief in a deep state conjures a governmental apparatus with an unacknowledged existence lurking beneath the surface of formal power. The "deep state" phrase triggers paranoia about educated elites in government, colleges and universities, news organizations, and Hollywood, settings known to most people only through film, literature, and news reports. When the Nixon administration came down on the Vietnam-era anti-war movement, Vice President Spiro Agnew named the enemy: "an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals."

Intellectuals. The bugaboo that there are people who work with ideas and use those ideas against the rest of us is as pernicious as it is old. Dating from the aftermath of the French Revolution, suspicions about what had inspired the rebels conjured hints of mysterious forces at work to undo the religious and civil order.

The elusiveness of ideas and those with them was fodder for anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Richard Nixon himself blamed Jews in the New York media for the release of the *Pentagon Papers* that revealed government lying about the war in Vietnam — that "damn Jew [*Times* editor Max] Frankel," the President once ranted.

The antisemitism sweeping over the nation in the 2020s—more antisemitic incidents in 2021 than at any time in 40 years, according to the Anti-Defamation League (though publications like *Jewish Currents* argue that this number is distorted by the inclusion of anti-Zionism and Palestine solidarity activism)—is hard to separate from Donald Trump's claim that Jewish philanthropist George Soros's money backed the attorney general who went after him in the Stormy Daniels hush-money case.

Trump's broadside attacks on the

news media and "coastal elites" strum antisemitic chords that carry into his followers' objection to Critical Race Theory: CRT was conceived at elite university levels and imposed on public schools. "Higher education is the problem," Cornell law professor and CRT critic William Jacobson told *Fox News* in 2021. Posting on *BitChute* in 2021, white supremacist Vincent James Foxx wrote, ". . . it's almost always Jewish Americans who are pushing [CRT] . . . the white people funding these sorts of ideas and pushing this sort of rhetoric are always Jews."

Americans Left Behind

The controversies over critical race theory touch deep nerves in conservative America. In the 1960s and 1970s, millions of white Americans fled to the suburbs, resenting the courts' imposition of school integration. In the same years, school consolidations closed thousands of schools nationwide, putting children on buses to neighboring towns. The schools were the economic lifeblood of farm towns, and when they closed, so did the local grocery stores, barber-shops, and gas stations.

The Interstate highway system, designed far beyond the states it would cross, broke local and regional commercial ties while opening blue-line America to 18-wheeler supply chains. The concentration of agricultural capital foreclosed hundreds of thousands of family farms. "Get big or get out," said Nixon's Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz. Thousands of farmers sold their tractors and dairy herds and got out.

The generation that bore those losses is aging away, but the distrust of big government etched in family stories and boarded-up towns endures. Middle America had been abandoned, discarded by Washington.

Phrases like "forgotten Americans" and "Americans left behind," have personal connotations in coastal suburbs and the fly-over states. Still restive when the war in Vietnam ended and the POWs held in Hanoi came home, the phrases caught new wind. The Nixon administration kept the war going, promising our POWs would not be abandoned. The return of POWs in February and March of 1973 were trophies that seemingly validated Nixon's commitment.

POWs Left Behind

But did they all come home? Speculation soon began that the communists still held some American prisoners. Hardcore rightists, angry that the peace accords had ended the war short of a clearcut victory, fed rumors that unnamed parties in Washington had dealt POWs to the Soviets in return for post-war favors.

The POW/MIA flag that flew over the Reagan White House had the caption "You Are Not Forgotten." The words were a perfect contronym because the flag had been conceived and produced in the last years of the war to accuse the government of doing just that—forgotten the POWs and men missing in action.

With the war ten years gone when Reagan ran the flag up, and with no credible evidence that there were any missing POWs to be forgotten, the flag and its slogan became a kind of political prosthetic adopted by a growing right-wing revanchist movement claiming a "forgotten" America as its constituency. Legislation mandating its flying over federal buildings and

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Nixon Administration May be Re-evaluated



50 Years After Vietnam War's End

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then many state buildings imbued it with what British writer Michael Billig called "banal nationalism," a surrogate nationalism licensing belief in government deception as a kind of patriotism.

From Rambo to Waco and Back

Public receptivity to the abandoned POW narrative led to a Hollywood genre of POW rescue films, of which *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) is the classic. Rambo, the character, may have been based on the real-life Bo Gritz, a highly decorated Green Beret veteran of Vietnam. In 1978, Gritz led a private mission to Southeast Asia to do what the government refused to do: rescue POWs. Deep into communist-controlled territory, his men received word that their mission had been betrayed. Under attack by the communist Pathet Lao, they fought their way out without any POWs.

The experience confirmed for Gritz that the government was conspiring to keep the fact of abandoned POWs a secret from the American people and sabotage efforts like his to get them out. It was the ultimate Washington betrayal story, which would be supercharged in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, then later resounding forward 30 years in Trump's campaign for the 2024 presidential election.

Gritz's alignment with POW conspiracism put him in league with the John Birch Society's deep-state fantasies. His persona fused right-

wing emotions left over from the war in Vietnam with domestic issues around gun rights, income tax, and public schools when he involved himself in the negotiations at an August 1992 standoff at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Randy Weaver had ensconced his family off the power grid, homeschooling, stockpiling weapons, and avoiding taxes. When the FBI and US marshals attempted to arrest him, a gunfight ensued, killing one marshal and two of Weaver's children. Gritz had known Weaver as a Green Beret and suspected the raid was a government effort to assassinate Weaver because of what he knew about POWs left behind in Vietnam.

Five months later, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) raided a religious center called Mount Carmel in Waco, Texas. The Branch Davidians occupied the center, a Seventh-Day Adventist religious offshoot led by David Koresh, a figure similar to Randy Weaver. Shots were fired, killing four agents and six Davidians. The Davidians and ATF dug in.

On April 19, 1992, M-60 tanks rolled up to the compound. Gas canisters were discharged, and a fire quickly consumed the building. Seventy-six people were killed, including twenty-five children. The fire exploded with a mushroom-like fireball that Gritz called "a federally induced holocaust."

MAGA Closes the Circle

To many Americans, the trail

from paranoia about communists in colleges and government betrayal of the military mission in Vietnam, through the Republican Party reviving of lost-war anguish for political gain in the 1980s, and on to the anti-government movements of the new century must seem a long and discontinuous path through unrelated events. But Donald Trump's return to Waco in March of 2023 during the 30th anniversary of the standoff confirms that many MAGA followers see it all as one piece.

Choosing Waco for his first campaign stop for the 2024 election campaign was "on the nose," said the *Atlantic* before recounting the details of the 1993 government raid on Mt. Carmel Center. "For those who have been wronged and betrayed," declared Trump, "I am your retribution." Pastor Charles Pace's connection of MAGA's retribution themes with the religious dimensions of Deep State imaginings (see the epigram above) fits with a revanchist narrative of the movement's origins.

But Bonnie Honig's "Rambo Politics from Reagan to Trump" in the January 7, 2020, *Boston Review* takes an even deeper dive. Trump's instinct for "retributive payback," she avers, lies in what she calls "a fantasy of poetic justice" linking to "Trump as Rambo, the Vietnam veteran and symbol of masculinity... who avenges American humiliation."

Honig avoids the simplicity of a Great Man explanation, writing that Trump's desire to Ramboize himself

"is not merely a matter of personal vanity" because the Ramboesque narrative is "a fundamental part of the Republican Party's cultural politics."

Contra the attribution of MAGA's rise to Trump's magnetism or the influence of media figures such as Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan, then, an explanation with deeper historical roots uncovers the resemblance between the Republican Party retributive campaign themes and those that flared in interwar Europe.

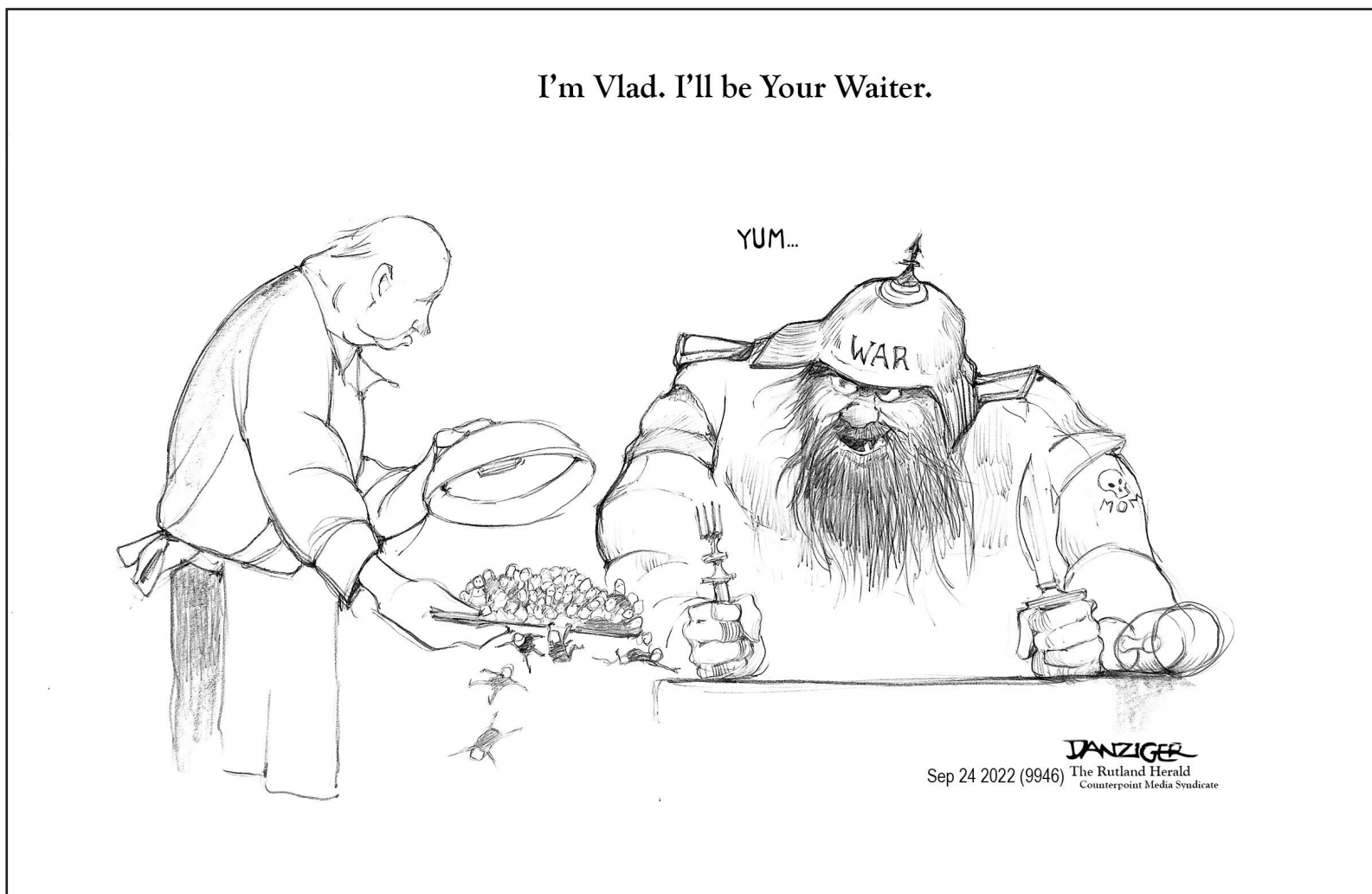
Germany's defeat in World War I registered as a humiliating loss of racial and national pride, with enough Germans that the Nazi's promise to avenge the losses won support. The campaign of retribution that followed alleged the war had been lost due to betrayal at home. Leftists, ethnic minorities, Jews, and homosexuals, all thought to compromise Arian greatness, were targeted.

The resemblance is troubling. Its denial is dangerous.



JERRY LEMBCKE IS THE AUTHOR OF EIGHT BOOKS, INCLUDING THE SPITTING IMAGE: MYTH, MEMORY, AND THE LEGACY OF VIETNAM (NYU PRESS, 1998) AND HANOI JANE: WAR, SEX, AND FANTASIES OF BETRAYAL (UMASS PRESS, 2010). HIS THE CULT OF THE VICTIM VETERAN: MAGA FANTASIES IN LOST-WAR AMERICA WILL BE OUT WITH ROUTLEDGE IN JULY, 2023.

I'm Vlad. I'll be Your Waiter.



A Long Life and a Little Zen

TIM FARLEY

Have you ever encountered someone angry at the US government over the war in Vietnam, and you felt the immediate desire to cool things? I have met people who don't understand why I'm not angry, given my disabled status, as someone hit with shrapnel, shot twice, and practically deaf in my right ear. I start by saying Vietnam and Korea were supposed to be part of a third option. That is, since August 1945, the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, war to any sane person is no longer acceptable. That's the first option, and the second is to do nothing. The third is to have a limited incursion to nip something in the bud or prevent the spread of communism. We never wanted to make Korea or Vietnam US territories, which left us entering the civil war in Vietnam seeking the same compromise we got in Korea.

Reflect on that for a minute, choosing to fight without a goal to win but to achieve a compromise. Perhaps the seeds of our defeat were sowed in March 1965.

Today, 50 years after the last GI left, it's common to encounter people who blame us for the loss and give us a hard look if we admit to enlisting. I tell people that 90% of those who served didn't have politics, being teenagers, and it had more to do with

what neighborhood you were from or who your father was. I was emulating my father in 1966 since my brothers and I saw him as our hero for enlisting in the navy in 1942, lying about his age, turning 17 in the South Pacific.

To be against terror, torture, and war makes good sense today. I remember hitchhiking to DC for Operation Dewey Canyon III, sleeping on the lawn across the street from the Smithsonian. I agonized about betraying our friends in Vietnam before leaving without even a water bottle, just a wallet with a few bucks to sleep on the grass in DC for weeks. I thought it was more intellectual than anything else; with war being long over, I might never donate to VVAW if it wasn't for the libraries built.

I've been writing romantic suspense stories and self-published the first a few years ago. When people ask me how many books I sold, I exaggerate in the spirit of Trump, for the truth is I gave away more than I sold. *Sour Women* opens after a vet's body is found, and they think suicide. His best friend from Iraq and his old girlfriend, also a vet, who slipped away when he was medicating his pain with drugs, get together at the memorial service and decide to investigate. They do everything wrong, and I try to make it funny, but the truth still comes out.

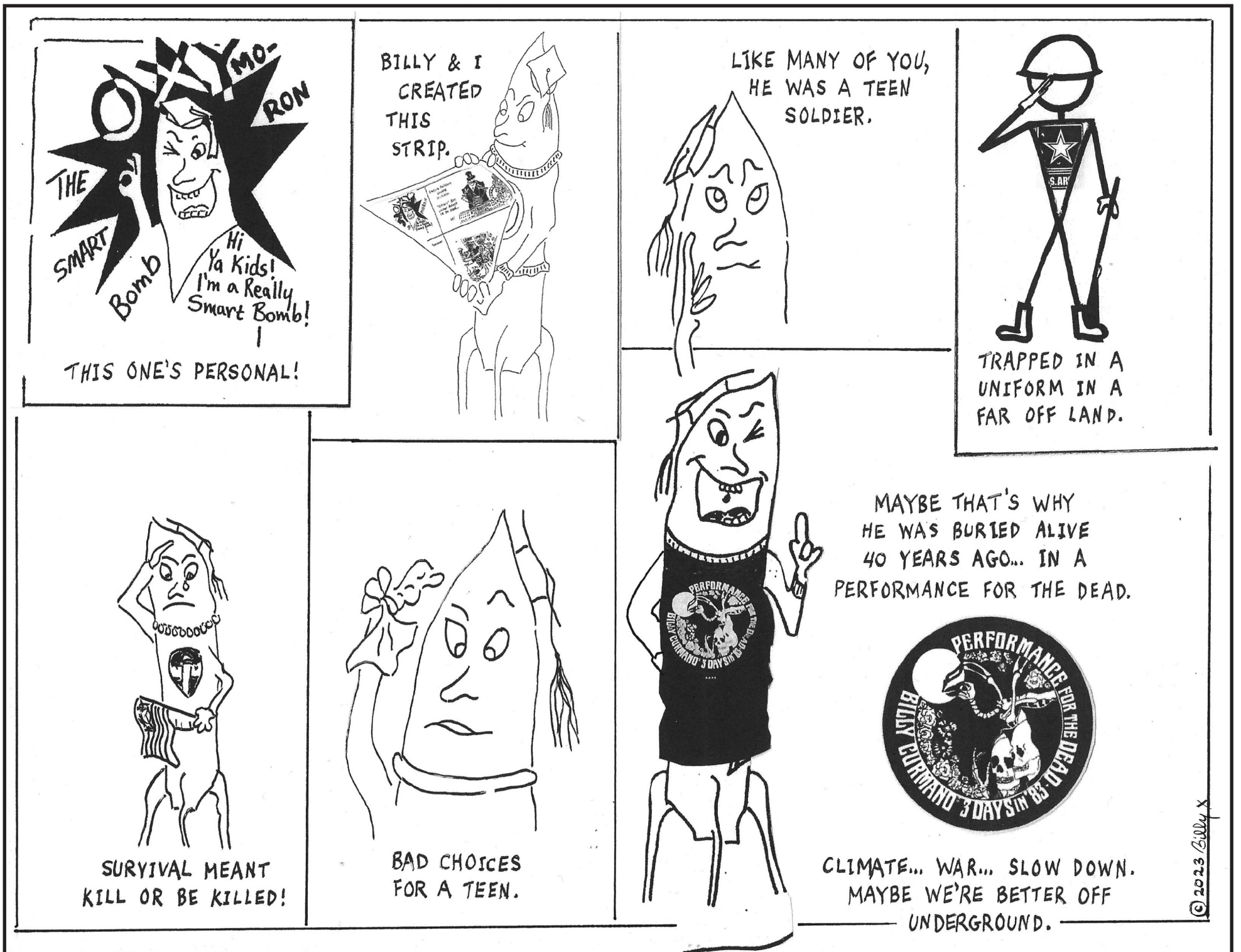
Another manuscript I'm currently trying to publish the conventional way is *All for Nothing*, set in the years leading up to and including the American Civil War. Micah, the main character, thinks his life might be short as a guide on the Underground Railroad; he's off to New York City alone after his Quaker girlfriend's mother persuades her to wait until he's employed. He writes for a newspaper about real crimes taken from the archives, but when an editor refuses to pay him, he gets in trouble, and the judge tells him to join the Marines. Next stop, Harper's Ferry, October 1859, and the girl he left behind has befriended John Brown's daughter, and she's headed for the same place. I want to write a story like *Gone With the Wind* or *Cold Mountain* but from a Yankee perspective, ensuring the reader sees the war was all about slavery and slavery was all about racism. I once heard there was a war in South America, Peru, and Chile fighting over bird poop, but when you think about more than 700,000 Americans dying so rich people can continue to own people, I guess we can't snicker or feel superior.

Meanwhile, you can forgive yourself if you didn't hear about the Department of Defense destroying the last chemical weapons in its arsenal.

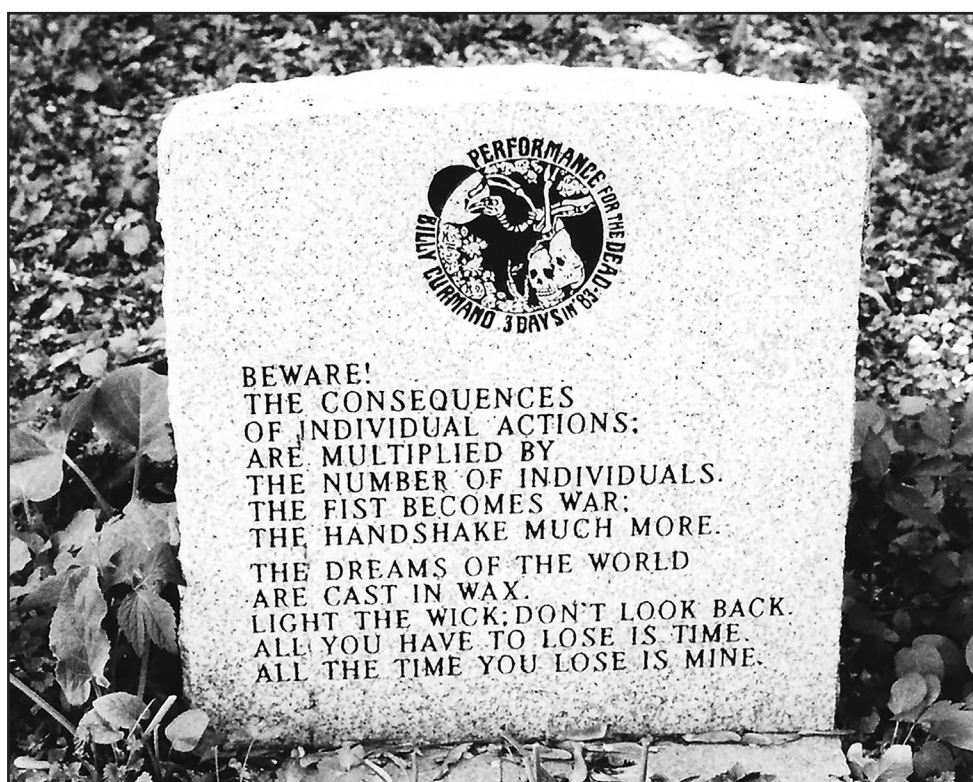
We had sarin stocked in missiles and recently destroyed over 30,000 tons to comply with the International Chemical Weapons Convention. We have yet to sign the No First Use of Nuclear Weapons, which nearly every other nation with the first bomb has signed, and we can make it an issue for 2024. The good news is no one has exploded an atomic bomb since the ninth of August, 1945, but the bad news is the power of firing a missile with an atomic warhead lies solely with the president. When half of the people don't vote, and half of those who do—vote as if they are thrusting their middle finger at the government, which is the only way a hustler like Trump could win. Maybe it's a good idea to keep pushing this idea of peace. Please don't consider it inevitable simply because danger and evil are. War, torture, and terror could go the way of slavery or something the ancients did because they didn't know any better. First, we must pay attention to what our government is doing and encourage people to believe peace is possible.



TIM FARLEY, A DISABLED EX-MARINE, RETIRED MAILMAN, AND A WRITER UNDER THE PEN NAME TIM BUKTU.



Comments or suggestions? Contact Billy at billyx.net@gmail.com or visit him online at www.billyx.net.





James Edward Murphy: 1945-2023

SUSAN MURPHY

James Edward Murphy was born September 3, 1945, to Margaret Elizabeth (Dwyer) Murphy and Francis Eugene Murphy. He was raised in Fairport, NY, with three brothers—Dennis, William, and John. Jim was the third in the line of the Murphy boys. After a 4 ½ year survival with Stage 4 cancer, Jim passed on June 29, 2023.

Anyone who knew Jim knew what a force of nature he was. After serving in the Air Force in Vietnam, he became actively involved in the peace movement, joining Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace. In 1971, he was one of the Dewey Canyon III action coordinators, in which Vietnam veterans threw their medals back on the Capitol steps to protest the war. He was also one of 14 Vietnam Veterans Against the War who took over the Statue of Liberty on December 26, 1971. His experiences in Vietnam galvanized a lifelong commitment to working for peace and justice.

Jim attended the University of Maryland, where he studied Special Education and Outdoor Education. He did graduate work in Alternative Education at Indiana University.

Jim's career as an educator included the Shon Tai Wilderness School in Virginia and the Hillside School for Children in Rochester. For the final 23 years of his career, he served wholeheartedly and passionately as Dean of Students at the Edward A. Reynolds West Side High School in New York City.

Jim met and married musician

Susan Mondzak in New York City in 1985. In 1992, their partnership extended into their professional lives, creating the Teen Talk Radio program and extending their family to all their students. Their son, Corey Marcus Murphy, was born in 1988... the absolute pride of their lives. Jim loved his family more than words can ever say.

In retirement, Jim and Susan moved to Ithaca in 2009, fully embracing the community. Jim helped launch the fledgling radio station WRFI and was their morning show host for five years. Jim mentored and advocated for military veterans struggling with PTSD from their tours in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He co-led the local chapter of Warrior Writers. His lifelong activism included serving on the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

His other passions were a love of the Adirondacks, railroad antiques, and golden retrievers.

Jim is survived by his wife, Susan, and son, Corey; his daughter-in-law, Sheila Sullivan Murphy; and his grandson, Eugene James Murphy. He never got to meet his granddaughter, Josephine Gita Murphy... BUT HE KNEW "IT WAS A GIRL!"

He is also survived by brothers John (Janice) and Dennis, his nieces and nephews Caitlin, Brian, Lisa, Matt, Mike, Tim, Erin, and Kathy – and all the students and friends who loved him.



Grandson Eugene and Jim.



Jim in the Adirondacks.



Jim Murphy, Barry Romo, and Bruce Hyland at anti-war march January, 2007.



Jim Murphy, Bruce Hyland, Barry Romo, and Marty Webster at anti-war march in Washington, DC, January, 2007.

Statue of Liberty Takeover, 1971: An Interview with Jim Murphy

KEVIN BASL

In April 2019, I interviewed Jim Murphy at his home in Ithaca, New York, for an ongoing research project on the iconic graphics and images of GI resistance and veteran anti-war movements. Jim and I had been friends for a few years, organizing the local Warrior Writers workshop together. We chatted and sipped coffee at his kitchen table while his golden retriever, Micho, sat by our feet. Though Jim had started undergoing cancer treatments about a month earlier, including surgery to remove a kidney, he was in good spirits—his mind remained sharp until his passing in June 2023. What follows is an excerpt from our hour-long interview on his anti-war organizing, specifically the execution of VVAW's 1971 Statue of Liberty occupation.

Kevin: Where did the idea for the takeover come from?

Jim: Following the Winter Soldier testimonies and the Dewey Canyon III National Mall occupation in the first half of 1971, someone came up with the idea for a camping occupation at Valley Forge—Operation Peace on Earth. It was probably just a group of [VVAW members] sitting around and wanting to do something.

Christmas Eve, VVAW assembled at Valley Forge. There were symbolic actions. We planted trees to represent our dead brothers in Vietnam. Because we were all veterans, we were often allowed to do things other peace groups weren't. We had a roaring campfire, tents set up in a huge circle around it. Three thousand people there. Somebody donated cases and cases of Boone's Farm wine—which was horrible but fine by us!

A bunch of actions happened as part of the operation. For example, painting the driveway into [war contractor] Honeywell's headquarters with blood—half the employees refused to drive over it. A group of VVAW members went over to New Jersey to the church of a pro-war Christian group, Victory in Vietnam, and carried a flag-draped coffin down the aisle to the podium and made a speech in the middle of their midnight mass. The Lincoln Memorial was also taken over in an amnesty demonstration.

Members Ray Grodecki and Bob Clarke, they came up with the Statue of Liberty idea, which we had been planning since August of that year, meeting in Philadelphia at a feminist revolutionary bookstore.

We had fifteen guys for the takeover. We left Valley Forge for New York City on Christmas to do the action the following day.

Kevin: How did you execute the takeover? How did you get the iconic inverted American flag atop the Statue?

Jim: Ray and Bob did lots of recon leading up to the takeover. We knew the spiral stairs going up the Statue's arm had a screen mesh gate with two locks on it. We knew how many feet to the top and how many vets we could hide up there.

Throughout the day, in groups of two or three, we rode over to the island on the tourist boat. Ray and Bob had bolt cutters under their winter coats. They cut one of the locks on the door, allowing the screen to bend back far enough so we could slide through.

I spent my day looking out over the harbor through the lamps in the torch. We brought a reporter to interview us. He was really nervous so, after interviewing us, he left early. Quietly, we waited all day for the tourists and employees to leave. At the time, the Statue only had one night watchman. We came out of the arm

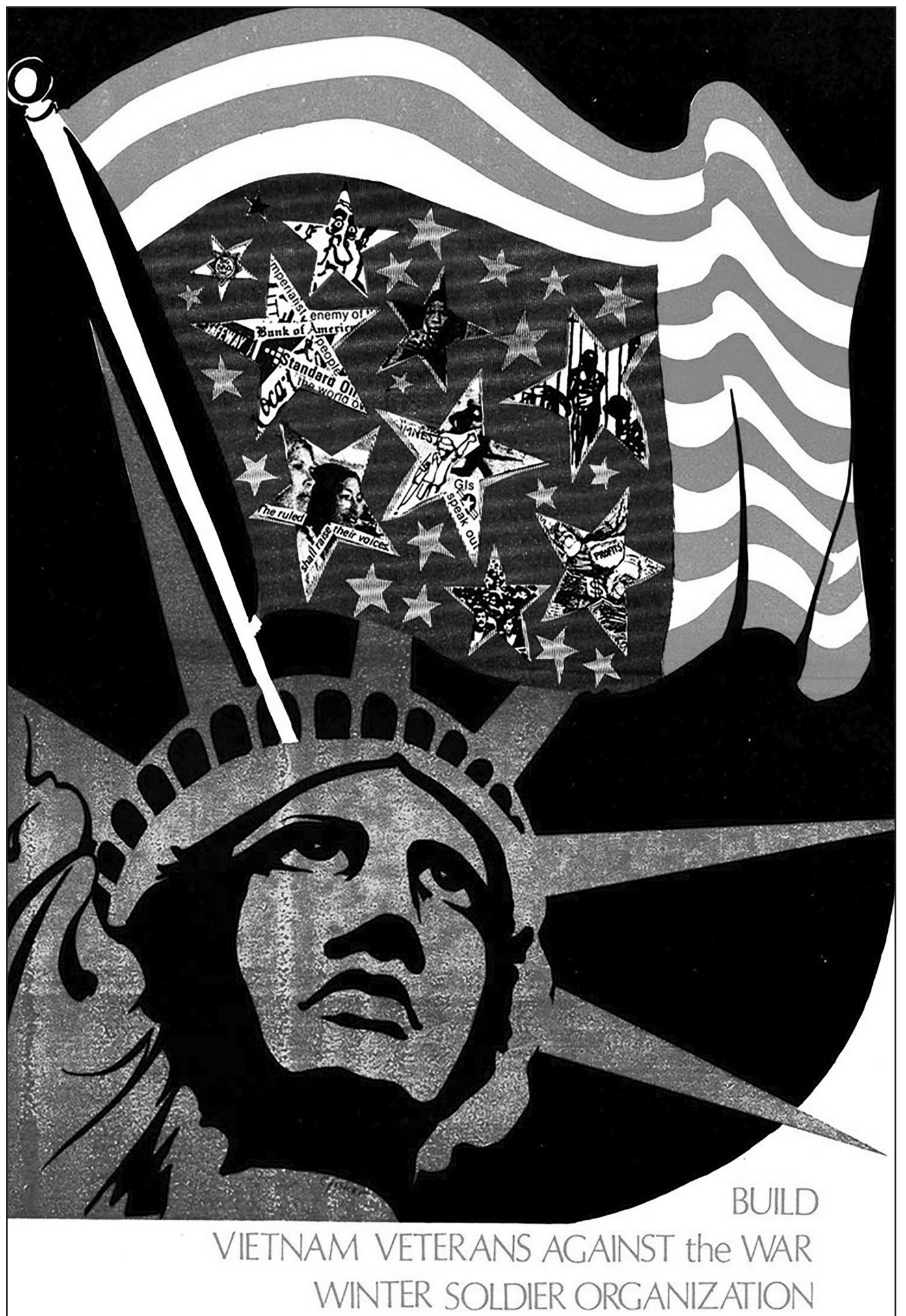
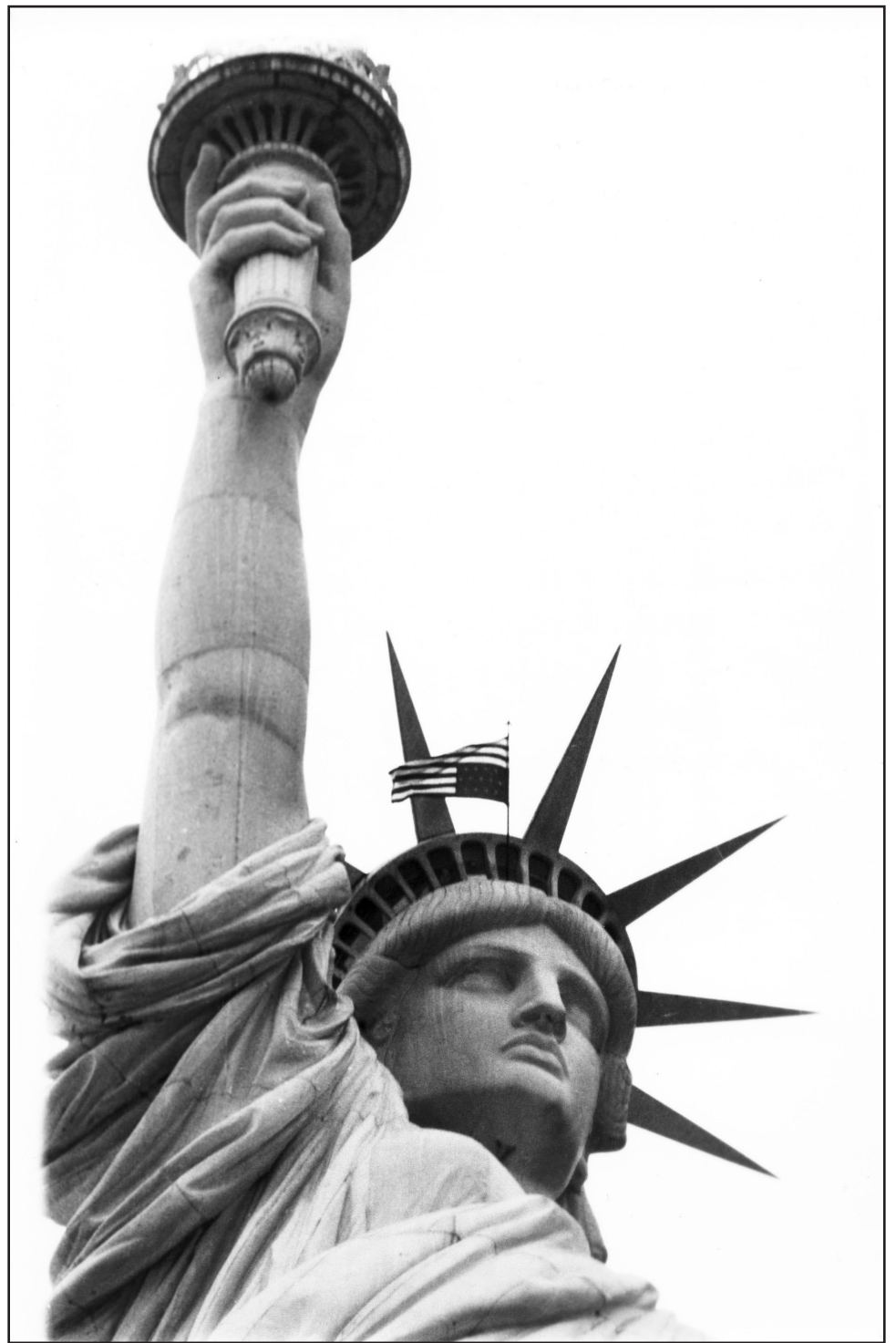
and found him at the front gate. We said we aren't going to do anything to the Statue of Liberty; we're just here to protest the war, and you're welcome to stay with us. He immediately took off and called the police. The immigration museum there was under construction at the time, so there was steel rebar to barricade all the doors. There were flags on site. We grabbed one, took it upstairs, poked a screen out of one of the windows in the crown and attached it. A *New York Times* photographer took the photo.

Soon there were two or three reporters at all four entrances. Although each vet there had different politics, the message we stuck to was "Bring our brothers home." We stuck with that, and everyone shared their stories, giving interviews through the cracks of the doors. When park police showed up, they realized they couldn't really do anything because there was so much press there. We had a lawyer, too. After two days, we held a vote, which determined that we would leave. We left quietly, and they didn't arrest us. Then, we were in media demand. We did a press conference. I went on the Dick Cavett show and talked about what I saw and did in Vietnam: the pit burials, the dead bodies. We did a couple other talk shows and many interviews.

The takeover and all that followed was fun, and it made all of us feel so good. We needed that at the time.



KEVIN BASL IS AN IRAQ WAR VETERAN, ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST, AND AUTHOR OF *MIDNIGHT CARGO: STORIES AND POEMS*.



Leonard Shelton 1964-2023

JOHANNA BUWALDA

The world lost a great man, and I lost my friend in May. Leonard was a loving and lovable man with a very hurt but gentle soul, visible to anyone who cared to look.

Leonard was a proud Marine who, like many veterans, felt strongly that his and his friends' lives and mental health had been sacrificed for unjustified wars. He could never find peace around this and felt betrayed by the military and the VA system.

For over a decade, we talked daily to make sense of his life as a child and warrior and figure out how to live as a veteran and build relationships that nurtured him. Leonard had great difficulty believing he was worthy of friendship and often tried to push me away to prove that. Many years later, he thanked me for never leaving despite his attempts.

I traveled back and forth to Cleveland, Ohio, many times to care for him and help him find some joy in his life. He introduced me to getting pedicures, and we hiked, went to museums, moved him into new apartments, and went out to eat the food he so badly wanted, but never really ate.

We searched for and found his sons, whom he missed dearly; their names were tattooed on his arm. We found therapists who were willing, capable, and brave enough to take him on.

We worked on writing statements when his town tried to take his dog away from him. He fought hard to keep Rosco, and he won. In the process, he

gained a community of friends.

We also worked on writing a chapter for a book describing his experiences in Iraq and Kosovo. The anniversary of "the event" in Iraq has been a permanent feature in my schedule, so I never forgot to talk to him that day.

Leonard was an active member of Iraq Veterans Against the War and attended the Winter Soldier event in Maryland in 2008. He later testified at a smaller version in Madison, where he freely shared his story and his experiences' effects on his mental health. Post-Traumatic Stress and Anorexia were his daily companions. Warrior Writers and Combat Paper Projects were very important to him.

These last years, Leonard found a community with friends around a restaurant, yoga, a wine shop, and more, and he didn't need me as much anymore. I'm forever grateful to that community for caring for him, and I'm so glad they enjoyed his friendship.

These pictures are from Leonard Shelton's last visit to Chicago in 2014. He loved having butterflies land on him at the butterfly garden, and in Garfield Park Conservatory, he was absolutely delighted to see how bananas and chocolate grow.

I am going to try to remember that joy.



JOHANNA (HANS) BUWALDA IS A SEMI-RETIRED WAR TRAUMA THERAPIST TURNED FULL-TIME POTTER. FACEBOOK/ INSTAGRAM: @JOHANNABCERAMICS



The Rose Procession

On the twentieth anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq—March 19, 2023—a group of about seventy-five Iraqis, Native Americans, veterans, and supporters (attendees of the second Veteran Art Triennial and Summit) walked in a silent vigil through downtown Chicago to Lake Michigan to drop roses into the water in memory of the many lives lost to the war.

The dancer, his scarf wrapped tight,
Hussein is here.
The artist, her hijab shielding the wind,
Shaymaa is here.
The warriors, their poetry as witness,
they are here.

Each holds a rose, an intention like a votive flame.

We stand atop a concrete pier
erected on sands
where humans once dipped their hands for a drink
read the patterns of the universe
Menominee, Miami, Ho-chunk
and the Council of Three Fires—
ceremonial shores, where today
a cargo ship crawls across the horizon,
an aquarium rises like a Roman temple,
and tourists buy trinkets and candy.

Vendors, joggers, and photographers
stop to watch
as one by one we walk forward
whisper a prayer
shout a song
for anyone listening

the spirits
the lost
siblings
friends
limbs
paintings
weddings
answers
time ...
A rose dropped into the ancestral waves:
twenty years gone,
four hundred years gone—
tomorrow offers renewal
all we can accept
is renewal.

Lake of turquoise, azure sky
scarlet and white roses
like vessels on the rolling waters
we look up
face the harsh winds
our anger a blessing.

—Kevin Basl

Mesa Refuge Seeks Writers

ELAINE ELINSON (REVIEWER)

Are you or someone you know working on a writing project focusing on the environment, economic equity, or social justice?

Mesa Refuge, a writing residency in Point Reyes Station, California (about an hour north of San Francisco), welcomes a diverse group of writers—both emerging and established—who are defining and/or offering solutions to the pressing issues of our time. Our particular priority is to support writers working "at the edge" in the

areas of nature, economic equity, and social justice. We welcome writers in all genres, including nonfiction, journalism, fiction, radio, film, and others.

We aim to support a diverse community of writers and welcome applicants representing a broad spectrum of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, immigration status, religion, or ability. We know that as veterans and activists, readers and writers of *The Veteran*

have a unique perspective on war, the anti-war movement, peace, and the crucial issues of our time.

The residencies are two weeks long and are at no cost to the resident. There are three writers on the site at a time. The application deadline for a two-week residency in 2024 is December 1, 2023. We contact all applicants eight to ten weeks after the application deadline.

Our application is online on Submittable. You will be asked to

submit a brief statement of your proposed project, including the reason why a residency at Mesa Refuge would be beneficial to your work at this stage, a resume, a writing sample (published or unpublished), and an application fee (or a request to waive the fee).

For more information and to apply, please go to the Mesa Refuge website: <https://mesarefuge.org/residencies/application/>



Waging A Good War: A Military History of the Civil Rights Movement

ED HAGERTY (REVIEWER)

Waging a Good War: A Military History of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968

by **Thomas E. Ricks**

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022)

Many readers will be familiar with the works of popular journalist and historian Thomas Ricks, such as *The Generals*, *Making the Corps*, and *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. Ricks brings his lively prose and insightful analysis to bear once again in *Waging a Good War*, in which he examines the Civil Rights Movement in the context of a military campaign, bringing to light many similarities in organizing, training, and executing strategy and tactics. The parallels seem superficial at times, but several significant commonalities effectively support his point for a close connection.

Ricks seems to be the first researcher to examine the Movement in terms of its connection to military principles, but how can campaigns based primarily on nonviolence as their primary weapon be comparable to military operations? Ricks addresses that question decisively in his preface. First, activists in the Movement saw themselves as engaged in a protracted moral struggle similar to warfare. In contrast, others recalled that although it was a nonviolent war, it was nonetheless a war, with marches being one of the key tactics. As Ricks asserts, the march is a vital element of warfare that is sometimes more decisive than violence. Second, he examines the Movement as a series of campaigns that parallel military efforts. He views the Freedom Rides as an example of a long-range raid behind enemy lines. Nashville sit-ins were offensive campaigns that demanded services, while the Montgomery bus boycott withdrew patronage to pursue a defensive campaign goal. Finally, Ricks demonstrates his understanding of military leadership by comparing some of the Movement's key personnel to successful generals. In that regard, one of the book's greatest strengths is treating the Movement's leaders fairly. This book is not just about Martin Luther King, though he naturally figures prominently. Ricks examines the importance of several lesser-known leaders he identifies as vital to developing successful strategies and tactics.

The modern civil rights movement began with the familiar story of

Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat to a white rider on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus in December 1955. Ricks makes the case for military-like training and preparation in examining Parks' role. As an official with the Montgomery NAACP, Parks had attended a two-week summer session at the Highlander Folk School, which had its roots in "the philosophy of well-disciplined nonviolent direct action" (14). Black leaders viewed Parks, a middle-aged Sunday School teacher, as the perfect person on whom to base a boycott campaign designed to advance the cause of racial desegregation. Shortly after her arrest, Martin Luther King gave his debut speech for the Movement in which he clearly outlined the overarching goal of redeeming "the soul of America" (16). Black people, he asserted, were American citizens, and they demanded equal treatment. They were tired of being abused, he continued, yet he decisively rejected violence in favor of a greater weapon, the weapon of non-violent protest. Simultaneously, the Movement was aggressively militant in the tradition of Gandhi, to whom nonviolence did "not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doers, but . . . the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant" (20-21). The difference between military violence and militant nonviolence, Ricks asserts, is that "the latter flummoxes the foe" (21). More than any other, that statement captures the essence of the Movement's success.

The essential structure of the Movement took shape in Montgomery, and it had many parallels to military action. First, it was necessary to establish clear lines of communication and then handle the logistics of providing alternative transportation during the bus boycott. Next, a staff was organized to handle administrative tasks such as finances. King was designated the face and voice of the Movement, essential to the need to maintain message discipline and speak with one voice. Meanwhile, Montgomery city officials engaged in disinformation campaigns to confuse protestors and discourage financial contributions. King and the Movement's leaders reacted immediately to counter the bogus information. Eventually, in a significant misstep, city officials arrested King and more than 100 others, including about twenty ministers. That quickly brought national attention to the Movement and led to a six-fold

increase in monetary contributions and broader sympathy for the cause. The Montgomery boycott also brought new leaders to the fore, such as James Lawson and James Bevel. Success in Montgomery relied on community involvement based on the existing infrastructure of Black churches, which made participation and support for the boycott highly visible. Those churches were "effectively a citadel for the Movement" (32).

From the victory in Montgomery came many lessons that would foster the successes of subsequent campaigns. Leaders recognized the need for regional organizations to plan effectively, recruit and train volunteers, fundraise, and ensure discipline. To begin that process, King invited several Black ministers and community leaders to a meeting where they agreed to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The first campaign would be to double the number of Black voters in the South by 1960, but the effort soon foundered. In a parallel to the military maxim that one should never reinforce failure, King began to draw away from the voter registration effort and, with James Lawson's help, refocused on compelling desegregation of lunch counters in Nashville. Success in those sit-ins depended mainly on a cadre of volunteers well-trained in nonviolence and able to withstand the verbal and physical taunts of enraged whites. When police arrested the protestors, another wave took their place in what Ricks considers the nonviolent counterpart to military concentration of force. Demonstrators who shared abuse and jail cells developed close bonds similar to "unit cohesion" (60), while post-action discussions filled the role of "After-Action Reviews" (61). From the Nashville Movement arose a second national organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which Lawson claimed was dedicated to "nonviolent revolution" (66).

By the time the Freedom Rides began in May 1961, segregationists were already on their back foot, having made several missteps and operating consistently at a disadvantage. They had to defend everywhere, while the Movement chose the time and place for action. Segregation also no longer had the force of federal law on its side. White supremacists had few realistic tools to defend their beliefs. They could use the courts to

fight desegregation, slowing progress, and fall back on their final recourse to actual or threatened violence. That option became increasingly risky to deploy in the face of national news coverage, particularly on TV, without generating negative publicity. Many segregationists fell victim to the error of believing their own lies about Black inferiority, Black contentment with the status quo, or Black susceptibility to follow outside agitators. Most importantly, segregationists never put forth a vision for a successful outcome.

Despite its opponents' handicaps, the Movement often struggled with missteps, internal divisions, and failures. Yet, Ricks shows that the adherence to sound military principles served it well and eventually propelled it to success. In his epilogue, Ricks notes lessons and takeaways from the Movement applicable to today's environment. He cites factors common to most campaigns: Training, Discipline, Support Structures, Planning, Strategy, and Reconciliation. The latter might be the most difficult to implement, but it embodies the concept that the goal is not to crush adversaries but to change them.

With the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington recently passed, now is a suitable time to review the events of that period with Ricks' excellent overview of the Civil Rights Movement in the context of military history. One aspect of the book that readers might find somewhat disappointing is the lack of an exploration of the nexus between the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-War Movement. It would have been instructive to explore the impact of one on the other, but that was different from his purpose in the book. Instead, as it stands, Ricks' *Waging a Good War* is a fine primer on the history of the era, as well as an incisive analysis of the key figures and events that gives much credit to leaders consistently overshadowed by the towering reputation of Dr. King.



ED HAGERTY IS A FORMER USAF MEMBER AND RESERVE OFFICER WHO SERVED WITH THE AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS (OSI). HE RECEIVED A DOCTORATE IN HISTORY FROM TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, AND HE TEACHES HISTORY AT AMERICAN MILITARY UNIVERSITY.

White Whale

One hour and eight minutes in
I always turn it off now
Can't stand to watch the full
one hundred and eighty three minutes
That red bandana - the Russian roulette
staggering impact long ago
Those first sixty eight minutes
are a masterpiece though
Once upon a time
I couldn't get enough of it all
But where is that white tail-finned Cadillac?
Who owns it? Does it still exist?
And those were the best years of our lives?

—John Crandell

Single Malt Whiskey

Single malt whiskey
splashed in a glass
two chickens in the oven
roasting off their ass
seven vets a-whining
don't know what to do
about the awful state the world's in
no one's got a clue.

But Jesus Christ Almighty
we're having so much fun
wallowing in all this shit
that when we're finally done
the only thing we can conclude
is that friendship trumps disaster;
so we'll treasure that forever
and fuck those other bastards.

Bob
Peter
Charley
Sandy
Hari
John
Woody

—Woody Powell

From Dealey Plaza to Gulf of Tonkin: Where Lay The Rub?

JOHN CRANDELL

PART 2: (The second of a three-part dissection of LBJ)

At the very least, one can acknowledge that in our time, we have witnessed a monster become President of the United States fifty-three years in the wake of an earlier president having entrapped the nation in a foreign conflict far more monstrous than any words or actions by the abominable D.J. Trump. Lyndon Johnson had not changed course due to the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident. There had been no turning point. He and his staff had been intent on waging war in Vietnam from that year's outset. As vice president, he objected to JFK's ordering a withdrawal of one thousand MAAG personnel from the war zone. Having wagged his tail in approval of JFK's order, Robert McNamara turned and wagged his tail for LBJ once Kennedy was buried across the Potomac. It has long been alleged that following a lame attack on the USS Maddox by North Vietnamese in the Gulf on August 2nd, a mistaken NSA translation of a radio intercept led to the infamous imaginary attack two nights later. The intercept had picked up communication regarding the towing of Vietnamese torpedo boats damaged in the one and only attack.

Thirty-five years later, a CIA engineering executive analyzed available evidence and judged that the White House staff's interest was insidious, aimed solely at confirming the purported second attack. Johnson knew of doubts relayed by CINCPAC on August 4th. NSC officials and McNamara informed him of such before congressional leaders arrived in the Oval Office. Both of them covered up the gray area and lied to the representatives from Capitol Hill. Orders to carry out an aerial attack on the North Vietnamese mainland had already been issued. McNamara proceeded to lie before House and Senate committees the next day. Only Wayne Morse of Oregon voiced skepticism, having been tipped off regarding gray issues by a confederate in the Pentagon. It was political season; no doubts were to be entertained at political necessity's ground zero. There was an election to be won and profits to be had.

Following the phantom incident of August 4th, somehow, eighteen sailors were rounded up to testify at a hearing at Subic Bay. These men averred that both the Maddox and the USS Turner Joy had been attacked by torpedo boats—one of which had been damaged by return fire.

Interestingly, James Stockdale had flown circles overhead that night, had a clear view of the area, and later revealed that the US vessels were just "shooting at phantom targets" and was soon given direct orders not to speak further of what he'd observed. When downed and captured, he kept the facts secret from his North Vietnamese captors for eight and a half years. No report of a second attack had been made to CINCPAC by the commander of either US vessel. It'd been Stockdale

who'd fired upon the torpedo boats on August 2nd.

Eventually, an Oval Office tape recording nailed Lyndon Johnson for posterity: "Hell, those damn stupid sailors were just shooting at flying fish." As a result of his experience under his father in the Hill Country, he was paranoid of failure of any sort. After Kennedy's rocking chair and PT-109 coconut had been cleared from the Oval Office, National Security Action Memorandum 263 was relegated to the dustbin. NSAM 273 was issued the day following, directing that the entire US effort in South Vietnam be unified, that particular efforts be expended in the Mekong Delta, and that increased activity be planned according to four possibilities: whatever level of damage to the North, the plausibility of denial by the US, retaliation by North Vietnamese and adverse international reaction.

Lyndon had always demanded and received only what he wanted to hear from his staff: a unified front, no dissension, and no contradictions. His zeitgeist for conformity was implicit in the House, the Senate, and the Oval Office. Otherwise, any male had to go to the shitter with him and take notes. The following June, he told Russell of South Carolina—that "Americans will forgive you for anything except being weak." A few weeks later, in Laurel Lodge at Camp David, Brain Trust member Clark Clifford would relate his doubt to LBJ and Mac: "I don't believe we can win in Vietnam... I can't see anything but catastrophe for our nation in this area." He had once served as naval adviser (and friend) to Harry Truman during the Korean War. He had witnessed Truman's having to cope with Douglas MacArthur's disastrous push to the border with China [hence, MacArthur would warn JFK to stay clear of any involvement in Asia—circa 1961]. Johnson has not been forgiven for his monstrosity, his effect on our lives.

Covert ops resumed along the coast of North Vietnam on September 10th. Planning began for a land incursion into Laos by puppet South Vietnamese forces. POTUS told Earl Wheeler that the Southerners wouldn't last one round in a ten-round bout but that he was ready to do more later. Furthermore, he wanted to avoid any problems interfering with the coming election. As Army Chief of Staff, Harold Johnson had never uttered a word of doubt to McNamara. At LBJ's pleasure, he'd been appointed to the position over and above thirty of his seniors and eventually admitted having felt a lack of requisite experience for the top job. He had weighed only ninety pounds at the end of World War II, the result of three years' imprisonment by the Japanese.

A mutual JCS agreement regarding North Vietnam was never arrived at under JFK or LBJ. LBJ's only use of the Joint Chiefs that summer was in service of Wheeler as a prop during meetings with congressional leaders. Competing with the Marines,



Curtis LeMay had submitted a list to McNamara, ninety-four targets for attack as part of an open-ended commitment to aerial bombardment. John McNaughton, assistant secretary under Mac, wagged his tail in approval over the list yet secretly divulged the opposite to Dan Ellsberg. Slapping his hand on his desk, he exploded, "Out, out, out! You don't understand, Dan! Six months from now, I don't want us to be in Vietnam!" Weeks earlier, he'd said that his wife had said that she felt what he was participating in was "insane."

Clifford's revelation at Camp David was duly recorded and kept in a super-secret eyes-only binder in McNaughton's walk-in safe. Ellsberg was allowed free access to the safe but was forbidden to touch the binder. Curiosity led the future master of the *Pentagon Papers* to "go there"—open the binder in July of '65 and discover Alibaba's treasure of correspondence between Johnson, McNamara, Rusk, and Central Intelligence. Also, a June '65 memo from McGeorge Bundy replied to Mac's latest brainstorm: "My first reaction is that this program is rash to the point of folly." Other written doubts were reflected in memos to LBJ submitted by Hubert Humphrey, Mike Mansfield, George Ball, and Richard Russell. All high-level advice against involvement became highly secret in the forcefield of Bob McNamara. The day after Ellsberg opened the binder, McNaughton had him reassigned. No copies were made; ironically, none of the doubts expressed would eventually be included in the *Pentagon Papers*.

Blockhead LeMay, obsessed with Strangelovean domination, rationalized that bombardment of the North would negate the need for US ground troops being required and would surely prevent China from entering the fray. Killing had been his mantra in the leadup to Hiroshima, wherein he'd sent Air Force bombers to annihilate nearly half a million people in Japan. Mac had drafted those plans.

A staff meeting was held in the Oval Office on September 7th, and a holding action was adopted. In Saigon and despite his doubts, newly established ambassador Max Taylor was forced to issue an artificially optimistic assessment of the southern government's success. The Joint Chiefs had remained divided—Army and Navy vs. Marines and Air Force. McNamara took advantage of their ambiguity by rejecting their

opinions, further sidelining their influence. Taylor's advance from JCS chairman to ambassador to Saigon further exacerbated policy regarding Vietnam. At the White House, he'd fostered Johnson's holding action. But on arrival in Saigon, he flip-flopped, acceded to LeMay's position, and warned Johnson that on balance, the current South Vietnamese ruler—Nguyen Khanh, was in a more "uncertain condition than before." Also, he lost all previous doubts regarding corruption among officials. It had been Khanh who'd given orders that the assassin of the Diem brothers be exterminated, forced to kneel, and shot in the head.

O! Hang Dog won it in a landslide on November 3rd, and he was all set. The US had ceased being a colonial power in 1946, but the ensuing years seemed to change that fact. The guy was a master of positioning, illusions, and distraction. Men had died in Texas, allowing his rise to his innermost summit of power. But that was not enough. Many would argue that the violence he would wreak on southeast Asia was only his being a prisoner of Joseph McCarthy's having swayed the country. Others to this day can cite the leverage over him that had accumulated during his decades in Washington and particularly—back home in Texas, long, long before.

On October 4th—fifty days before John Kennedy died, Taylor—as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, issued the following memorandum to the four chiefs:

"On October 2nd the President approved recommendations on military matters contained in the report of the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The following actions derived from these recommendations are directed: ... all planning will be directed toward preparing RVN forces for the withdrawal of all US special assistance units and personnel by the end of calendar year 1965. The US Comprehensive Plan, Vietnam, will be revised to bring it into consonance with these objectives, and to reduce planned residual (post-1965) MAAG strengths to approximately pre-insurgency levels... Execute the plan to withdraw 1,000 US military personnel by the end of 1963..."

Taylor's edict remained classified until 1997. In December 1965, McNamara privately conceded to Robert Kennedy that the war could not be won by military means and that a political solution was necessary. Yet he would remain as Secretary of Defense until the last day of February 1968. Ironically, Clark Clifford would have the misfortune of replacing him.



JOHN CRANDELL SERVED IN II CORPS WITH THE 4TH INFANTRY IN 1969. CAMP ENARI, THEN THE DIVISION'S BASE OF OPERATIONS, IS NOW SOLIDLY COVERED WITH UNIFORM ROWS OF TEA PLANTS. ONLY THE FAINT TRACE OF THE BASE PERIMETER REMAINS.



Waikiki, Hawaii, August 2, 1975.

Deadliest Year

JOSEPH GIANNINI

John Kerry volunteered for and went to Vietnam in 1968. George W. Bush went into the National Guard in 1968. It was the deadliest year in the Vietnam War. Over one hundred thousand American casualties. Fourteen thousand five hundred and ninety four killed in action. Eighty seven thousand three hundred eighty eight wounded in action. 1968 began with the Tet Offensive. I know—I was there serving with the First Battalion Third Marines, aka "The Home of the Brave." Then the siege at Khe Sanh. I know we were nearby. Then the Battle of Dai Do. I know, we were in it.

Tet started with a barrage of rockets slamming into our positions at the Quang Tri Combat base. I ran for cover. Jumped into a bunker. They were firing rockets with delayed detonating fuses. We had no defense to this type of incoming. I crunched down, making as small a target as possible. Terrified as death walked amongst us. Praying over and over, "Oh God, please please." I laugh uncontrollably. Close to insanity. Exposure to death at any moment changes you forever. You find out

what you're made of.

In early April we convoyed up Highway One. The only north south road in Quang Tri Province. We were heading to Route Nine. It ran east to the ocean and west to the marines under siege at Khe Sanh. Vietnamese girls standing alongside. Patting their backsides. Hatred in their eyes and voices. Yelling over and over, "Hey Marines, you fucking number ten." Meaning we were the worst. We hadn't won their hearts and minds. Our crusade to bring them freedom and democracy doomed long before the first marine waded ashore.

The NVA (North Vietnamese Army) had closed Route Nine by Khe Sanh. Then 40 thousand NVA surrounded five thousand Marines in a death trap. We moved up Route Nine. Took up positions a few miles from the combat base. Then waited. The siege looked like another Dien Bien Phu. A famous battle in the Indo China War. Where the Vietminh, now the NVA, surrounded and defeated 15,000 French soldiers. Ending that War and beginning ours. I thought all those Marines were dead. Didn't

have a chance. Thank God it wasn't us. They held on and finally we were able to relieve them. Khe Sanh was promptly abandoned.

In early May 1968, at Dai Do, we walked through the positions of the Second Battalion Fourth Marines, aka "The Magnificent Bastards." They had been in a vicious battle with a large NVA force. The Bastards suffered terrible losses. Held a thin green line. As we moved forward to continue the fight we came upon a large ditch filled with dead Marines. Each facing outboard. Everyone in a fighting position. Killed by multiple small arms wounds. The NVA had pulled back without stripping or mutilating them. Our Chaplain climbed down into the ditch. With his index finger and pinky of his right hand he closed the eyes of each Marine. We went into the ditch. To put each Marine in his own poncho. We found and wrapped fifty-five. Each about to start the long journey home. I called this Poncho Rotation. We moved out again. Came upon a lone dead Marine. He had been captured. Was blindfolded. Arms tied so tight behind that his elbows were

touching. Shot in the back of his head. Out here the Geneva Convention didn't protect captured grunts. They weren't valuable intelligence assets.

E.L. Doctorow wrote that Bush doesn't know death. When Bush had the chance to stand and fight with his fellow Americans he used his father's connections to avoid combat in Vietnam. He believed in the War but didn't have the courage to go and fight. This says something about his character. He has none. A false patriot. In 1969 Kerry wasn't sure about the cause, the War, but volunteered to go In Country. He stood with his fellow Americans and bravely led them in combat. He took on the responsibility of keeping his men alive. Even if it meant his own life. He knows death. This says something about his character.



JOSEPH GIANNINI, A CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY, SERVED IN VIETNAM FROM 1967 TO 1968 WITH THE FIRST BATTALION, THIRD MARINES. A VICTIM OF AGENT ORANGE, HE IS CURRENTLY WRITING A BOOK OF SHORT, NON-FICTION STORIES ABOUT FATE, SURFING, AND WAR.

Letter to the Editor

Dear *The Veteran*,

I take this opportunity to respond to Rashid Patch's Letter to the Editor in the last issue, which was critical of my statement that the Vietnamese do not experience chronic wartime PTSD like Americans. John Ketwig quoted in his review of my book *Coming Home in Vietnam*. I thank and honor John for the review and Rashid for taking the time and effort to write. Clearly, Rashid is concerned with properly understanding PTSD and protecting all survivors from misinterpretation.

Rashid correctly stresses that when there is severe physical trauma of any kind, neurological changes occur in the survivor. These include war wounds as well as injuries from abuse, sports, accidents, etc.

However, Rashid reduces PTSD to a physiological trauma. It is a holistic condition that impacts the body, mind, heart, spirit, culture, and pursuit of meaning. Its impact includes psychology, ideology, culture, religion, and spirituality. Rashid is correct that all humans are wired the same, and it would be racist to say otherwise. I certainly do not claim that humans from any

ethnic background are differently constructed. But Rashid is incorrect in not understanding how psychology, history, culture, and spirituality impact trauma processing. PTSD not only results from physical injury but is very much shaped by the family's, community's, and culture's responses to it. Otherwise, homecoming for veterans would not be so damaging.

Of course, human physiology is the same in the US and Vietnam. However, the surrounding cultural conditions are vastly different. Vietnam has been invaded for 2,000 years, and they have developed ways of coping that the US does not have. Moral injury is absent because they were invaded, not aggressors, and as they say, liberated their country, so their sacrifices were meaningful. Even many ARVNs who were aligned with the US felt like they were protecting their homeland. Buddhism, ancestor veneration, Confucianism, traditional practices, everyone in the struggle together, talking circles and other support from pagodas, national holidays that everyone honors, and countless other practices enable the Vietnamese to avoid the chronic breakdown that Americans experience with PTSD. These are the practices

Vietnamese use for healing PTSD, not, as Rashid wonders, that they have "much better access to health and psychological care." Vietnam is still one of the poorest countries on the planet, and they do not have such care available. They have the highest levels of human, cultural, and spiritual caring and support.

I have led 19 healing and reconciliation journeys to Vietnam since 2000 and spent about two years in post-war Vietnam. I have researched this issue in depth with the Vietnamese Institute of Psychology in Ha Noi and several universities there. I have met with hundreds of Vietnamese veterans of the American War and others. They have the same conclusion—there is very little chronic wartime PTSD, though it certainly exists from other conditions. In fact, their veterans express concern and regret over the ongoing invisible wounding of American vets.

It is not only our physiological conditions that matter regarding trauma. Two people experiencing the same event may process it very differently. It deeply matters how a culture judges and supports its survivors—or fails to. Physiology is traumatizing, but culture, history,

personality, religion, support, morality, and other factors all determine how we process our traumatic wounds.

Very Respectfully,
Edward Tick

*I am a psychotherapist specializing in healing the invisible wounds of war in veterans and communities in the US, Vietnam, and internationally. I have been working in this field since the end of the Vietnam War and before PTSD was even a diagnosis. I have served as the military's subject matter expert in treating PTSD and Moral Injury. I am the author of *War and the Soul, Warrior's Return, Coming Home In Vietnam, and other books. For anyone interested in exploring this issue of no wartime PTSD in Vietnam more deeply, I refer you to "Vietnam: No Traumatic Breakdown" in Chapter 6 of my book *Warrior's Return* and my article "Different Philosophy, Different Result: Why There is No PTSD Among Vietnamese Veterans of the American War," in *PTSD Journal*.**



Washington, DC, July 4, 1974.

Where We Came From, Who We Are, Who Can Join

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still-raging war in Indochina, and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States, including active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups

to deal with traumatic aftereffects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at vet centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert

actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice—facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and

respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle. JOIN US!



Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War



We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of US aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia also put forward lies. The US military was not protecting (the sword) the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China (the China Gates), but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself.

Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families.

Our insignia is over 55 years old. The insignia, VVAW® and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.

Beware of VVAW-AI

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individuals calling themselves the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist" (VVAW-AI). VVAW-AI is actually the creation of an obscure ultraleft sect, designed to confuse people in order to associate themselves with VVAW's many years of activism and struggle. They are not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW, Inc. and are not affiliated with us in any way. We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit.

SUPPORT VVAW!

DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.
 VVAW Membership
 P.O. Box 355
 Champaign, IL 61824-0355

Membership Application

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email address _____
 Branch _____
 Dates of Service (if applicable) _____
 Unit _____
 Military Occupation _____
 Rank _____
 Overseas Duty _____
 Dates _____

- Yes, add me to the VVAW email list.
- I do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW.
- Sign me up for a lifetime membership in VVAW. \$250 is enclosed.

Membership in VVAW is open to ALL people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice and support the work of VVAW and its historic legacy. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The annual membership fee is \$25.00 (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

Signature _____
 Date _____
 Total Amount Enclosed _____

Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax-deductible.



In June 1973 VVAW members met in Paris, France with fifteen Indochina veterans of the war. Ed Damato, 3rd from left.

RECOLLECTIONS

On the Road to Miami

PAT FINNEGAN

August 14, 2015

Thanks to you guys and your pursuit of the various Agent Orange issues, I now live on the VA dime and SS disability payments, plus my 30-year \$25,000/yr with a COLA increase built in State pension.

I'm a big tipper—usually 30% or better. I tell people that this tip is as close as they are gonna get to the Reagan "Trickle Down Theory."

I'm 65 now and had my first but undocumented heart attack at 39-41—my first documented heart attack at 42.

The only people in the ICUs I was in and the rehab afterward near my age were all Combat VN Vets.

Not to say that the heart attacks came from combat, though being in combat didn't help the vascular system.

Being in combat in Vietnam made it more likely for you to be exposed to the potentially harmful effects of Agent Orange, Blue, White Purple, etc., which was sprayed heavily in the Central Highlands.

A map showed each spray mission with a thin black line. Starting point "A" and ending point "B." The area I was in was completely blacked out on the spray mission map.

I've now had four heart attacks and also have type two diabetes. I've had a double bypass and five stents. My vascular system is pretty fucked. I almost lost my right leg with the last heart blockage and accompanying right leg blood clot.

I first hooked up with you guys in 1972 with the San Francisco Chapter. Mike Oliver was there—also Jack McCloskey and the unforgettable "Max Casualty," aka Don Rice. There were many others I don't remember the names of.

They worked and, in some cases, lived in the office on Howard Street. I had hitchhiked into David Harris's "Peoples Union Co-Op Farm #1" outside of Fresno, near Raisen City, in February 1972. I and my traveling companion had just gotten out of the Humboldt County Jail after serving a month for ripping off the food stamp system and the local supermarket.

It's a long, interesting story, but I'll skip the details now. We were on our way to San Diego to hook up with the NVA [Nonviolent Action Committee] when we hitched into David Harris's

farm outside of Fresno.

Through the farm, I finally met VVAW up in San Francisco.

VVAW planned to form a convoy, starting there in Redwood City, in the Frisco Bay area, run down the coast to Los Angeles and San Diego, and then across US 10 to Jacksonville, and make a right down 95 to Miami Beach and the Republican Presidential Convention in August 1972.

All along the journey from San Francisco to Miami, we picked up brothers and sisters who were also committed to bringing the lies and realities of the death and destruction, caused by the present administration, to the unforgiving glaring light and truth of the moment at the Republican National Presidential Convention.

I drove the California group at least half of the journey to Miami in a large half-ton flatbed pickup truck.

The truck was owned by a brother Vet, from the 101st. His first name was Bob. He was a farmer from the Bakersfield area and had just recently had a baby boy.

We were the truck that wound up carrying Mingo, another 101st brother from 71-72, who had a 750 Triumph motorcycle.

Mingo's name was Bob Mingo. We carried the bike to Miami and then wound up throwing it in a river off a bridge on the way back west.

When we arrived in Miami, I was the driver of the flatbed. As we drove up to Flamingo Park, the Yippies jumped on the truck's running board and welcomed us to Miami by throwing joints in the window.

The joints didn't go to waste.

Five or six of us got arrested in Miami Beach, out on the Keys. We had some legit passes to the event. We were in a different flatbed than the one I had driven. I was just a passenger on the back. We had tried to crash the "Young Republicans For Nixon Rally" to do a little guerrilla theater. The rally was being held in some sports stadium out on the Keys.

We headed to the stadium to do the guerrilla theater with our jungle fatigues and plastic Mattel toy M-16s.

We were denied entrance at the gate to the parking lot of the stadium and turned around and sent back to Miami.

The police were notified about us at that point, I assume, and we were



pulled over by Florida State Troopers on the causeway.

The police stopped the truck because they said we had a broken tail light. We showed them that we didn't have a broken tail light. At that point, the young state trooper smashed one of the outer tail lights on the truck's right rear and stated, "Well it looks like you got one now."

It somehow turned into an impounded vehicle offense, and we were all ordered off the truck.

Then, we were all arrested for being pedestrians on the causeway.

Kinda Kafkaesque. There was no way we weren't getting arrested that day on the causeway in the Florida Keys.

The arrests were discussed the next day, as filmed in the documentary *Last Patrol*. Jack was giving most of the talk to the VVAW campsite at Flamingo Park as a prelude to marching in peaceful protest to the Republican Convention Center.

It cost \$50 each to bail us out, and money was running thin.

That was the message to the crowd as we prepared to march on the Convention Center.

I helped push the wheelchair brothers up Collins Blvd. to the Fountainbleu Hotel.

Before the march on the Convention Center, VVAW en masse marched out of Flamenco Park up Collins Blvd. to the Fountainbleu Hotel, where the Republican delegation was staying for the convention.

I was close enough to the front of the march to get one of the 48 warm Cokes that the then Congressman from California, Pete McClosky, handed out when we reached the Fountainbleu

Hotel. I am trying to remember if the Cokes came before, during, or after Ron Kovic's memorable speech. If I had to bet, I'd bet on before or during.

I coulda had two cokes; I was that close, but figured one was enough, and I didn't like Coke-Cola anyway.

On the return trip to California from Miami, Bob's truck encountered a mechanical problem in Texas. We laid over a day to get it fixed. The rednecks that got us going from Texas put a faulty band-aid on the motor.

I told everyone that I thought we were getting fucked by the mechanic in Texas but no one listened.

The band-aid didn't last too long, and the motor threw a rod just as we crossed the California border.

Through the connections on the farm, I got someone to come and get the truck. We loaded it on the farm's much larger flatbed and hauled it to Bob's farm in Bakersfield.

I stayed at the farm until the fall, when some of us had to leave for the winter.

I was in Boulder, Colorado, when I got word through the farm that my older brother, Dennis, had been killed in Vietnam.

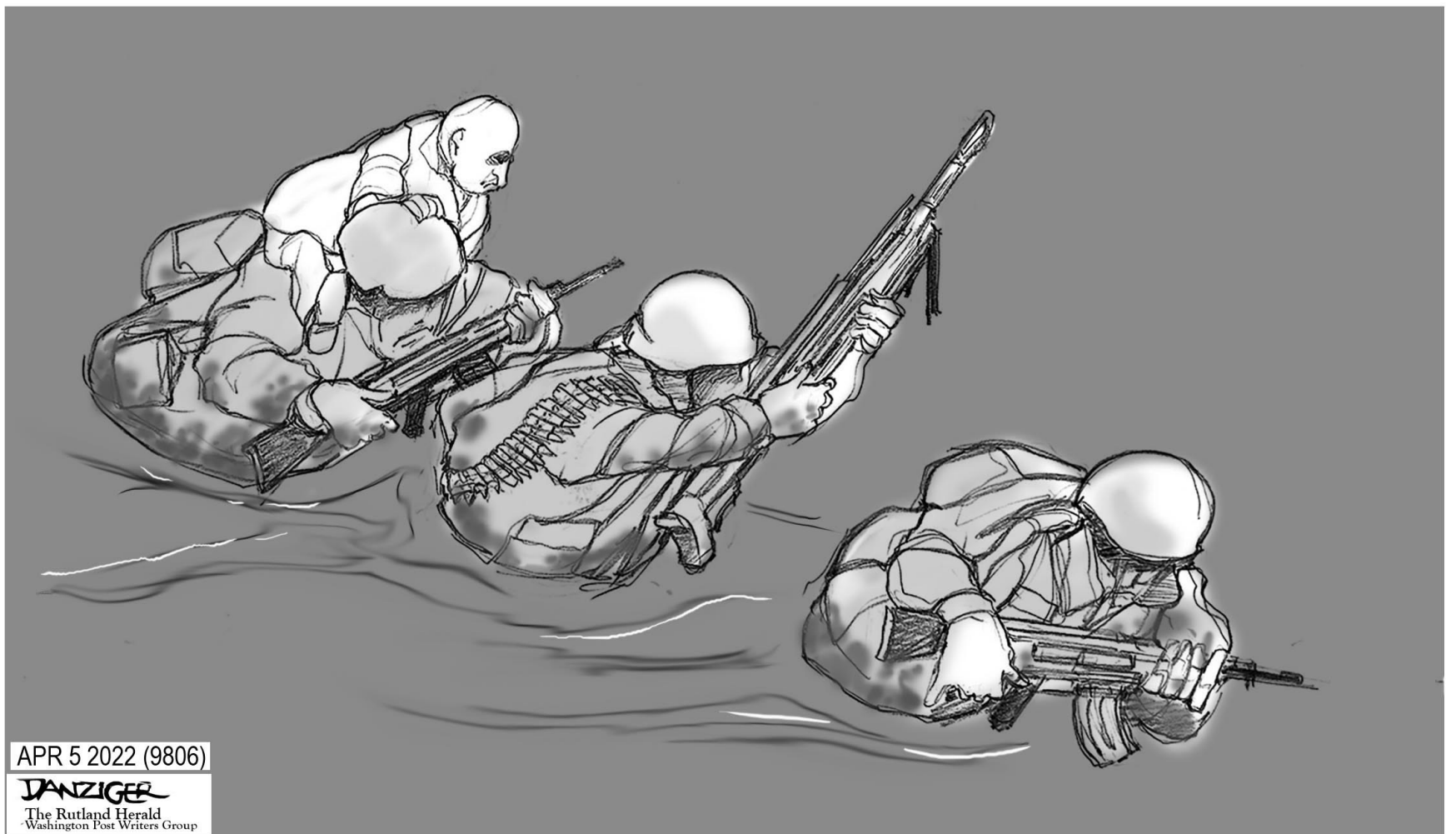
He was on his fourth tour and the last day of his last tour. It was 10/31/72.

Dennis's name is on panel #80, down in the bottom quarter of the panel.



PAT FINNEGAN, 3RD PLATOON, DELTA COMPANY. 1/503RD, 173RD ABN 1/69-10/69, USA 8/66-10/69. 82ND ABN 3/67-11/68 FT BRAGG NC.

Russia. Waist-deep in the Big Bloody*



APR 5 2022 (9806)

JANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group

*apologies to Pete Seegar, Waist-deep in the Big Muddy