



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Veterans and Nurses Fight for Improvements at the Jesse Brown VA

ROBERT CLACK

IVAW Chicago chapter members have long been concerned about the quality of care and service they receive at the Jesse Brown VAMedical Center (JBVA). In the midst of a suicide epidemic (22 suicides a day in 2012) and based on our members' own bad experiences, IVAW Chicago decided to begin organizing to demand improvements in quality of care.

Some of the members had experienced issues including long wait times, not receiving medicine or care in a timely manner and insensitivity from some staff. Some of IVAW's Women Veterans were also concerned

about the Women's Health Clinic which was a shared space with the VA's Neurology clinic. "You would go into the women's clinic for treatment and you walk into a room full of men. For Veterans receiving treatment for Military Sexual Trauma (MST), this can be a trauma trigger," said IVAW member Sabrina Waller.

In March 2012 the chapter began organizing. Through the Move the Money coalition (a local labor and economic rights coalition), IVAW made contact with National Nurses United (NNU), the union that represents the JBVA Nurses. The Nurses were

also frustrated with the VA and were concerned with understaffing, long work hours, and lack of training of the staff on issues of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and military culture. The training was so bad that the nurses in the VA's psych ward had not even received training on PTSD from the VA. Concerned nurses had to seek training independently.

It was also discovered that some of the staffing levels of nurses were dangerously low and that nurses could be responsible for up to 13 or 14 inpatients at

a time. The Nurses and Veterans clearly realized they had a common struggle and called for an informational picket to air their grievances under the banner of "Safe Staffing for Veterans Right to Heal."

The VA leadership quickly responded to the planned picket and offered a meeting if IVAW and NNU canceled their picket. In good faith, both groups agreed and a meeting was held with the Director of the VA, the Nurses Director, the Regional Network Director, and representatives from the VA central office.

continued on page 12

Remembering the Christmas Bombing

INTERVIEW WITH BARRY ROMO BY JEN TAYABJI

Forty years ago from December 18-29, 1972, the US carried out the largest aerial blitz in North Vietnam. After the breakdown of the peace talks in Paris, Operation Linebacker II started with 129 B-52s bombing Hanoi on the first evening. This bombing campaign lasted 11 days with a short break over Christmas. 741 B-52s, along with other fighter-bombers dropped over 20,000 tons of ordnance on Hanoi. By the end of the Christmas Bombing, thousands of homes and shops had been destroyed and at least 1,600 North Vietnamese killed.

In December 1972, I went to Hanoi with Joan Baez, Rev. Michael Allen and General Telford Taylor. We were going to deliver Christmas packages and cards for US POWs from their families and

to witness the damages from the war in North Vietnam. Many of you know of Joan, a well-known folk singer and human rights activist. She recorded parts of her album "Where Are You Now, My Son?" on this trip. Michael was the Assistant Dean of Theology at Yale at the time.

Telford was a lawyer, professor, author and veteran. Before World War II, he worked as a lawyer. When the war started, he joined Army Intelligence and led the group who decoded intercepted German messages using ULTRA encryption. He served as both the Assistant to the Chief Counsel (then Robert H. Jackson) and the Chief Counsel for the US Nuremberg Military Tribunals. After the war, Telford taught International Law at Columbia



Survivors of the bombings look for their relatives, Hanoi 1972.

University. He spoke out against McCarthyism and the Vietnam War. His book entitled, "Nuremberg and Vietnam: An American Tragedy," argued that the US conduct in Vietnam was as equally criminal as the Nazis conduct during World War II, based on the legal standards implemented at the Nuremberg trials.

We left on December 11 and traveled for two days to get to Hanoi. As we flew to an airport outside of Hanoi, we could see craters marking the landscape. We were escorted to Hanoi. On the way, there was a convoy coming the opposite direction so we pulled off the road into a hamlet to let them pass. The railroad yard had been destroyed by bombings.

But, there was a school not too far from it that had been untouched. The young school children came out to see who we were. We were clearly Americans. I had on Levis and Joan had her guitar. The school kids innocently sang us songs. Telford pointed out how the railroad yard had been destroyed yet the school was still here - there didn't seem to be signs of civilians being targeted, of war crimes.

We met with our hosts in Hanoi to plan out our two-week-long trip. Tran Trong Quat with the Vietnam American Friendship Association had arranged our lodging and interpreter. We gave the Vietnamese the packages and

continued on page 20

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From the National Office

BILL BRANSON

Welcome to the Spring 2013 issue of *The Veteran*!

Forty years ago, we saw the beginning of the end of the Vietnam War. A month after the December 1972 Christmas Bombings, the Paris Peace Accords were signed. By the end of March 1973, our combat troops were brought home. It would be two more years before the official end of the Vietnam War. This triggers a lot of memories for us.

Some have asked why Vietnam Veterans Against the War is still around, forty-six years after we first marched together. Our mission to fight for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans is as necessary in today's world as it was then. What we witnessed and experienced, what we have learned, and what we know gives us a unique voice that must continue to be heard.

Sure, we are in the process of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. But, we are still engaged in a war and "nation-building" farce we shouldn't have been in to start with. We have been sending our young men and women off to war, as

we were sent off to war, to come home with tremendous physical and psychological injuries. They have returned only to be repeatedly deployed. Just like us, now that the war is winding down the military is unceremoniously kicking out hundreds with bad discharges. The vets who qualify for benefits have returned to an overwhelmed VA system where they cannot get the care they need.

In February, the Department of Veteran Affairs released a new study that showed that an estimated 22 veterans commit suicide each day. That is almost one veteran every hour of every day. And almost 70% of these unfortunate deaths were in veterans 50 years old and older – our brothers and sisters who survived the war in Vietnam to come home to a psychological war that never ended. That is why VVAW's work is still as important as ever.

We must also fight to protect the benefits we have earned through our service. Yet again, there are proposals in Washington that would cut our benefits. Some elected officials, including President Obama (who has included

this proposal in his 2013 budget), want to "tweak" how the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is calculated. COLA is what makes our VA and Social Security benefits keep up with inflation. But the proposed "tweak" that would switch how COLA is calculated to the chained-CPI model is basically a lot of economics that means a cut in benefits that will not keep up with inflation. And this COLA is used for Social Security benefits, disability benefits AND Veterans benefits.

We have much work to do. We may not be taking to the streets like we did when we were in our 20s, but we can still make a difference. We can help our younger brothers and sisters who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. We can help our brothers and sisters who are facing hard times through events like the Chicago Homeless Vets Standdown. We are spread across the country, and around the world, and we may not often be able to come together at an event en masse. But our individual actions must continue. We each must do what we can, where we can.

Get out and into the class-

rooms and make sure our younger generations know the truths about the war and what GIs and veterans face. Write a letter to the editor. Take copies of this issue of *The Veteran* with you the next time you go to the VA, the Legion, etc. Contact your Senator and Representative about the issues that affect us. Call on them to stand against cuts to Veterans benefits, to work for fairer discharges, and to fight for improving the VA so that veterans are not waiting so long to get the care that they need. We each need to take these issues that we carry close to our heart and do whatever we can to advance our cause. If we each do this, our actions collectively resound for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Veteran* and that you see the important role that lays ahead for us.



BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

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- Jeff Machota
- Ellie Shunas
- Bill Branson
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Thanks to Jeff Danziger, Billy Curmano and Jeffrey Hirsch for their cartoons. Thanks to Barry Romo, Susan Schnall, Brian Matarrese, Ben Chitty, Cindy Piester, Suzanne Cogan, Marc Levy, Trina Irish, Bill Branson, Rick Jahnkow, the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project and others for contributing photos.

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Mail order and check to:
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Below is a list of VVAW coordinators and national staff. If you need a speaker for an event, class visit, or interview, please contact the National Office at (773) 569-3520 or email vvaw@vvaw.org and we will put you in touch with the nearest VVAW member.

VVAW

National Coordinators:

Bill Branson	Joe Miller
Annie Hirschman	Susan Schnall
Brian Matarrese	Marty Webster

VVAW

National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

VVAW Military and Veterans Counseling Closing: VVAW Still Fights On

In 1967, VVAW began our long history of working to help our brothers and sisters. We fought to end the Vietnam War and organized for decent benefits for GIs and veterans. We started a national newspaper in 1971, which turned into *The Veteran*. We put together rap groups in the early 1970s to help our brothers and sisters with PTSD (then called Post-Vietnam Syndrome). We helped organize and testified at the Winter Soldier Investigation to bring light to the truths of what really happened in Vietnam. After the war ended, we continued to organize. Our work brought recognition of the effects of Agent Orange and PTSD.

In the early 2000's, an outpouring of support from our membership - due to the presidency of George W. Bush and the impending return to Iraq - provided VVAW with enough resources to give grants to Iraq Veterans Against the War and fund the security for Winter Soldier II. VVAW was able to assist a great many other projects and hire paid staff for our very own Military Counseling Project.

Through the intervening years, VVAW's Military and Veterans Counseling (MC) project has assisted numerous veterans, service members, and their loved ones. We provided support and assistance to people in need of VA disability benefits and/or discharge upgrading.

Time has marched on. The funding simply no longer exists to support the MC Project. The day has arrived when we must close down the project. Last summer our benefits specialist, Ray Parrish, left us, which caused a significant decrease in services. We had plans to carry on through 2013 with some cuts. Unfortunately

the level of pay was not enough to provide a decent salary and guaranteed future employment for our remaining staff member, mental health provider Johanna (Hans) Buwalda. This summer she found it necessary to seek and secure a more permanent position. Hans will be leaving the program as well.

Regretfully, we can no longer accept new clients into the

org. If we have the records, and know your current address, we can mail them to you. If we do not hear from you by June 1, 2013, your records will be stored.

Unfortunately, there are very few, if any, programs in the country to replace the service VVAW's Military and Veterans Counseling provided. We will make sure that we post any pertinent information on our website. However, this

that we began in 1967. Those of us that survived the war and its after-effects are older, grayer/balder, thicker and more tired than we were 46 years ago. We can no longer lead the fight like we did when we were in our 20s and 30s.

But VVAW is still here. We are in classrooms, speaking the truth of the Vietnam War. We are working side by side with our younger comrades in IVAW. We are at Veterans Homeless Standdowns feeding and clothing our less fortunate brothers and sisters. We are sharing our unique perspectives in our newspaper, *The Veteran*. With our resources becoming more limited over the past several years we must make some difficult choices.

We will carry on the fight for peace, justice and veterans as we have for the last 46 years.



Program. It is necessary to focus our remaining funding towards winding down the project in an ethical manner. We will be working with Hans to either complete open files, or transfer them to other providers or organizations. Any current evaluations will be completed and finalized to the best of our abilities.

We know that VA and Military records are valuable. Our client records with current addresses have already been returned. If you believe that we have your VA records or your Military records, please contact us at vvaw@vvaw.org.

information will no longer be updated on a regular basis. You will also be able to find a small list of resources there if you are looking for help. A list of alternate providers is provided below.

It has truly been an honor to do this work and it is with great pain that we are now forced to close our doors. Unfortunately, the aging of our membership and the bad economic situation (recession) have brought this worthy effort to a halt.

But, please remember: VVAW still carries on its fight for peace, justice and veterans



We offer this list of alternate providers:

SWAN - Service Women Action Network:

servicewomen.org,
Help Line: 1-888-729-2089

The Soldiers Project: www.thesoldiersproject.org

GiveAnHour.org: www.giveanhour.org/ForVisitors.aspx

VetCAT; www.facebook.com/VetCAT

GI Rights Hotline;
girightshotline.org,
877 477-4487

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

A week after we last invaded Iraq, in March of 2003, a local attorney penned a column in the *Tuscola Review* about how it was high time that we went in and kicked some serious Iraqi ass. His justification, to the best of my recollection, had something to do with making the world safe for democracy, or Jesus, or maybe safe sex. I forget. Anyway, I immediately picked up the phone and called the paper's editor.

"Randy," I said, "I either want my fifty cents back or I want a rebuttal column." His reply was, "Paul, we're all good Republicans here at the *Review*. Our money is our god, and we never, ever give any of it back. So I guess I have to give you your column." So I sat down with pen in hand, over my lap top, and wrote the column that went to press on April 15, 2003.

As much as I'd like to blow my own horn about my incredible ability to see the future, I have to admit that I got a couple of things wrong. But I figure that if I got even one thing right, I still did a lot better than Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld or Wolfowitz. So here is my review of that column ten years later - the good, the bad and the in-between. You may also score yourselves ten years after the fact. Nobody's watching.

Two months before my column was written, I should point out, Gene Lyons wrote one of his own. Referring to the impending invasion, he wrote, "This isn't conservatism. It's utopian folly and a prescription for endless war." In his own review ten years later, he concluded that "Although the short term outcome wasn't in doubt and Americans could

be counted upon to rally around the troops, it struck me as almost mad to imagine that the US could convert Iraq into a Middle Eastern Switzerland by force of arms." My own March, 2003 prediction in this regard, admittedly a trifle long winded, read as follows:

"You all remember 1095. If you guessed that was the last time the Cubs won a pennant, you wouldn't be far off. But no. 1095 was the year Europe launched the First Crusade, which was the first time that Western civilization decided to colonize and civilize the Islamic world. Even the amateur history student will recall how well that one worked out. (It didn't.) 900 years later, this administration's stated goal is to establish representative democracy in Iraq. As much as I'd love to see the House of Burgesses resurrected in Baghdad, I have to tell you that democratic institutions are not flowering shrubs you can pick up at Walmart and put in your front yard. They take time - a whole lot of time - to develop. We've been working on ours since 1607, and I have yet to talk to anyone, Republican or Democrat, who thinks we've perfected them. I do not see long range Jeffersonian democracy as our legacy to that part of the world. If that is your prediction, I would respectfully suggest that you've spent too much time flicking channels between Cartoon world and Presidential press conferences. My dour prediction: about a dozen nameless warlords fighting for turf until one of them winds up as the next Hussein. 'Iraqi freedom' will be short-lived indeed."

I'm happy with the first part of

that assessment, but less confident about the prediction. Let's be honest. One man's tyrannical warlord is the next man's liberating hero. I would imagine that if you polled Sunnis and Shia in Iraq that you would get much different answers.

Before I leave the subject of the Switzerland that wasn't to be, let's remember that, at the outset of the war, the administration entitled it Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Actually, the first choice was Operation Iraqi Liberation, but there was some problem with the acronym.) My point is that, for all of the wild talk about 9/11 and Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, the administration chose to go with an emphasis on liberating the oppressed Iraqis. Could it be that someone in the brain trust guessed that the first two might not wind up flying as well?

In his 2003 column, Lyons quoted the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, as follows: "We all share the same priority, that of fighting terrorism mercilessly. Invading Iraq without just cause would likely exacerbate the divisions within societies, cultures and peoples, divisions that nurture terrorism." My own suggestion at the time was that "It is possible that Saddam, admittedly a despotic pig, and al Qaeda have been longtime co-conspirators, and that Iraq had some involvement with the 9/11 murders. If so, we may only hope that the CIA will soon lay its hands on the first shred of evidence which proves that. It is also possible that conquering a country in the heart of the Islamic world, and in the process doubling or tripling the number of people in that region who hate us, will make us safer from future acts of terrorism, although for the life of me I can't imagine how."

I'm still comfortable with those observations, although I suspect that if Donald Rumsfeld were reading this, his first question would be, "OK, Paul, so when was the last time terrorists flew airplanes into buildings in America?" (I'm safe. I doubt that he belongs to VVAW.)

So let's turn to what else I may have missed. I ended my column by admitting that "I could acknowledge that the \$100 billion we're going to spend on this war, and its indeterminate aftermath, really isn't a lot of money. There would be no point in spending it

on improved education for our children or on affordable health care and housing for our working poor. But of course I don't believe any of those things, and I don't understand why anyone else would either."

You see what I missed? According to the *Onion Book of Known Knowledge*, Saddam Hussein "successfully carried out a devastating attack on the American economy by forcing the United States to spend more than \$800 billion to invade, occupy and withdraw from his country." To paraphrase Everett Dirksen, a hundred billion here and a hundred billion there and pretty soon you're talking real money.

But what's the worst thing I missed? I never once mentioned The Big Lie about the WMD's, of which Saddam had about as many as the Tuscola Police Department. Why not? Because my old Vietnam buddy Colin Powell promised me that Saddam had them! OK, Captain Powell and I didn't spend a lot of time together sharing a bowl out behind a Saigon strip joint, but Nam vets aren't supposed to lie to each other. Pardon me while I go hang up my stocking on the fireplace for Santa.

I'm actually going to close with something serious. Reviewing his own column from ten years ago, Lyons noted that in 2003, "Skepticism was in short supply. Spooked by 9/11 and intimidated by the intellectual bullies of the Bush administration, American journalists largely abandoned that professional virtue in favor of propaganda and group think." My own experience at the time was very much in tune with that. Well meaning friends cautioned me that I hadn't won any points around town with my column. "You pissed some people off with that," they advised me. "Don't plan on running for the City Council anytime soon."

That's OK. I never planned to. But hey Iraq, at least some of us are sorry. And good luck. You're apparently going to need it.



PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN TUSCOLA, ILLINOIS, WHERE HE USED TO WORK AS A PROBATION OFFICER. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE US ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.

Corpses, Corpses

Can I gouge out my inner eye?
To block the corpses I can't stop seeing?
Am I strong enough to force them gone?
A technique sniper Kyle aimed to force?
War kills and its stench stays and stings forever.

"None of the guilty are killed" ...
says White in 'Raid' ... "We eat, drink,
vote and read and cannot trace
the graves or name a single murdered child."

Corpses, corpses—charred and dark—reaching ever toward me.

—Tim Bagwell

Celebration of the Life of David Cline

SUSAN SCHNALL

With a call for unity in the veteran movement for peace and justice, co-host of the Celebration of the Life of David Cline, Michael McPhearson welcomed the crowd of over 150 people gathered at Connolly's Pub and Restaurant in NYC to remember Dave and discuss those issues with which he was involved.

It has been five years since Dave's untimely death. About a year ago Michael McPhearson began meeting with groups about organizing an event to celebrate Dave's life. A committee including Ben Chitty, Brian Matarrese, George McAnanama, Pete Bronson, Bill Gilson, Bob Carpenter, Laurie Sandow, Tom Fasy, and myself met monthly to discuss the program, speakers, and outreach. The committee that brought this event together is now working on a conference on the veterans peace movement scheduled to be held on Armed Forces Day, May 18, 2013 in NYC.

Like many others who attended, my life was changed by the US conflict in Vietnam. Soldiers like Dave were never free of the horrors they had witnessed and participated in. I knew Dave many years ago when he was active in VVAW and the GI coffeehouse movement and I was working with Medical Aid to Indochina. And then over 30 years later we caught up with our joint work on the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign which he co-founded.

A panel on military dissent was moderated by Brian Matarrese who introduced Frank Toner, a Vietnam veteran. Frank spoke about his time in Vietnam and refusal to carry a gun during his tour of duty. He was assigned to work as a medic while in southeast Asia. Despite threats of court martial and jail, Frank remained adamant in his refusal to participate in armed struggle against the Vietnamese. Another member of the panel, Camilo Mejia, was born in Nicaragua, lived in Costa Rico, and finished high school in New York City. Camilo went to the University of Miami on a military funded scholarship and in 2003 was sent to Iraq for five months active combat. When he returned to the US on furlough he realized that he could not go back. "We weren't preventing terrorism or making Americans safer. I realized that I was part of a war I believed was

immoral and criminal." Camilo was charged with desertion and sentenced to one year in prison at the Fort Sill military prison in Lawton, Oklahoma.

In 1967 I was Navy nurse who cared for the soldiers returning from Vietnam and a peace activist. I was tried by general court martial for anti-war activities I organized and participated in while wearing my Navy uniform. Similar to Camilo, I felt that as an active duty member of the armed forces, I had a responsibility to speak out against the immoral and criminal actions of the United States government.

Ngo Thanh Nhan was born and raised in Vietnam and came to the US in 1967 on a leadership scholarship. He received a Ph.D. in linguistics from NYU where he is a visiting scholar. Nhan performed a song by jazz violinist and Vietnam veteran Billy Bang named, KIA/MIA and played on the dan tranh - a Vietnamese traditional 16 string zither.

Le Hoai Trung, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the United Nations spoke of having witnessed the B-52 bombings over north Vietnam when he was a child. He stated that he had been taught that the American people were not his enemy or the enemy of the Vietnamese people, that it was the US government that was waging the war. In a hushed room, he told us that he felt sympathy for the American soldiers who were the victims of the US government and he felt sorrow with the deaths of the American GI's. Trung has been a long time supporter of the work done in the US and Vietnam on behalf of the victims of Agent Orange/dioxin.

Heather Bowser, a founder of the Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance, spoke about her dad's service in Vietnam where he was sprayed with Agent Orange, leading to his heart problems and to five cardiac bypass surgeries and early death from a massive heart attack at age 50. As a result of her father's exposure, Heather was born two months premature and weighed three pounds, was missing her right leg below the knee, several fingers, a big toe on her left foot and webbed toes. She is a former high school teacher and mental health professional who uses her skills to educate people about Agent Orange and empower

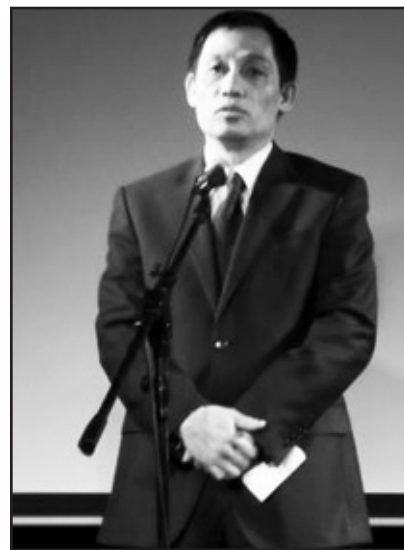
second and third generations of Agent Orange survivors to fight for justice for themselves.

Dr. Tom Fasy is a board certified pathologist with a long standing interest in the toxicology of heavy metal, including uranium. Tom spent 7 weeks last winter in Iraq, visiting medical, dental, nursing, and veterinary colleges and universities and looking into ongoing health and environmental issues caused by the US conflict in Iraq.

Michael McPhearson moderated the panel on Veterans Returning Home with Geoff Millard (Iraq Veterans Against the War) and Margaret Stevens (Service Women's Action Network). Geoff told the story of having participated in the New York demonstration against the US invasion of Iraq in 2002 when he was activated for National Guard duty after the attack on September 11, 2001. He walked with a sympathetic older guy for the better part of a couple of hours and, when they parted, the man gave Geoff his card and told him to call after he had served his tour of duty. That man was David Cline and he became a major influence in the beginning of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Margaret is a professor in the History Department of Essex Community College and was a member of the New Jersey National Guard. She spoke about the difficulty of organizing students, as by their very nature, they are a transient population. Margaret spoke about working with one female African American veteran who she brought into a cohort of women veterans who got into Vassar.

Randy Credico, NYC advocate for civil rights, social justice, Occupy Wall Street, drug and prison reform is a professional comedian who is currently running for mayor of New York. He brought humor to the event with a number of impersonations of Richard Nixon and others. His platform includes ending the city drug war and reforming the criminal justice system.

Ben Chitty was moderator of the panel on the Role of Veterans in the Social Justice Movement and noted that we need to re-examine the relationship of veterans to the movement for peace and social justice, that we need to determine how best to use the intelligence and insight we have gained



Ambassador Le Hoai Trung

through our experiences. We have a responsibility to define who we are, what we want, and how best to organize and influence the world movement. Greg Payton, Jerry Lembcke, Mike Reid, and Jan Barry participated.

Personal reflections of David were given by Elena Schwolsky-Fitch, Sabrina Sergeant and Mona and Angela Fitch.

Stephen Said, son of an Iraqi father and Australian mother, who was raised in Appalachia, uses his music to spread his message of peace across the world and unite movements of peace, positive social change, and global unity. He sang Aheb Aisht Al Huria, I Love the Life of Freedom, and inspired the audience to continue its work for social justice.

We are left with Dave's observations about the war that kept giving, of its lasting emotional impact on those who had served, of the violence, suicide, substance addictions that destroyed families and lives. He told us that it was our responsibility to remember these costs of war until the silent majority was no longer silent, and that because we knew the terrible cost of war, we had to continue speaking out.

There are a number of memorials to those who died as a result of the American War in Vietnam. The author Jack Roth wrote: "Memorials are the way we make promises to the future from the past." As we celebrate Dave's life, let us promise our children and our children's children that there will be no more war.



SUSAN SCHNALL IS A CO-COORDINATOR OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF AND RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN AND A MEMBER OF VFP AND APHA. SHE IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VVAW.

COVVHA Testifies to the Institute of Medicine

HEATHER BOWSER

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) is further examining the birth defects and illnesses that Vietnam veterans and their children are suffering from. The adverse affects of Agent Orange, the toxic dioxin-based herbicide sprayed over the jungles of Vietnam, are well known to veterans and their families, long before the government first admitted the connection in 1991. For years, veterans and their families have been saying birth defects and rare illnesses have affected their children's health. These birth defects and illnesses have not only happened to the children of Vietnam veterans (2nd generation), but are now showing up in alarming numbers in the grandchildren (3rd Generation) of Vietnam veterans.

On January 16, 2013, Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance (COVVHA) participated in the public hearings held by the IOM's Committee to Review the Health Effects in Vietnam Veterans Exposure to Herbicides. Tanya Mack, COVVHA Core Chairperson and California resident, gave testimony on behalf of COVVHA to the committee. She is the daughter of a recently-deceased Vietnam veteran who succumbed to service-connected Agent Orange illnesses. She was born with severe hip dysplasia and has developed several rare aggressive cancers in her thirties, which she is currently still fighting.

The Institute of Medicine is an independent, nonprofit organization that works outside of government to provide unbiased and authoritative advice to decision

makers and the public (from their website at iom.edu). They have been commissioned to review the most current data available about herbicides and the health effects on our veterans. In the past, the IOM has been responsible for getting new illnesses added to the presumptive list for our ailing Vietnam veterans. On October 13, 2009, the VA added three new medical conditions for veterans presumptively-associated with exposure to herbicides to the list of covered illnesses: hairy cell and other B-cell forms of leukemia, Parkinson's disease, and ischemic heart disease.

COVVHA included in their testimony to the committee the number and types of illnesses and congenital anomalies found in the second and third generation members of COVVHA. This includes the ailments that mirror Vietnam veterans and the congenital anomalies found on the list of birth defects covered in the children of female Vietnam veterans. COVVHA made several recommendations to help the children of Vietnam veterans in the most practical ways. The first recommendation is to approve the currently-covered birth defects for children of female Vietnam veterans for the children of male veterans. The second recommendation is to make available free DNA and epigenetic testing for the biological children of Vietnam veterans (as needed) and to create an official Agent Orange Registry for Children of Vietnam Veterans.

In addition to COVVHA's

testimony at the public hearing, there were several other notable presentations. Ken Holybee, Director at Large of Vietnam Veterans of America, pointed out in the Veterans and Agent Orange 2008 Update, the IOM Committee concluded that it was plausible exposure to herbicides could cause paternally-mediated effects in offspring as a result of epigenetic changes, and that such changes would most likely be attributable to the TCDD (dioxin) contaminants in Agent Orange. He urged the committee to follow-up on their 2008 recommendations due to the continued suffering the VVA sees in the families who attend their Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings.

Debra Kraus, a widow of a Vietnam veteran, activist and artist, shared a slideshow presentation of her art that is based on her experience through her husband's dealings with the VA and health issues.

Elayne Mackey, National Health Committee co-chair for the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA), recommended the creation of Centers of Excellence to provide for research, treatment, and social services for the offspring of veterans of all eras who have been exposed to toxins while in service to our country.

Wesley T. Carter, Chair of the C-123 Veterans Association, requested that first, the Department of Defense designate the contaminated C-123 aircraft, by specific tail number, as Agent Orange exposure sites, and second,



Tanya Mack

the VA to accept claims from veterans able to provide evidence of service aboard the aircraft known to have been contaminated.

COVVHA is committed to serving as a voice for the children of Vietnam Veterans including second and third generation victims of Agent Orange and Dioxin Exposures worldwide. We believe in empowering each other to hold the companies and governments responsible for causing so much devastation and suffering to our generations. We fight for justice globally. We hope the IOM will make the responsible recommendations to the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Visit us at www.COVVHA.NET.



HEATHER A. BOWSER, MSED, LPCC, IS THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS HEALTH ALLIANCE (COVVHA)



Chicago, 1974.

Missing in Action in the Twenty-First Century

BRUCE FRANKLIN

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This chapter excerpted from Four Decades On: Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies of the Second Indochina War, edited by Scott Laderman and Edwin A. Martini, forthcoming from Duke University Press in June, 2013.

Today, the United States of America has two national flags. One is the colorful red, white, and blue banner created during the American Revolution, with stars that represent, in the words of the 1777 Continental Congress, "a new constellation." The other is the black-and-white POW/MIA flag, America's emblem of the Vietnam War.

The POW/MIA flag is the only one besides the Star-Spangled Banner that has ever flown over the White House, where it has fluttered yearly since 1982. As visitors from around the world stream through the Rotunda of the US Capitol, they pass a giant flag, the only flag that has ever been displayed amid the epic paintings and heroic statues, given this position of honor in 1987 by the Congress and the President of the United States. The POW/MIA flag flies over every US Post Office, thanks to a law passed by Congress and signed by the president in 1997. During the 1980s and 1990s, the legislatures and governors of each of the fifty states issued laws mandating the display of this flag over public facilities such as state offices, municipal buildings, toll plazas, and police headquarters. The POW/MIA flag also hangs over the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange and waves at countless corporate headquarters, shopping malls, union halls, and small businesses. It is sewn into the right sleeve of the official Ku Klux Klan white robe and adorns millions of bumper stickers, buttons, home windows, motorcycle jackets, watches, postcards, coffee mugs, T-shirts, and Christmas tree ornaments.

The flag symbolizes our nation's veneration of its central image: a handsome American prisoner of war, his silhouetted head slightly bowed to reveal behind him the ominous shape of a looming guard tower. A strand of barbed wire cuts across just below

his firm chin. Underneath runs the motto: "You are not forgotten."

This colorless banner implies that the Vietnam War may never end. It demonstrates to the world both the official US government position since 1973 and a profoundly influential national belief, Vietnam may still secretly hold American prisoners of war. This was the official reason why every twentieth-century postwar administration, those of presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton, reneged on the pledge in the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement that the United States would help rebuild Vietnam and then waged relentless economic and political warfare against that nation. Even when President Clinton announced in 1995 that Washington was finally establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam, he claimed that the primary motive was to further "progress on the issue of Americans who were missing in action or held as prisoners of war."

To comprehend the meaning of all this, one must first recognize that there is no rational basis or evidence for the belief that Americans were kept captive in Vietnam after the war. Indeed, it runs counter to reason, common sense, and overwhelming evidence.

None of the armed forces has listed a single prisoner of war (POW) or even a single person missing in action (MIA) since 1994, when the only person still listed as a prisoner, for symbolic reasons, was reclassified as deceased at the request of his family. There are, it is true, 1,739 Americans listed as unaccounted for from the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, but not one of these is classified as a prisoner, a possible prisoner, or even missing. Most of the unaccounted for were never listed as POWs or even as MIAs, because well over half were originally known to have been killed in action in circumstances that prevented the recovery of their bodies. Their official designation has always been Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered (KIA/BNR). Crews of airplanes that exploded in flight or crashed within sight of their aircraft carrier, soldiers whose deaths were witnessed by others unable to retrieve their bodies, or men blown apart so completely that there were no retrievable

body parts, all these are listed in the total of unaccounted for. All that is missing is their remains. The KIA/BNR category was never included with the missing in action during the Vietnam War, it was lumped together with the POW/MIA category only after the Paris Peace Agreement was signed in 1973.

The confusion thus created was quite deliberate. But this miasma was relatively mild compared with that generated by the bizarre POW/MIA concoction itself. Arguably the cagiest stroke of the Nixon presidency was the slash, forever linking "POW" and "MIA." In all previous wars, there was one category, Prisoners of War, consisting of those known or believed to be prisoners. There was an entirely separate and distinct category of those Missing in Action. The Pentagon internally maintained these as two separate categories throughout the war and its aftermath. But for public consumption, the Nixon administration publicly jumbled the two categories together into a hodgepodge called POW/MIA, thus making it seem that every missing person might be a prisoner. Because this possibility cannot be logically disproved, the POW/MIA invention perfectly fulfilled its original purpose: to create an issue that could never be resolved.

It also created an almost impenetrable fog of confusion that clouds the issue right up through the present. Although prisoners of war were previously not considered either missing or unaccounted for, once the MIA's became defined as possible POW's, then all the POW/MIA's could be dumped into the category Unaccounted-For, which then became synonymous in the popular mind with POW/MIA. So when it is reported that there are still almost 1,800 Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War, people assume that any or all of them might still be languishing in Vietnamese prisons. MIA and POW and Unaccounted-For have even become interchangeable terms, as manifested by a question I'm frequently asked, usually in an incredulous tone, "Don't you believe there are MIA's?" or, even more revealing, "Don't you believe in MIA's?"

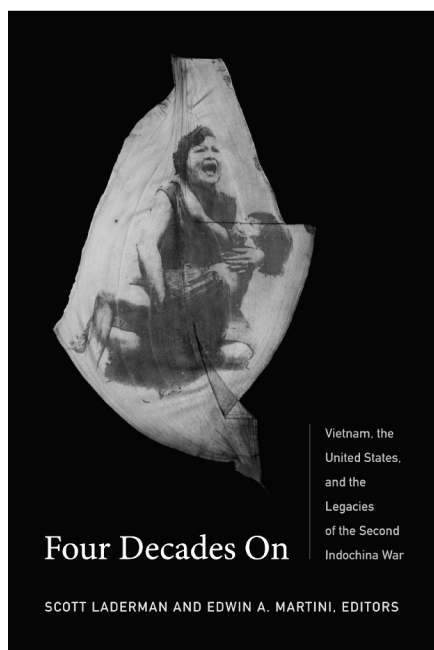
In 2000, Senator John McCain, running as America's

Vietnam POW hero, overwhelmed his four Republican opponents in the New Hampshire primary, crushing the runner-up, George W. Bush, by nineteen points. But in the next primary, in South Carolina, McCain's "Straight Talk Express" was violently derailed by a series of explosive charges. The most damaging charge was that, as a member of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, he had viciously betrayed those hundreds or thousands of his fellow POW's left behind in Vietnam. The main ingredients for this charge came from a 1992 article by Ted Sampley, "John McCain: The Manchurian Candidate," which argued that McCain had been brainwashed by the Vietnamese and might very well be acting as their secret agent. McCain's campaign never recovered from the electoral defeat or the shattered image inflicted in South Carolina.

In 2004, the defeat of Senator John Kerry by incumbent President George W. Bush has been widely attributed to the heavily bankrolled "swift boating" by the organization Swift Vets and POW's for Truth, an assault that torpedoed Kerry's status as a heroic Vietnam veteran. But more than three months before the Swift Vets first went public in a 4 May press conference, the campaign to use the POW/MIA issue to destroy Kerry's Vietnam credentials was launched by Sidney Schanberg, one of the most fanatical of the POW/MIA cultists. Using long discredited evidence that Vietnam held many American POW's after the war to be used as future bargaining chips, Schanberg's article "When John Kerry's Courage Went M.I.A." appeared on 24 February in the Village Voice and was soon widely disseminated in various forms. Schanberg claimed that as chair of the Senate Select Committee, Kerry had deliberately "covered up voluminous evidence" of "perhaps hundreds" of these left-behind POW's.

In 2008, Schanberg recycled his anti-Kerry article, along with other articles that he had been reissuing for decades, as "McCain and the POW Cover-up," an especially vitriolic assault on John McCain, who was then in what seemed to be a tight presidential

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Four Decades On

Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies
of the Second Indochina War

SCOTT LADERMAN & EDWIN A. MARTINI, EDITORS

344 pages, 14 illustrations, paper, \$24.95

"This strong collection of essays demonstrates that the war continued to shape critical dimensions of Vietnamese and American history after 1975 and that these postwar developments must be conceived in a transnational frame."

—Mark Philip Bradley,
author of *Vietnam at War*

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Missing in Action

continued from previous page

race with Barack Obama. As he had done in earlier articles, Schanberg drew heavily on Sampley's "The Manchurian Candidate." There was nothing surprising or even new in Schanberg's piece. But what some people found startling, indeed, shocking, was where it was published: in *The Nation*, one of America's leading liberal journals and historically a major opponent of the Vietnam War.

Even more appalling, liberal and progressive media responded by deliriously ballyhooing Schanberg's POW/MIA fantasy. Democratic-Underground.com ran excerpts from and links to *The Nation's* article, along with ads for POW/MIA flags, pins, and bracelets. Daily Kos, Huffington Post, Alternet.org, and many others reprinted the piece, some adorning it with large images of the POW/MIA flag. Democracy Now!, the nationally syndicated

progressive radio and TV show, ran a long, adulatory interview with Schanberg on 23 October and provided a link on its website to a longer version of his article published online by the Nation Institute. Scattered protests from some historians, anti-war activists, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War were drowned out by denunciations, from right, left, and center, of McCain as a betrayer of all those POW's abandoned in Vietnam. The true history of the phony POW/MIA issue has evidently now been buried under a myth so sacred, and so central to our nation's cultural memory, that to question it amounts to heresy.

In the decades since the Vietnam War, joint US-Vietnamese search teams have combed the country for possible remains. The remains of scores of men whose names were engraved on POW/MIA bracelet have been positively

identified. Swarms of US tourists, businesspeople, and returning veterans have visited all parts of Vietnam. Hanoi has actually opened its secret records of those captured to American researchers. Today we should know, with as much certainty as could ever be possible, that there are not now, and there never were, American prisoners held in Vietnam after the war. So why are those hundreds of thousands of POW/MIA flags still flying in every part of America?

The short answer is that those flags seem to symbolize our culture's dominant view of America as victim, victim of the Vietnam War and victim of all the peoples we have bombed and invaded since 1975. As George H. W. Bush so revealingly put it in 1991, while celebrating the beginning of our endless wars in the Middle East and southwestern Asia, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all!" In a nation still festooned in

those black- and- white banners, the true history and crucial lessons of the Vietnam War are now missing in action.

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Kill Anything That Moves

JOHN KETWIG - REVIEWER

Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam

Nick Turse

(*Metropolitan Books, 2013*)

This book came to my attention via Truth-out.org, the on-line news and commentary site I trust as my primary source for awareness of what's happening in the world. Turse had been interviewed by Bill Moyers on his TV show *Moyers & Company*, and Truthout published a transcript of that interview. I immediately ordered a copy of the book, and read it with mixed emotions. First of all, I quickly recognized Nick Turse as the author of another book in my possession, "The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives". I haven't had time to read that book yet, but I have browsed it, and I give Mr. Turse high marks for his ability to recognize the big picture.

I left Vietnam in September of 1968. Instead of returning home to "the World," I transferred to nearby Thailand where I completed my military obligation. I avoided any possibility that I might be assigned to stand on the Pentagon steps and hold a bayoneted rifle against the anti-war protesters, and attempted to get my head straight enough that I would dare to walk down the street in my home town. Forty-four years after leaving Vietnam, I continue to have nightmares, anger, bitterness, and devastating sadness related to my war experiences. I was eager to read "Kill Anything That Moves," but I found I could only take it in small portions. Sometimes I could read a complete chapter in one sitting, but more often I had to put the book down and assimilate or digest the information. There is nothing new in Mr. Turse's book, but the sheer volume and detail of his reporting reveals in a harsh light that the few terrible moments that have haunted me all these years were not isolated instances at all, but mere threads in a huge tapestry. Turse acknowledges this head-on in his introduction. Yes, most Americans think of the massacre at My Lai when atrocities in Vietnam are mentioned, and the military's official position has been that that holocaust was an aberration. "The United States Army has never condoned wanton killing or disregard for human life," the army's director

of military personnel policies, a Major General Franklin Davis, Jr. had assured one troubled vet back in 1971. It was, and is, a lie. Most Vietnam vets are painfully aware that the history of our war bears little resemblance to the reality of what we saw taking place all around us, but we carry that knowledge inside us like a cancer. It is terrible, not fit to be discussed at the dinner table, nor with friends while barbecuing in the back yard. We wait, always believing that there will be a better occasion to unburden ourselves, always hoping that someone will come along who might recognize the terrible importance of our fragments of memory to the vast mosaic that is American history in our lifetime. We read the newspapers, watch the TV evening news, and we become cynical as we wonder how the horrible truth has been ignored for so long. We will take our memories to our graves, still hoping that someday the truth might become known and accepted, even as the hopes slowly fade day by day.

Nick Turse was a graduate student researching post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, when he stumbled upon the basis for this book. He was at the National Archives and finding little about PTSD when he asked an archivist for help. "Do you think that witnessing war crimes could cause post-traumatic stress?" the person asked, and Turse replied, "You know, that's an excellent hypothesis. What do you have on war crimes?" Within minutes he was looking at an expansive collection of data in cardboard boxes, a collection titled The Vietnam War Crimes Working Group Collection. In the wake of the My Lai massacre and the bad publicity that resulted, the Pentagon set up a task force in the Army Chief of Staff's office to track any war crimes allegations that might arise, and handle or spin them in a manner that would guarantee ongoing public support for the war effort. This was a huge collection of information relating to more than 300 investigations by the US military during the war, all related to allegations or reports of war crimes such as atrocities, massacres, mutilations, murders, tortures, assaults, and rapes.

Turse was so moved by what he discovered that he left grad school to investigate this subject.

He had no funding, no advance on a book, and no organization backing him. Fueled only by obsession, he traveled America to sit down with over one hundred veterans in their homes, or in hours-long telephone conversations, and hear their stories. His investigation led him to investigate other files at the National Archives, to request information under the Freedom of Information Act, and to interview generals and top civilian officials, and former military war crimes investigators. He made several trips to Vietnam, where he made his way to dozens of hamlets and villages to interview witnesses and survivors. "I'd thought I was looking for a needle in a haystack," he writes. "What I found was a veritable haystack of needles."

"The scattered, fragmentary nature of the case files makes them essentially useless for gauging the precise number of war crimes committed by US personnel in Vietnam. But the hundreds of reports that I gathered and the hundreds of witnesses I interviewed in the United States and Southeast Asia made it clear that killings of civilians – whether cold-blooded slaughter like the massacre at My Lai or the routinely indifferent, wanton bloodshed... were widespread, routine, and directly attributable to US command policies. And such massacres by soldiers and marines, my research showed, were themselves just a tiny part of the story. For every mass killing by ground troops that left piles of civilian corpses in a forest clearing or a drainage ditch, there were exponentially more victims killed by the everyday exercise of the American way of war from the air." He continues, "There's only so much killing a squad, a platoon, or a company can do. Face-to-face atrocities were responsible for just a fraction of the millions of civilian casualties in South Vietnam. Matter-of-fact mass killing that dwarfed the slaughter at My Lai normally involved heavier firepower and command policies that allowed it to be unleashed with impunity."

"This was the war in which the American military and successive administrations in Washington produced not a few random massacres or even discrete strings of atrocities, but something on the order of thousands of days of relentless misery -- a veritable

system of suffering. That system, that machinery of suffering and what it meant for the Vietnamese people, is what this book is meant to explain." The above quotes are all from the author's introduction, and the book is relentlessly true to its aims. Mr. Turse exposes as never before the strategy of body counts, with accompanying competitions and incentives. Common grunts were awarded R & R (rest and recreation) days off for reporting enemy deaths, and higher-ups were awarded decorations, promotions, and career advancements. There was no concern for the Vietnamese who were dying by the millions. Turse calls this strategy overkill, and documents his case convincingly. "The notion that Vietnam's inhabitants were something less than human was often spoken of as the 'mere –gook rule', or, in the acronym-mad military, the MGR. This held that all Vietnamese – northern and southern, adults and children, armed enemy and innocent civilian – were little more than animals, who could be killed or abused at will. The MGR enabled soldiers to abuse children for amusement; it allowed officers sitting in judgment at courts-martial to let off murderers with little or no punishment; and it paved the way for commanders to willingly ignore rampant abuses by their troops while racking up 'kills' to win favor at the Pentagon." Again and again, the author quotes documents and records from the hidden files to substantiate his assertions.

"American forces came blazing in with fighter jets and helicopter gunships. They shook the earth with howitzers and mortars. In a country of pedestrians and bicycles, they rolled over the landscape in heavy tanks, light tanks, and flame-thrower tanks. They had armored personnel carriers for the roads and fields, swift boats for the rivers, and battleships and aircraft carriers offshore. The Americans unleashed millions of gallons of chemical defoliants, millions of pounds of chemical gases, and endless canisters of napalm; cluster bombs, high-explosive shells, and daisy-cutter bombs that obliterated everything within a ten-football-field diameter; anti-personnel rockets, high-explosive rockets, grenades by the millions,

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Kill Anything That Moves

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and myriad different kinds of mines. Their advanced weapons included M-16 rifles, M-79 grenade launchers, and even futuristic technologies that would only later enter widespread use, like electronic sensors and unmanned drones. "The American military saw the battlefield in poor, agricultural Vietnam as a "laboratory" for new tactics and weaponry, and they threw everything at the war except nuclear weapons. (General Westmoreland begged permission to nuke Khe-Sanh in 1968, and President Johnson refused.) Ultimately, Turse says, American bombing dropped the equivalent of 640 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs upon Vietnam, an agricultural country approximately the size of Connecticut, and the majority was dropped upon our ally, South Vietnam. Civilian casualties were rarely avoided.

This is an uncomfortable book to read. Page after page describes the horror in unflinching terms, and the scope of the devastation is overwhelming. He quotes veterans, observers, military data banks, and journalistic reports to inform us of the immense damage inflicted. It is an illuminating and troubling book, and sobering. But this story has been told before, perhaps in less detail, and all of this sordid history has not affected the American military's blood lust whatsoever. Books such as "Our War: What We Did in Vietnam and What It Did To Us," by David Harris (1996), "US War Crimes in Vietnam," published in 1968 by the Juridical Sciences Institute of the Vietnam State Commission of Social Sciences in Hanoi, "The New Soldier," by John Kerry and Vietnam Veterans Against the War (1971), "The Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes by Vietnam Veterans Against the War in 1972," "The War Behind Me: Vietnam Veterans Confront the Truth About US War Crimes," by Deborah Nelson (2008), "Going to Jail: The Political Prisoner," by Howard Levy, M.D. and David Miller (approximately 1970), "Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character," by Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D. (1995), "Conversations With Americans: Their Shocking Stories of Being Trained in Torture Tactics and Their Accounts of Atrocities and Massacres They Witnessed or Participated In by Mark Lane (1970),

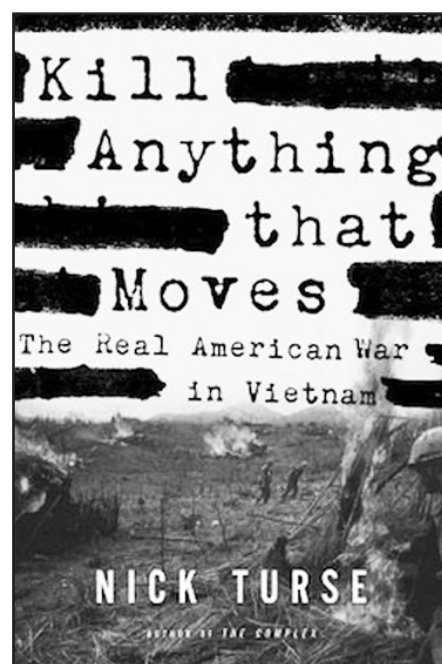
If This Be Treason by Franklin Stevens (1970), In the Service of Their Country: War Resisters in Prison," by Willard Gaylin, M.D. (1970), and "The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era" by Richard Moser (1996) are just a few of the very explicit volumes published and available on library or book store shelves during and since the war that the American people have largely ignored. Alas, I'm afraid "Kill Anything That Moves" will also be largely ignored, which is a shame. It is the best researched and documented history of the subject yet, by far, and a desperately important book in every respect.

That said, I must point out that the book has its shortcomings. Very predictably, it has been criticized because it does not describe similar atrocities committed by the enemy in Vietnam. Yes, those atrocities did certainly happen, and they have been well documented elsewhere. Two wrongs don't make a right, and they are not relevant to the focus of this history. America still has not recognized that war itself is the common evil and to be avoided, in fact today's American society embraces militarism with far more passion than it did during the Vietnam tragedy or since!

As this is written, a recent CBS 60 Minutes segment estimated that 22 American veterans are committing suicide every day, and the situation is getting worse despite all efforts to control it. Nick Turse has done us a great service by revealing that atrocities and overkill were "the American way of waging war" in Vietnam. But he discovered the evidence by accident when that nameless archivist asked if there might be a connection between witnessing war crimes and post-traumatic stress. There is ample evidence that America's "way of waging war" has not changed significantly since Vietnam, except that today's weapons are more terrible than anything we saw in Southeast Asia forty-some years ago, and today's military leaders are assured and emboldened by the fact that no one has yet been held accountable for atrocities committed by our troops in any combat situation since My Lai. If the suicide rate among veterans is a national tragedy of unprecedented proportions, Nick Turse has taken us to the very rim of the precipice

and given us a long, hard look at the snakepit lurking below, but he has not acknowledged in any meaningful way what damage our "American way of waging war" did to our Vietnam veterans, and what the current continuation of those policies in Iraq and Afghanistan might be doing to today's American troops. He fell upon this material while researching PTSD, and it is a shame he does not tie the two subject matters together in any way. He acknowledges the importance of that archivist's question in his introduction, and tells us he has devoted more than ten years of his life to researching the subject, but he never answers the question! The truth should be obvious. Far too many of America's veterans are severely troubled by what they have seen or done in wars. Mental health "experts" are reluctant to acknowledge moral damage as an integral part of PTSD, as that recognition might discourage enlistments or defense appropriations. It has been half a century since our military won a war, and millions of the world's people have died horrible, needless deaths as the great American military machine grinds on. Today our militarism accounts for sixty cents of every dollar the American government spends, and our politicians want to cut Social Security, Medicare, health care, education funds, and even veterans' benefits to regain control. No one questions the military in today's America. Nick Turse has shone a bright light upon the sickness infecting America, and one can only hope that America will read this book and demand the wanton killing and torturing come to a halt. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the common phrase "Support our troops" might someday come to mean that we no longer allow our military to expose our patriotic, well-meaning soldiers to these types of horrors? Clearly, that is the author's intention in releasing this book to the American public, but his case might have been better made, not just implied.

Vietnam veterans grew up in a different time. In those good old days, America stood for all that was good and just in the world. The Vietnam War was a tumultuous era in American history, and our nation changed drastically. "War is good for the economy," the protest posters read, "Invest your sons!" Today we have seen our manufacturing base abandoned or outsourced, with the obvious exception of the



"defense industry". Our country is in the business of death and destruction, and business has been good. War profiteers buy influence in Washington, and flag-draped coffins come home to silent cemeteries in hometowns across the land. We know that civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan are suffering terribly, horribly, under America's assault. Meanwhile, President Obama has granted the Pentagon millions of dollars for a Vietnam War Commemoration Project that seeks to improve our appreciation of the "noble" aspects of the war. In a time of great economic and moral uncertainty, the "American way of waging war" might be far better served if copies of "Kill Anything That Moves" were placed in every library in the land.

America's "way of waging war" is cruel and heartless, and "Kill Anything That Moves" is a sincere, honest, and hugely important attempt to rein in the bloodbath-for-profit that has been bankrupting our country both financially and morally for half a century or more. It is a compelling book, a dark secret brought into the light of day. Turse's prose is thoroughly accessible, his research exhaustive, and he has organized his material well. Perhaps the horrible history of America's tragedy in Vietnam has never been told better, but sadly I doubt that "Kill Anything That Moves" will become a great commercial success.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM." FIRST PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 1985, IT IS STILL AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES.

Turse's Take on US Atrocities in Vietnam

HORACE COLEMAN - REVIEWER

Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam

Nick Turse

(Metropolitan Books, 2013)

Nick Turse's chapters and verses on US atrocities in Vietnam

Seymour Hersh wrote the most widely known articles about the My Lai massacre. *Life* magazine published the most raw and grisly pictures. A college classmate of mine was a member of the *Toledo Blade's* management when that newspaper won a Pulitzer Prize in 2004 for a series of articles entitled, "Buried Secrets, Brutal Truths" (<http://www.toledoblade.com/special-tiger-force>) about atrocities committed by Tiger Force, a reconnaissance platoon of the 101st Airborne's 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry.

Nick Turse, managing editor of TomDispatch.com, has written the most documented, detailed and comprehensive book to date about atrocities and mayhem committed in Vietnam by US forces. Turse did research at the US National Archives. There he found out about reports written by

the Vietnam War Crimes Working Group.

He writes that was "a secret Pentagon task force . . . to ensure that the army would never again be caught off-guard by a major war crimes scandal."

In the introduction to "Kill Anything That Moves," Turse quotes Ron Ridenhour, the former Army trooper who tried to get the nation's attention about My Lai for years before the story finally got national exposure. Ridenhour said about My Lai, ". . . This was an operation, not an aberration." Turse writes about My Lai that ". . . The real aberration was the unprecedented and unparalleled investigation and exposure . . ."

Body Count, Free Fire Zone, Mad Minute, H & I fire (Harassment and Interdiction), Collateral Damage, Tiger Cages made in the USA, defoliation by Agent Orange, When in doubt—take 'em out!!, Xin Loi ("Excuse me / Sorry about that!" said in a way that means exactly the opposite), water poured through cloth on a face. The Tucker Telephone. All the nice nicknames for Vietnamese. And how about

the joke that goes: "The best way to end this war is to put all the good Vietnamese into boats and carpet bomb the entire country. Then sink the boats!!"

Any time the US gets involved in an armed conflict with non-Caucasian, non-Christian, so-called primitive people, excess blood will flow. Killing is a daily aspect of war, murder isn't. The too common US desire to dominate the world, or at least to have a great deal of influence on its ideas and actions, will go the way of other empires' whims. That's what always happens, eventually.

Turse describes many incidents, his book has 85 pages of notes, plus acknowledgments and an index. He's not playing. Neither are "the forces that be." The material he had access to is no longer available to the public.

The last paragraph of "Kill Anything That Moves" begins:

"The true history of Vietnamese civilian suffering does not fit comfortably into America's preferred postwar narrative—the tale of a conflict nobly fought by responsible commanders and good American boys, who should not be

tainted by the occasional mistakes of a few 'bad apples' in their midst."

The book's last sentence is this:

"What I've ended up with can offer, I hope, at least a glimpse of the real war: the one so many would like to forget, and so many others refuse to remember."

What I sometimes wonder is what was the ratio, in the field and in the rear, between the number of VC we killed and the number our actions created? Read Turse's book with an open and judicious mind and draw your own conclusions. Neither side in our Civil War appreciated aid from foreigners to the opposing side. That explains a lot. What explains our behavior? The usual suspects?

War, in and of itself, is atrocious. Some people go out of their way to make it more so.



HORACE COLEMAN WAS AN AIR FORCE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER/INTERCEPT DIRECTOR IN VIETNAM (1967-68).

Veterans and Nurses Fight for Improvements

continued from page 1

The meeting was a success and the VA agreed to address many of the issues brought forward, including giving the Women's Center its own space, agreeing to hire more nurses, other support staff and to improve training. The VA leadership also agreed to regular meetings with IVAW and NNU.

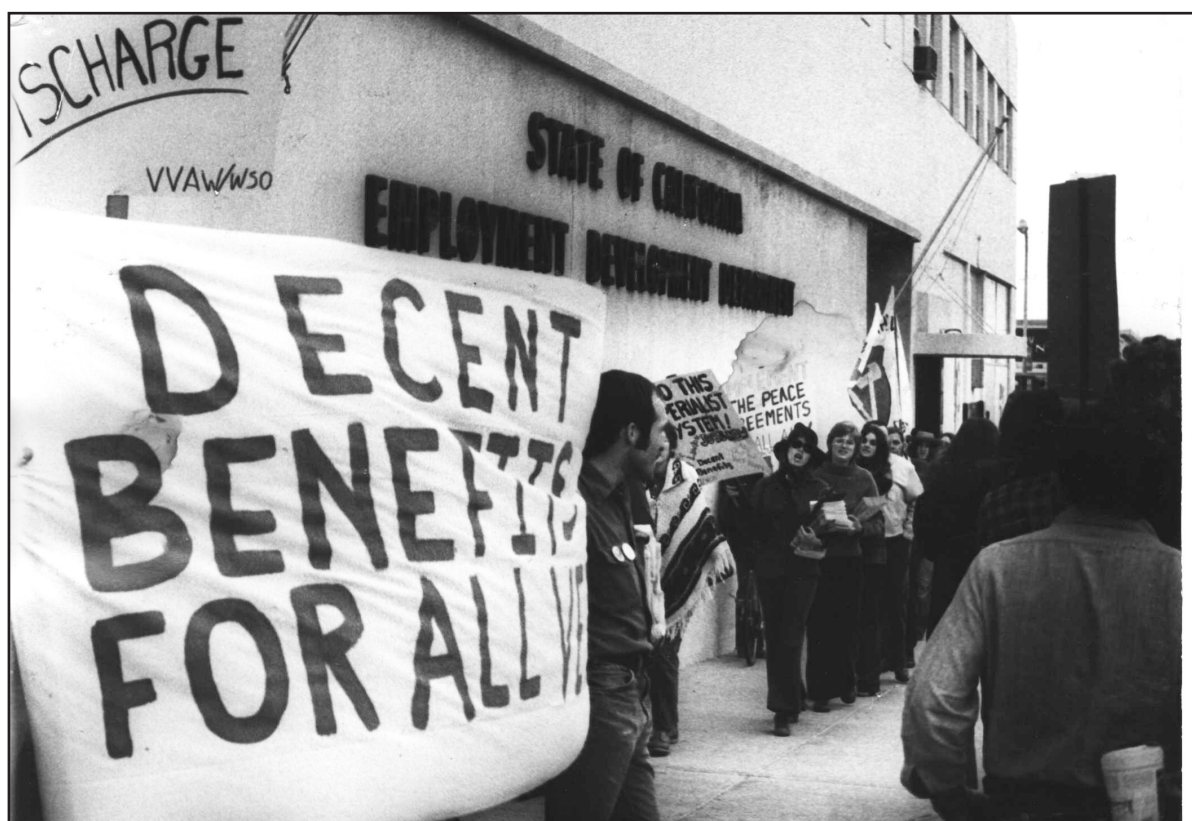
IVAW and NNU have continued to work together to hold the VA accountable for their commitments. Along with following through with the Women's Center, the VA has hired 6 nurses of 13 promised for the psych ward. Nurses are also being hired for other areas of the hospital. Two patient advocates to help assist Veterans navigate the VA were hired as well. The Nurses have also reported progress on training issues, although the training is not yet as comprehensive and universal as desired.

"This is the kind of work that saves lives," said VVAW member Barry Romo, "I can't believe we have gotten so much done in less than a year's time, we never would have accomplished so much without our collaboration with NNU."

Although starting as an experiment, after the success of the Chicago chapter, IVAW is now moving to incorporate VA work as part of a "Right to Heal campaign." The campaign will focus on holding the VA accountable to giving quality care for PTSD, MST, TBI as well as physical ailments related to military service. Recently the Colorado chapter of IVAW announced forming a "Right to Heal Committee" to work to improve the VA in Denver. Organizers hope this will be the next step in forming a National VA campaign that demands improved care for Veterans throughout the country.



ROBERT CLACK IS A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZER FOR IVAW CHICAGO AND THE RIGHT TO HEAL CAMPAIGN. HE IS ALSO A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER WITH THE METROPOLITAN TENANTS ORGANIZATION IN CHICAGO.



Confessions of a War Criminal

R. G. CANTALUPO

There is a girl. Running. Toward you. Her clothes burned off, her flesh on fire with the sweet, licorice-smelling gasoline, her tears dry smears of char. "Nong qua. Nong qua!" she screams. "Too hot!" Around her are four other children, also running from the napalm flames, also screaming, also on fire.

This image, from probably the most famous photograph of the Vietnam War, Nick Ut's Pulitzer prize winning photo of Kim Phuc, running naked from the village of Trang Bang, napalm burning her skin, highlights the problem with Nick Turse's expose of war crimes in the Vietnam war, "Kill Anything That Moves."

If you could understand the Vietnam War by reading and sifting through boxes and boxes of reports and investigations on war crimes, then Turse's expose, might be a cogent and illuminating vision of the war we all knew too well.

Unfortunately, nothing about war, particularly the Vietnam War, can be experienced on paper. Neither the terror of battle, nor the endless suffering of both the combatants and non-combatants.

For the planes that dropped the napalm on Kim Phuc were not American as I had long thought, but South Vietnamese. And the

children running, were "assumed to be" North Vietnamese soldiers since Trang Bang was now controlled by North Vietnamese troops.

Yet napalm, like white phosphorous grenades, mortars, artillery rounds, etc., is considered a criminal weapon when used upon either combatants or non-combatants.

And here is the problem with Nick Turse's book, both in concept and in premise. It doesn't expose anything we didn't already know from the Winter Soldier investigations of 1971, unless you want to believe that most American soldiers committed atrocities and massacres most of the time on their tours, and that most operated and conducted themselves like out-of-control gangs and sadistic killers.

Let us return to Trang Bang for a moment, for Trang Bang happened to be the village where my battalion, 2nd of the 12th of the 25th Infantry Division, operated back in 1968-69, three years before Ut's photo. Trang Bang was where I saw my first casualty, our point man blinded by a booby trap set off by a nine year old boy on my first day in the bush. We daily confronted sniper fire, mortars, ambushes, and booby traps.

I was an RTO, a radio operator for the weapons platoon of Bravo Company, and over the next six months I was awarded three Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star with a Combat V for courage under fire. Trang Bang was where the mortar was fired which wounded me the third and last time. Trang Bang was the place where "an enemy" put me so close to death it took almost ten months and four hospitals before I could be discharged as a disabled veteran.

And yet, not unlike the South Vietnamese pilots, as an RTO, I called in napalm strikes on civilians, and, as a member of a four man mortar crew, I plotted and fired "willie peter" mortar rounds on civilian populations in villages, and sometimes saw the results of my war crimes, women, children, and old papa and mama sans horrifically burned by white phosphorous.

According to Nick Turse's premise, I would be considered a war criminal for having done so, along with the hundreds of thousands of other combat veterans whose rules of engagement and even the weapons they used were against the principals of the Geneva Convention and International Law.

However, war crimes in

Vietnam, was not a simple black and white issue, no more than war crimes in Iraq or Afghanistan. There are no rules in the Geneva Convention that applies to a nine year boy as an enemy combatant, and there were no rules of engagement given by officers that the white phosphorous rounds and the napalm I called in, or the claymore mines I exploded on shadows in free fire zones, could be considered war crimes.

I didn't witness anyone cutting off ears, though I saw some crazy short-timers wearing a few. I didn't witness any massacres. I didn't see any soldiers indiscriminately shoot water buffalo, pigs, chickens, or "kill anything that moved." But I was ordered to call in napalm air strikes on civilian villages; I did light up my Zippo on thatched roofs like the rest of my platoon, and I did suffer from night terrors and PTSD for the horrific actions I witnessed, participated in, and knew were inhumane.

Am I a war criminal? Probably? But under Turse's definition and premise, we probably all are—from the President of the United States on down.



Stop the Killing! Ground the Drones!

LOUIE DE BENEDETTE

Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) used by the military for surveillance, targeted assassinations, and bombings. Drones are usually controlled by a human operator on the ground, though they can also be programmed to fly fully autonomous missions - with no pilot at all. The operator who makes the decision to launch a missile from the drone can be located thousands of miles away from their victims. The United States has used armed drones in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistan. A drone's selling point is that no pilot or crew is at risk of being killed or captured if the drone crashes or is shot down.

Drones used in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries have killed hundreds of innocent civilians, violating just war principles. Drones violate international and American law on political assassinations and intelligence used in drone target

selection is notoriously unreliable. Killing an unknown person 3000 miles away is morally reprehensible. Such killings, especially of innocent civilians, fuel revenge and eventually terrorism.

Drone training at Hancock Airfield, in De Witt, NY which is less than an hour away from Ithaca poses a risk for civilian aircraft, and technical failures that can lead to rogue drones crashing are a risk to all people in this region. Only certain war-profiteering corporations benefit from war. We certainly don't. Wars and military spending take precious resources away from our domestic needs; education, housing, healthcare, infrastructure repair, and development of nontoxic energy.

Killing by using drones must be seen in the larger context that war is not the answer to human disagreements. Drones make killing more abstract, impersonal, and make killing more convenient

and war more likely.

People must realize that a drone arms race is well underway with more than 40 countries developing these weapons. According to the Fellowship of Reconciliation armed drones have been used by the US military in Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen, by

the CIA in Pakistan, by the UK military in Afghanistan, and by Israel in Gaza.



LOUIE DE BENEDETTE IS A LONG TIME ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST AND A VVAW CONTACT IN ITHACA, NEW YORK.



Louie De Benedetto (center) participates in local and regional marches and protests as far away as Syracuse.

A Veteran's Perspective on Gun Violence

THOMAS BAYARD

What a lovely coincidence that the VVAW "Call for Articles" appeared the same morning as my local paper ran several articles on gun control in Delaware. The main focus of the articles was having a mayor, a county executive, and several legislators with concealed carry permits who are pushing for "more and better" gun control in our state.

The articles were written entirely without irony. It is as if none of the reporters could see the falsity of gun control positions of people who carry guns themselves – along with most of our local criminals – want to dictate to the rest of us how we may protect ourselves with guns of our own. It all reminds me of spotting VC running around in the middle of

Long Binh on the first day of Tet and not being able to shoot at them, because "You may not fire without a direct order!" And who is around to give the order? Or permit combat veterans to have a gun?

I think that most Vietnam veterans are not being swayed one way or the other by the gun control arguments commonly out there these days. We all have had real, defining experiences with violence – and with guns. We may feel different now, and even take anti-gun positions on the question, but there is no way to separate us from our experiences. Most of us are not ready to rush right back into armed violence, but we know what it is like, as most of the anti-gun people do not. What

all of us can probably agree on is that we don't want inexperienced people dictating to us. The one thing that we all know for sure is that they, the anti-gun people, do not generally know what they are pontificating about.

I dread the possibility of needing to use a gun to defend myself, my family, or my household, but I will grit my teeth and follow my training and experience if and when that day comes. "Gun violence," as it is always named these days, is really just violence perpetrated by someone who doesn't care how they behave or who they hurt. They could use a speeding car. They could use a baseball bat. They could use a kitchen knife. Or they could use a gun. The result

could likely be the same. Some people, or nations, even use armed drones which do not carry guns. Are they OK to use, because they don't have guns mounted on them? Think about it: it isn't the guns, it is the violence.



THOMAS BAYARD WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 66TH ENGR CO, TOPO 9/67. THE 66TH WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TET OFFENSIVE, AND ALL ITS REMF'S LEARNED ON THE FLY HOW TO BE COMBAT TROOPERS. BAYARD WAS A PROCESS PHOTOGRAPHER IN THE 66TH AND HAS CONTINUED HIS PHOTOGRAPHY SINCE THEN. HIS DAUGHTER WORKS WITH IVAW IN THE SAN FRANCISCO AREA AND IS ON THE WRL NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

The Gun Line

GREGORY ROSS

I don't own a gun, never have. My interactions with guns have all been while in uniform. The first as a Boy Scout when our suburban troop would go to a rural shooting range and learn about gun safety and shoot .22 caliber rifles at bullseyed targets, no human shaped targets, and bottles filled with water.

The next was in Navy Boot Camp, when we had to qualify with various weapons. For most of my four years in the Navy, I carried no weapon. I had no real need for a weapon. The only time I routinely carried a weapon was when I was stationed on two different Cruisers as a Communications Technician working for the Admiral running the Naval war from the 7th Fleet off the coast of Viet Nam. We handled sensitive materials, Top Secret, Eyes Only materials. Our spaces, which in effect were a large bank vault with a tumbler lock, held machine guns and .45 caliber pistols. When we took classified materials to be incinerated we were required to wear a .45. I never could figure out the rationale. Was some Russian spy, disguised as a US sailor or marine going to steal a bag of info, jump into the Pacific Ocean and swim to Vietnam to turn it over to his superiors?

While at sea, in a classic Department of Defense idiotic waste, all personnel on board all ships were required to re-qualify with a .45 caliber pistol. All 1,667 officers and enlisted on the ship I was on at that time were so

required. One by one, each man stood on the fan tail of the ship with a .45 and was ordered to empty a full clip into the ocean. He was then declared to have re-qualified, since he hit the designated target - the Pacific Ocean. Orders are orders.

I reiterate, I don't own a gun, even though I live in

We have only had two break-ins. One by a teenager known to our then teen aged son and one by a stranger. We have an alarm system and have security screen doors on our side and back and basement doors and have reinforced our solid wood front door to prevent it from being kicked in. We have a sign on the front yard stating

One by one, each man stood on the fan tail of the ship with a .45 and was ordered to empty a full clip into the ocean. He was then declared to have re-qualified, since he hit the designated target - the Pacific Ocean.

Oakland, California, the fourth most dangerous city in America according to the FBI. The geography of the Bay Area goes like this. The Pacific Ocean flows through the Golden Gate to form the Oakland/San Francisco Bay. West Oakland, closest to the bay, is the poorest part of town. Mid-Oakland, locally known as East Oakland, is a mix of poor, working class and middle class. This is where my family and I live, in a mixed working and middle class neighborhood. Then there are "The Hills," the more affluent area of Oakland. My wife and I have lived in our present home for 22 years, and raised our son, from the age of 9, in this house and neighborhood.

that our house is alarmed. We had a dog but, she died. We live in a "safe" part of town but, in the last year armed robberies, burglaries involving doors being kicked in, home invasions and muggings, some in front of our house, some just doors away from us, others within blocks, have gone way up.

When I was out at sea the Cruisers I was on had 8" cannons which were known as "Guns." They could throw roughly 300 pound shells almost 20 miles, yet they never made me feel safe. Owning a gun here in my house, in 2013 would not make me feel safer. The Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins University released statistics on

gun deaths. Three out of five gun related deaths are suicides. This number is from the most recent study available dated 2010. Google gun related suicides, look for the Boston Globe article based on the Johns Hopkins study. The article gives this 3/5th number then goes on to say that this percentage has held true since 1920. Oakland has a dwindling tax base and poor governance. Altruistic assessment - incompetence, cynical assessment - corruption, most likely reality - both. A gun is not going to help us. For one thing, I have not fired a weapon since "qualifying" with the .45 on the fan tail of the Cruiser, on the "Gun Line" off the coast of Vietnam in 1968 or 1969 and my wife has never fired one.

I don't know the answer to the "Gun Violence" problem but, I do endorse stronger gun control laws, all of them. Since I have been clinically depressed and suicidal (VA therapy and medication have changed that), I say again, I don't own a gun, for my own safety.



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY, THE GUN LINE OFF COAST OF VIET NAM WITH THE 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. GRADUATE OF A VA DRUG, ALCOHOL AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY [SINCE 1989], LAID OFF [2011] PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE". FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM

It's People Who Kill People . . . With Guns

BILL ANDREWS

It seems that most of us can sensibly debate issues without coming to physical or rhetorical blows unless, that is, the subject is gun control. Then it is as if we all suddenly chug down a liter of undiluted lunacy before opening our mouths. Of course, guns don't kill people. People kill people . . . but they do it with guns. A firearm is the most efficient way to kill. Military grade weapons, both automatic and semi-automatic, are the most effective of firearms in snuffing out lives quickly and indiscriminately.

I should preface this piece by admitting that I am a gun enthusiast, a gun owner-collector, a gun-show patron, and a competitive shooter. In basic training, I was the best shot in my company with the M-14 on the rifle range and before leaving for Vietnam I qualified as an "expert" in firing the M-16. Because I have so long been around firearms, I respect their power to entertain us, to connect us to the natural world, and to put food on our tables. I also understand their power to threaten public safety and the lives of children.

Any deer hunter who requires a thirty-round magazine to bag a buck is not only a danger to himself but a threat to anyone within a mile of his stand. Any parent who thinks he needs an assault rifle with a high capacity magazine to stop a home intruder needs to take his weapon into the woods and fire a round into an 8x8" square block of pinewood to appreciate how powerless drywall and 2x4's are in curtailing the lethality of his weapon. The collateral damage

could be a loved one in a remote room in the home.

The AR-15 .223 Bushmaster used by Adam Lanza to murder twenty children in Newtown is essentially the same weapon that I used in Vietnam. Although we could fire the .223 M-16 on full-automatic or in short bursts, we seldom did because such would compromise accuracy and expended ammo rapidly. We used twenty-round magazines in a war zone and Adam Lanza used thirty-round magazines in an elementary school.

I personally found it too difficult to watch the news from Newtown, especially when portraits of the children began to air. After forty-four years, I still can't expunge from memory the image of the enemy dead along our perimeter and the impact of .223 rounds on flesh, bone and muscle. I wished not to think of the wounds that forensic experts would have found on the bodies of six-year-olds.

Gun sales have been through the roof this holiday season because of the fear that the mass killings in Newtown will prompt stronger gun-control laws. I'm not worried because I don't have an assault weapon and I don't feel that I need one. I might feel differently were I a militiaman plotting to overthrow the government, a neo-Confederate embracing a new secession, a neo-Nazi awaiting a race war, a xenophobe frightened by people with accents, an antisocial paranoid off his medication, or a survivalist anticipating some apocalyptic convulsion of civil

society.

As a grandparent with children often in our home, I keep my rifles and handguns disassembled, dispersed, locked up, and separated from ammo. I'm much more concerned about the safety of innocents within the home than the machinations of monsters outside. Military-grade assault weapons and magazines on our streets and in our homes pose the greatest threat. I have to disagree with the AK-47 enthusiast who says that the freedom to own and the fun of firing his assault weapon on his farm are worth the lives lost each year to guns.

I would like Congress to fulfill its constitutionally mandated responsibility to protect the public welfare. To resurrect and strengthen the expired ban on assault weapons is no more a threat to the Second Amendment than restricting access of children to pornography is a threat to the First Amendment, or institutionalizing the criminally insane is a threat to the Fifth Amendment. Common sense tells us that we endanger ourselves to have weapons of war on our streets. If we can restrict access to Singer missiles, 105mm howitzers, and RPGs, then it frankly doesn't seem that radical to restrict access to assault weapons.

Wayne LaPierre of the NRA blames violent games and movies for the tragedy in Newtown. Progressives blame the lobbying power of the NRA. The ATF blames the Second Amendment. Religious leaders blame moral laxity. Mental health experts blame inadequate funding for

treatment of mental illness, a condition that is not always static. A law-abiding citizen with access to an AK-47 or an AR-15 could snap over a divorce, the loss of a job, or some other unanticipated life-altering event.

Any realistic solution to the problem of gun violence in our country will require the commitment of many interest groups working together. It will require an intelligence, a resourcefulness, and a resolve that have been conspicuously lacking in our leaders. It would also help if the lunatic fringe on both ends of the issue could take some anger management courses. Guns are not going to go away because the Second Amendment is sacrosanct. We can, however, consider getting assault rifles and extended magazines off the streets by tougher laws, better enforcement, a national data base, buy-back programs, and numerous other stratagems. The problem is that we're all shouting so loud that we can't hear the common-sense proposals that are realistically achievable.



This column first appeared in the Columbia Daily Herald and the Nashville Tennessean in January 2013 and is reprinted with permission of the author.

BILL ANDREWS IS A RETIRED COLLEGE HISTORY PROFESSOR AND A VIETNAM VET (165TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP OF THE 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE - LONG BINH 1969).

The Dark

I dwell in places dark
and am comfortable there
but like it not

Silence is my goal
and my many words achieve this
with confusing ease

Failure doesn't suit me well
I fear it more than death
so I persevere

Honor and discipline my bywords
I have them both in some measure
poor substitutes for peace of mind and happiness

—August Steiner-Zehender
Vietnam twice
7 years 9 months 20 days and holding



"Violence is as American as Cherry Pie!"

HORACE COLEMAN

"Violence is as American as cherry pie!" H. Rap Brown, a chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and, later, a short term Black Panther and a convicted murderer, said that. Rap was right. Who spends more money on national defense? No one. Who is the planet's largest arms dealer? US! What country has the most privately owned guns? This one.

Almost anything can be a toy, a tool or a weapon. Firearms fit that definition. They have valid uses: target/skeet shooting, hunting, protection of self and family, etc.

This year *NPR* ran a series of stories about gun violence. Guns and rifles are a big part of everyday life in Wyoming. And, many residents have been directly impacted by a suicide in which a gun was used. The state has the highest suicide rate in the nation, two-thirds of Wyoming's suicides are by firearm. Wyoming's per capita rate suicide is one of the world's highest. Another *NPR* story stated suicides, not homicides, cause two thirds of US gun deaths. *The Los Angeles Times* ran a story about 26-year-old

Brandon Maxfield, a quadriplegic since age seven. A babysitting family friend tried to unload a .380 Saturday Night Special a 12-year-old relative found in an unlocked drawer. The gun that crippled young Maxfield jammed when its safety was on and the slide was pulled back. Its manufacturer knew this but decided not to spend the nickel per gun it would cost to fix. So many cheap hand guns were once made near Los Angeles the region acquired the nickname The Ring of Fire.

US culture esteems firearms. Many phrases reflect that. Like "half cocked," "quick on the draw," "straight shooter," "flash in the pan," "couldn't hit the broad side of a barn," "cool under fire," "the equalizer." As recently as the Vietnam War, Injun Country was used to describe areas where "hostiles" were.

Just weeks after the massacre of 20 children and six adults in Connecticut, a disgruntled, fired black Los Angeles policeman named Christopher Dorner went on a rampage. He shot and killed the daughter of a police officer, who represented him at a dismissal

hearing, and her fiancée. He posted a ranting diatribe on Facebook. At random, he shot and killed a Riverside, CA police officer and wounded the officer with him. When LAPD officers guarding the home of an officer on Dorner's hit list saw a truck without lights on early one morning, they opened fire on two Latina women delivering newspapers, even though their truck didn't match the make or color of Dorner's. The 71-year-old mother was shot twice in the back, and her daughter was wounded by flying glass. Houses in the neighborhood were hit by bullets. In an adjacent city where Dorner supposedly was, officers in a prowler car rammed a truck with its lights on—driven by a white male. They opened fire. Luckily its driver was only wounded by flying glass. Dorner, finally cornered at a resort miles from Los Angeles, had night vision goggles and rifles converted to full automatic equipped with telescopic sights and sound suppressors. And, mucho ammo. The televised fire fight sounded like a war zone. Dorner killed two more law enforcement officers. Combustible tear gas known to

start fires was used. The house he was in caught fire. Dorner shot himself in the head. A white ex member of the LAPD said in a TV interview he'd been unfairly fired, hearings were often rigged, injustices frequent.

So it goes. You never can tell who's going to take a shot at you. Or, who you need to shoot. We like it that way, it's the American way. But most of us won't get combat pay. Nevertheless, we know what we want to do - When in doubt, take 'em out!

Nationally, we still haven't grown up. Gun violence is in our movies, TV shows, video games, songs, hearts, minds, history and daily news. Even if we don't like that we put up with it because some folks want to protect themselves from the government. With guns.

There's always some kind of rust you can trust. In the meantime, keep your powder dry.



HORACE COLEMAN WAS AN AIR FORCE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER/ INTERCEPT DIRECTOR IN VIETNAM (1967-68).

Guns

HAROLD PETTUS

I find it interesting that those who like to pack heat go immediately to the second amendment to justify this urge. If you read it carefully, it states that the right of the people to keep and bear arms is based on the need for a well regulated militia to provide security for a free state. This was wise and laudable for a country that was still heaving sighs of relief at having used this militia to free itself from an eighteenth century overbearing colonial foreign government. Some observations.

That militia was equal to that cause because that war was fought with muskets against muskets for which such a militia could be and was effective. Such a militia no longer exists for this purpose nor could it serve in that effort in the face of the thermonuclear capability of any major international power. If you think that facing such a assault on our freedom today could be accomplished by a patriotic militia-like gathering of any number of modern hand weapons and conventional explosive devises, you watch way, way too

many bad movies. Ten minutes after deciding you were a real and immediate threat, your entire brigade would become radioactive mist. Only our own national army can mount such a defense and, as gun lobbyists are wont to observe, that's not the aforementioned militia. In short, the whole idea of arming the citizens for purposes of mounting a militia for defense has become inappropriate, impractical, irrelevant, and no more than a lame excuse to carry a gun. Watch the news of the Middle East. Tons and tons of killing and dying, a new leader, more killing and dying. Millennia of it and nothing changes.

A quarter of a million years ago, nature pulled off an amazing transformation in the evolution of life on our planet. For millions of years, every species had functioned in the preservation of itself by dint of violent assaults for both food and competition for food. Almost suddenly, in the over all picture of life development, along came humans. Here was a dominant species with an amazingly advanced brain capable

of meeting both of those functions without battle on any scale.

Unfortunately, there was one small leftover that has plagued us since that wonderful development. Millions of years of functioning with this need for battle had also equipped all creatures with an attending instinct for it. It was part of everyone's life. It was the first club out of everyone's bag. We did it without consideration. We did it with lust. We even learned to enjoy it. So now, instead of using this fantastic capability to leave violence behind, we used it to enhance our violent capacities in ways we could only imagine even twenty years ago.

After the suicidal notion of mounting some kind of brave and useless anarchist rebellion against the might of our own or any national military, all other reasons to retain personal firearms boil down to one rationale. There are already millions and millions of them out there and I want mine and I want it to be bigger. For a creature with a three-and-a-half pound brain, that is truly pathetic.

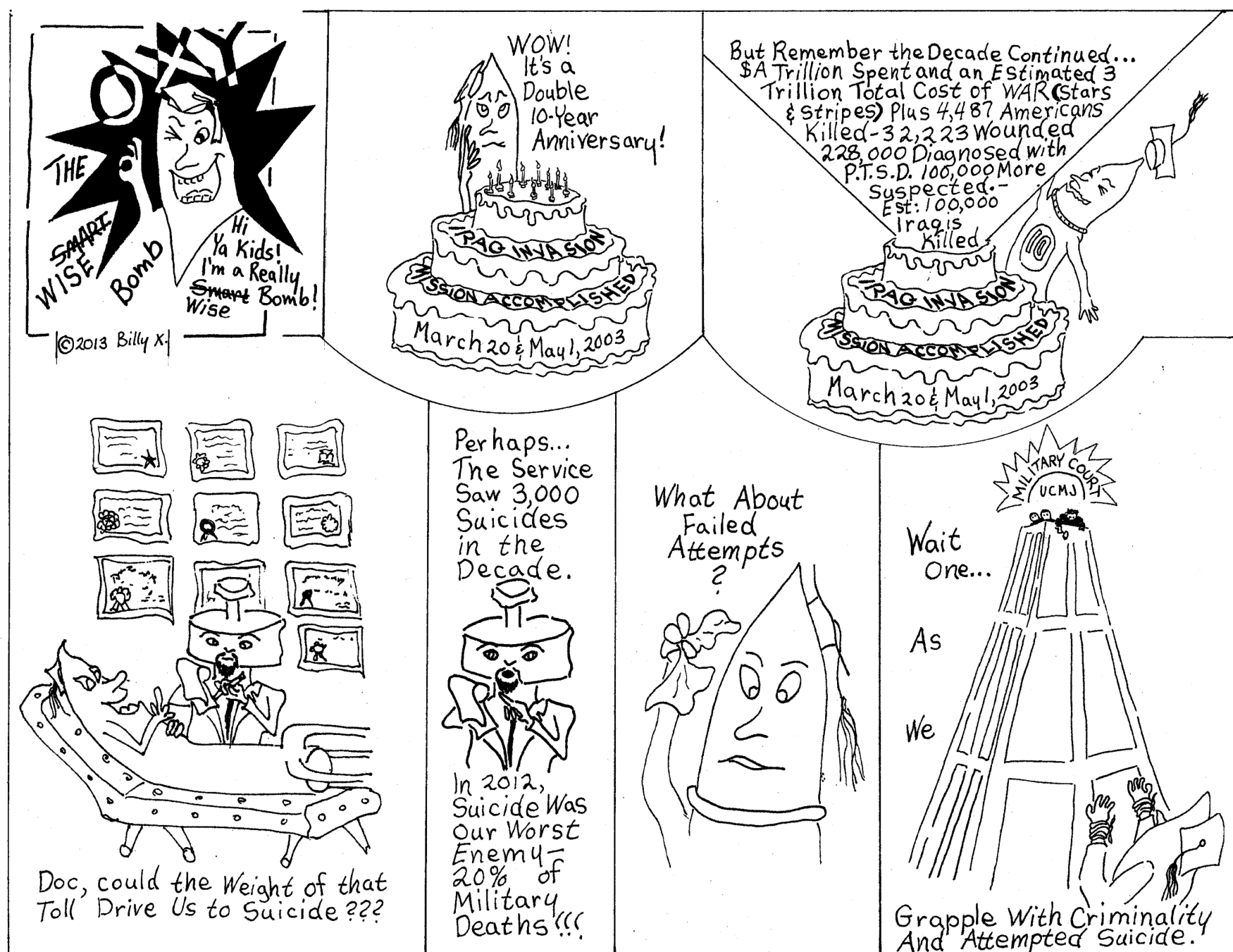
Get rid of all of them except

police and military. Problem solved. As to your fears of your own police and military. We have a democracy. Stop voting for people who will do that.

Of course there are many details to be argued about beginning with where to begin and I would be glad to debate all of them. The only exception would be for those who want to go out and kill other creatures because, to them, that is fun. You have some serious evolving to do. Actually we all do and after 250,000 or so years, it's about time we got started before it's too damned late. No good comes of this.



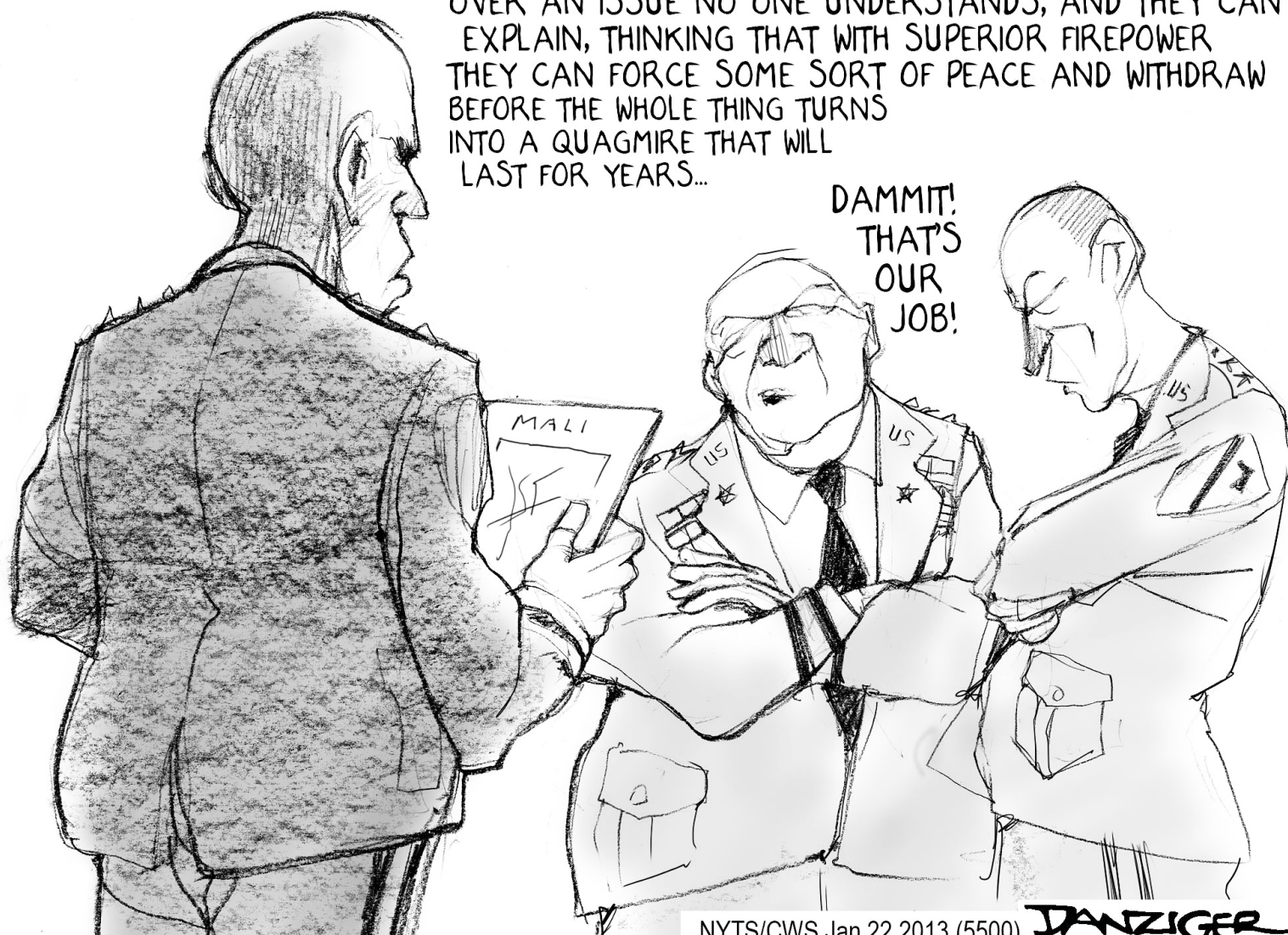
HAROLD PETTUS IS SEVENTY YEARS OLD AND MORE A VETERAN OF THE "MILITARY ADVISORS" WAR IN VIET NAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA. NAVY HOSPITAL CORPSMAN THIRD CLASS 3RD CLASS AND CONVINCED THAT EVERY WAR AFTER WW2 HAS BEEN FOR THE PURPOSE OF WAR PROFITEERING, PERIOD.



comments or suggestions? billyx.net@gmail.com www.billyx.net

Worries at the Pentagon

LISTEN TO THIS! THE FRENCH HAVE ATTACKED INSURGENTS IN A COUNTRY MOST PEOPLE CAN'T FIND ON THE MAP OVER AN ISSUE NO ONE UNDERSTANDS, AND THEY CAN'T EXPLAIN, THINKING THAT WITH SUPERIOR FIREPOWER THEY CAN FORCE SOME SORT OF PEACE AND WITHDRAW BEFORE THE WHOLE THING TURNS INTO A QUAGMIRE THAT WILL LAST FOR YEARS...



NYTS/CWS Jan 22 2013 (5500)

DANZIGER

Women in Combat: Can We Talk About This?

JERRY LEMBCKE

*Originally posted in Mass Dissent
- February 2013*

I'm remembering the 1980s when work-place limitations on allowable weights for women to lift were being challenged. Men were allowed to lift heavier weights making it legal for employers to prefer men over women in hirings for certain jobs. Citing the discrimination in those practices, some feminists favored raising the weight limits for women. Some labor activists, meanwhile, said the standard for women was actually safer for everyone so equality should be achieved by making it the standard for all, men and women.

Mindful of that history, the recent debate over allowing women in combat has caught my ear. In late January the Pentagon announced that it would lift the ban on women serving in combat units. The outgoing Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta will formally receive the proposal in May and move it on to Congress which has the authority to finalize the change within 30 days. Implementation of the changes is expected to take up to three years.

Unlike the disagreements over workplace safety issues 30 or so years ago, the opening of

combat roles to women is being widely applauded. Polls show men and women equally supportive of the change by as high as 76%. Particularly interesting to me is the absence of an anti-war voice comparable to that of labor on the workplace issue. Where is the American pacifist voice contending that the standard for women should be the standard for all – no one should be in combat?

The no-combat position would be politically impractical, of course, unwise even in the current geopolitical environment. But a strategic use of the issue, just as some union members used concerns about weight limits in the 1980s, could leverage more serious thinking about the militarization of our culture and economy, the consequences of which we see manifested in the national gun fetish and the federal budget crisis.

It would be easy enough, for example, to argue that all soldiers under the age of 21 should, like women, be exempt from combat. Whereas the combat exception for women is based on physical qualifications, evidence that the still-developing minds and emotions of young adults, men and women, make them especially vulnerable to the stresses and

traumas of war provides a basis upon which to keep them away from combat. Such a policy would not only not deprive young recruits of the income, job-training opportunities, and post-service benefits like education—that, for some advocates, justify military service—it would likely channel them into military occupational specialties that transfer more readily to future civilian employment.

The age limitations on combat experience would protect teenagers from military recruiters who prey particularly on young men's machismo and fantasies of war-front valor. Those youthful expectations of prideful martial accomplishment are fed by film and veteran folklore, but they are seldom met with satisfaction by real-world military experience. This is a likely contributor to the despondency of returnees from the new wars that is sometimes lumped in with other ailments for PTSD diagnoses. The average age of American war-dead in Iraq and Afghanistan is about 26, far higher than the mythical image of "our kids" dying in war, but it is still sickening that anyone under the legal age for drinking in most states is lost in battle. The demand for a wider combat-exemption policy, leveraged by the non-combat standing of women, should be a priority for progressive reform movements.

Setting an age standard for combat eligibility may be disputatious but a standard of parental-status should be a no-

brainer. Mothers and fathers with dependent-aged children should, of course, be welcomed into the military for whatever occupational, career, and economic benefits they may anticipate. But the interests of their children, and ultimately the society, should be protected by legislation keeping parents out of harm's way.

Legislation to that effect could easily be extended to cover all family members with dependents, be they young, old, or disabled. Exemptions like that for the "sole surviving son" that enabled farm families to keep a young breadwinner at home during World War I might provide a model for new legislation.

The lack of imagination coming from the liberal anti-war community on this issue is concerning. The clamor for equal opportunity to kill and be killed or even to be in closer proximity to battleground mayhem, in the name of women's rights or gender equality, misappropriates those progressive traditions, redirecting their promise to elevate humankind onto another path, one leveling us all at a lower level. But there is still time to rethink where the demand for women in combat takes us. Let's talk about this.



JERRY LEMBCKE IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS IN WORCESTER, MA. HE IS A VIETNAM VETERAN.

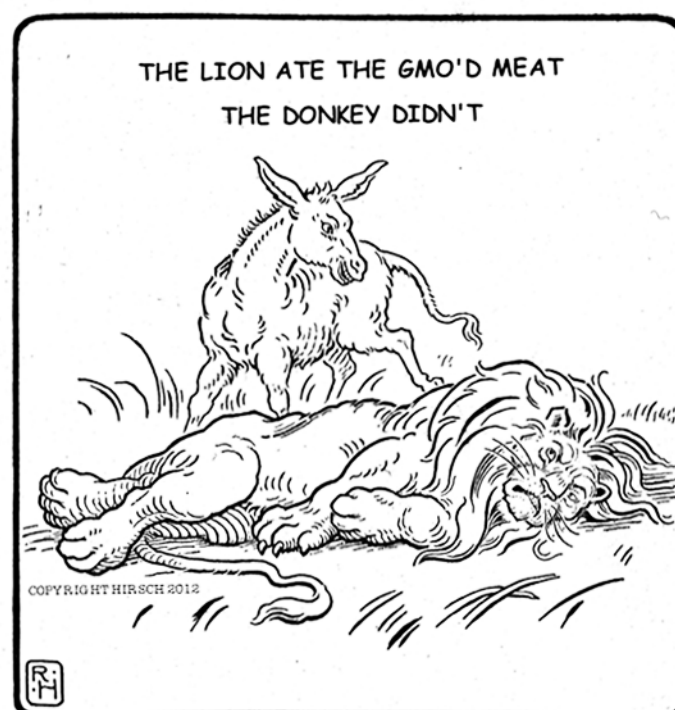
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Published by Mark Pezinger Verlag Vienna



How to Live with Killing

Every thing's a toy, a tool or a weapon.
The Weapon Wielder's tools can be fun to use.

It's the use, the trained user and the cause or
accepting the creed and not taking a pause
that's really responsible for the deed. Wanting some
certainty, safety, pleasure, having fear, anger, or greed.
Any thing can set loose a barely suppressed need.

Maybe it's the culture, the zeitgeist, politics or religion.
A nation's history, style, habit, customs, the nature of
human beasts on or off their leash. Even if they do
lurch to a mosque, synagogue or church every some time.
Science, technology or medicine don't always purge
the urging worms crawling in souls and minds.

But what difference or excuse does that make?
You can cut up, stab, slash, bash, burn down,
poison, strangle, mangle, push off a cliff
or throw out of a window, blow up,
drown, run over or down, maybe hang.

Or simply shoot. It's all the same.
Any excuse can set true nature lose
and turn away blame.

Some folks say "They needed killin'!"
Someone's got to do it.
It's our way

No matter the method, means or motive,
all killing requires is to be death devoted.
Life's rugged climes make us
struggle through "interesting times."

Who you're hunting makes no difference.
Just shoot. And don't give a hoot.
Except in happiness.

Besides, violence is
only lastly physical.

—Horace Coleman

Cheating the Reaper

for Kazunori Takenaga
February 5th, 1968 - June 23rd, 2011

This is the building, Ken.
This is the place
where our lives nearly ended.
My fault. I got careless.
That NVA gunner was aiming at me,
but all I got was a hell of a headache,
permanent tinnitus,
and a cheap Purple Heart.
You got a gaping gash in your head
and nearly lost an arm.
Both of us a rice shoot away
from buying the farm.

But here we are in a vibrant city
forty-three years later:
two ex-Marines shaking our heads
in wonder at what we survived
and what we are seeing now:
a five-story four-star hotel,
scooter rental and coffee shop
instead of a house we'd commandeered
for a makeshift battalion CP,
cinder block wall
enclosing a littered yard.

Who would have thought
the day that RPG exploded
we'd live to see this day,
this house, this city, this Vietnam.
Who would have thought
we'd ever want to come back
or be happy because we'd lost.

This is the very building, Ken.
This is where we almost died
for nothing that mattered,
but didn't.

—W.D. Ehrhart



New York City VVAW, May Day 2012.

Remembering the Christmas Bombing

continued from page 1

cards from families back home that we had brought for the US POWs. We also gave them the blank video and photo film we brought. Because the war was still going on, they couldn't allow CBS to bring film crews, but they allowed us to bring them unexposed film from CBS so that they could record parts of our trip. They would develop the film and make sure they didn't reveal anything that US Intelligence shouldn't see. We understood. It was war.

We started sight-seeing the first few days there. We went to Buddhist temples around Hanoi and also went to see areas that had been damaged from bombings. Late in the day on December 18, massive bombings began. There was so much confusion. We all thought – my travel companions and the Vietnamese – the war was coming to an end. But then the bombing started. Even after having served in South Vietnam, this was larger than any bombing raid I had experienced.

The Vietnamese were prepared. They had a massive warning system using sirens. They also had built large rooms underground as well as these single-person tiny concrete foxholes throughout Hanoi. There were heavy-duty shields so the people could quickly get cover when needed.

The raids were worse at night. We would go into the bomb shelter with the workers and other people staying at the hotel. The B-52s were so loud, when they dropped bombs, you could feel the earth move and grind. The shelters, being underground, only intensified the feeling of the earth grinding. It's hard to explain what it was like in the shelters. Everyone was on edge, just wanting the bombing to end so they could get out. And there were people from all different countries staying at the hotel so we couldn't really talk with each other. Sometimes after we all went into the shelter and I

knew Joan, Michael and Telford were safe, I would go back up and sit outside behind the hotel and watch the planes. First, F-111s would fly in very low to the ground, so low that they could be shot down with machine guns. They were followed by the B-52s.

During the day, we would still go sightseeing, but it was so much more limited now. The group that sponsored our trip, the Vietnam American Friendship Association, wanted to make sure we stayed safe so they were very careful about where we went. The Vietnamese really tried to clean up after the bombings, but there were a lot of people killed, blown apart. There were body parts scattered after each bombing raid. That's how hard Hanoi was targeted.

During one of our trips out, we went to see Tran Quoc Pagoda, the oldest pagoda in Vietnam. Our interpreter broke down. He started shouting and screaming, "Why?"

After the bombing started, the North Vietnamese said that we could photograph anything. They wanted the world to see what was happening. They wanted the pictures to show the truth – there were no secrets anymore.

On Christmas Eve, Rev. Allen held a service for us. Joan sang for us. The bombing started again. Mr. Quat arranged for us to go to a Catholic Midnight Mass. He had never been to a Catholic service and wanted to understand what it was like.

After Christmas, the North Vietnamese tried to get us out of the country earlier than planned. They drove us out to the airport to see if we could catch a plane. We went by the hamlet we stopped at on the way in to Hanoi. The school had been leveled, everything there had been leveled. There were no survivors. Telford had been very quiet on the trip and when we saw the decimated school, he shed a tear.

Since we were unable to

get out of the country, the North Vietnamese threw us a party. Despite being at war, having limited supplies, and being bombed, they found supplies to make us a cake. And we ate cake, drank and exchanged our cultures and experiences, songs and poems. Joan sang for everyone. They wanted us to share American culture. I didn't know what to say or share, but I had a prayer card with me from a friend's funeral, the Eight Beatitudes.

I was overwhelmed. The pressure from the Christmas bombing raids, from my nephew's death, from what I saw in Vietnam, I started crying. The Vietnamese at the party took me aside. I started talking, sharing with Mr. Quat. I said, "My nephew died. My men died. I killed Vietnamese..." I didn't want to die by an American bomb. And it wasn't about dying, but to die at our own hands. I felt such a visceral hatred for Nixon and Kissinger for what they were doing to the Vietnamese.

Quat said something to me I will never forget. "We know about your nephew. We knew your background before you came here... You know, your government took your precious idealism and they lied to you and sent you to Vietnam to kill Vietnamese people. And you killed people. But that's not important now. What's important now is that you suffer with the Vietnamese people. You can't blame yourself for what happened in southern Vietnam. The war is going to end. I know you don't believe me, but the war is going to end. And when it ends you are going to know peace like no other person. You are going to know the peace of a soldier who fought and killed in the south, but you are also going to know a Vietnamese peace because you suffered through the bombings with us in the north. You will know peace like no other." It brought me back to reality. It was just another night living under B-52 bombs.

The next day, we went to Bach Mai hospital. It was the larg-

est hospital in French Indochina. It was on every map. And it ended up being bombed three times. The day we went it had just been bombed for the second time. The doctors and nurses were digging with their bare hands through the rubble trying to find their patients. They had personally all lost so much, but they focused on their patients, on saving their patients, on keeping them from suffering. 600 people died.

The first time the US bombed Bach Mai, they said there was no hospital there. The second time, they said that it was a first aid station. The third time the US said it was a hospital, but it was surrounded by MiG planes so they had to bomb it. I was there. We took photos. There were no MiGs. These were absolute lies.

Finally, we were able to get out through the Chinese Embassy. After we met with them and we were waiting for the final word about leaving, we were back at the hotel. We were doing news interviews with the French press. And the bombings started again. The sirens went off. They knew I couldn't stand being in the bomb shelters, so we all waited out the bombing in the hotel room. Joan went on to the balcony, this tiny little balcony, and started singing civil rights songs with her guitar. Her voice carried through parts of Hanoi and people would clap. After that bombing raid ended and the electricity came back on, the people came and gathered outside the window to listen to and applaud Joan.

The next day we were able to leave on a Chinese plane that was taking injured Polish sailors out of the country. These sailors had been stranded in a sunken vessel. They had been wounded and burned. We were waiting at the airport with the sailors and the bombing starts up again. So we went into the shelter. But the Polish sailors, who are still reeling from their vessel sinking, start to really freak out. Joan sang lullabies that she wrote for her son to help calm them down. Finally, the "all clear" siren goes off and we got onto the plane and flew to Guangzhou, China. We were some of the first Americans to be able to go into China then. We finally got back to the US when we flew into JFK airport on New Year's Eve, 1972.



BARRY ROMO IS A MEMBER OF
VVAW LIVING IN CHICAGO. JEN
TAYABJI IS A COMMUNITY ORGANIZER
LIVING IN URBANA, ILLINOIS.



Joan Baez and Barry Romo.

Christmas Bombings 1972

SUSAN SCHNALL

On Sunday, March 17, 2013 CBS aired an episode of *Amazing Race* where contestants were traipsing through the remnants of American B-52 bomber shot down by the Vietnamese during the Christmas Bombing in 1972. Known as the Stratofortress heavy bombers, the B-52's along with Marine tactical support aircraft, dropped over 20,000 tons of bombs, destroying Hanoi and Haiphong, including Bach Mai Hospital. From December 18, 1972 until December 29, 1972, 729 sorties killed over 1600 Vietnamese and knocked out 80% of the country's electrical supply. And what was the military gain? Why did President Richard Nixon order this reign of terror on a country and its people thousands of miles from the United States? What was the threat posed to the people of the United States by the Vietnamese? Or was this action part of the American political process, a desperate effort by the President taken before the incoming Congress would meet and deny continued funding for this unpopular war in southeast Asia?

Response to the Christmas Bombing in the United States was anger and outrage against the bombings and President Nixon who had declared: "Peace is at hand." On December 21st, 1972, I was part of the group, Medical Aid for Indochina (MAI), gathered in front of the Army Recruiting Station in Times Square, New York City. Medical Aid for Indochina was an organization that raised money to purchase medical supplies for the civilian medical facilities in North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and south Vietnam under control

of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. MAI carried out its work in cooperation with medical aid groups engaged in relief work in Indochina. We believed that we had to accept responsibility for our government's actions, to say loud and clear that the people of Indochina were not our enemies, and to demand withdrawal of all US forces and weapons from Southeast Asia.

We were part of the thousands of demonstrators peacefully gathered in Times Square until the NY police formed a line with raised batons and began hitting the demonstrators. We sang "Give peace a chance" as the police struck out at those of us in the front. We asked them to stop as we got caught between the crowd behind and the police contingent in front of us. I remember the bright, garish lights of Times Square, the Marlboro man blowing smoke rings into the dark night and images of the US bombs falling on the civilian population in Vietnam, people screaming as they ran from this rain from hell which merged in my mind. And then I was grabbed, hit, pulled and dragged by several police to a waiting squad car and shoved inside. In handcuffs, lying on the back seat, I felt one of the officers straddling my back as he pulled my hair and yanked my head up and down, slamming my face against the car floor. Once again, I saw Vietnamese people running and screaming as the US planes rained down death and destruction, babies dying in their mother's arms, buildings smashed and burning, bodies filled with shrapnel and felt impotent about stopping this madness my



Susan Schnall.

government was doing in my name in Vietnam.

When the car stopped, I was pulled out by my hair, once again dragged by my hair up the steps to the station house and booked for assault, resisting arrest, and obstructing the police. As a prisoner held overnight, I was strip searched, made to shower in front of the officers, made to squat nude, searched for contraband, and placed in a solitary cell with a cement bunk.

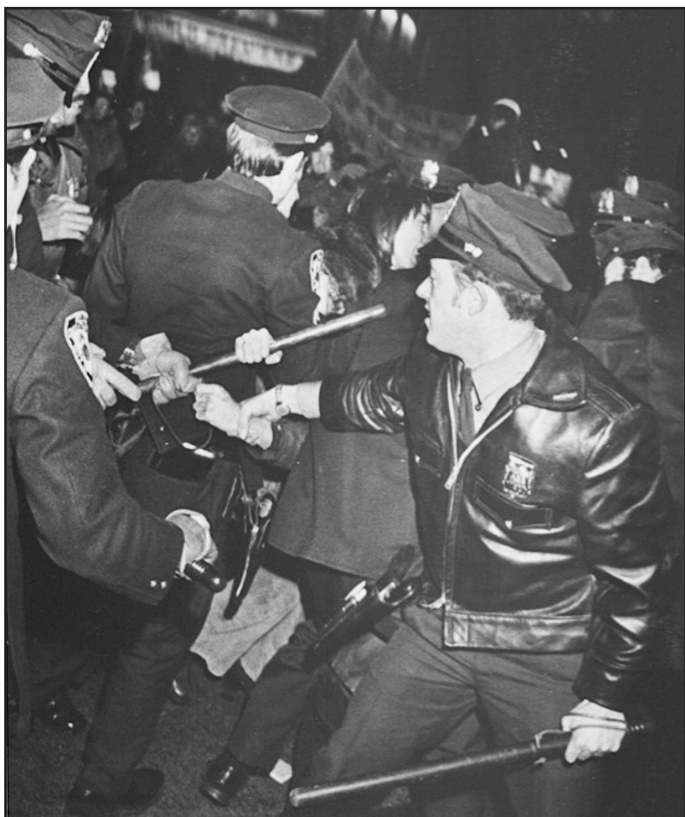
And the American planes continued to drop bomb after bomb, day after day, night after night and for what? To show that the United States of America could destroy a land and a people struggling for their independence that didn't have approval from the mightiest country on earth?

There has been a very righteous vocal response from VFW and VVA in response to the *Amazing Race* episode in Hanoi, talking about American sacrifice and the deaths of American pilots represented by the display of the B-52. CBS has apologized to "veterans, particularly those

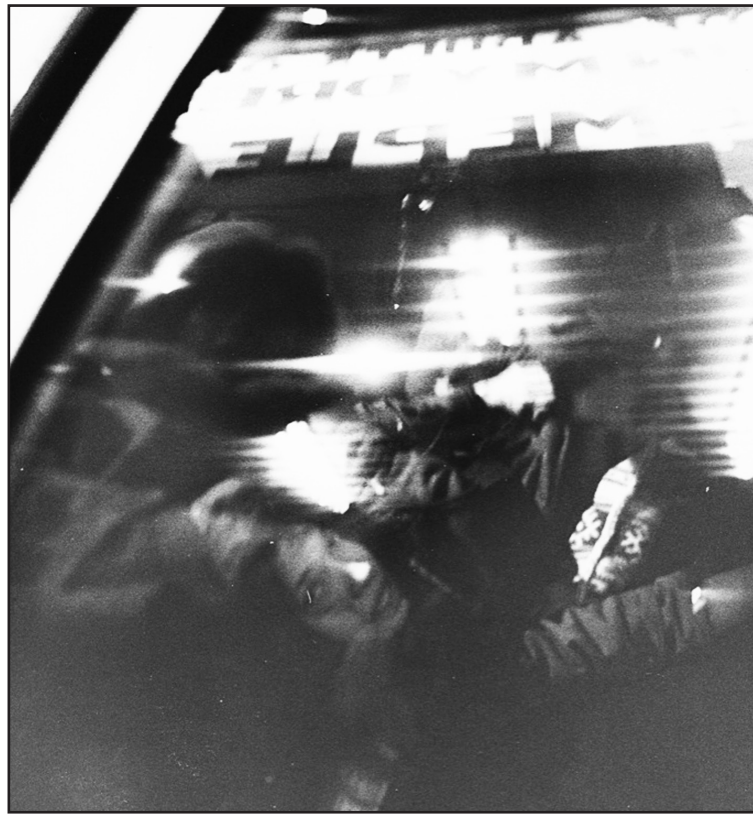
who served in Vietnam.....and any others who were offended by the broadcast." Where is the American voice that decries the terrible violence against the Vietnamese caused by these weapons of war? Where is our outrage about the destructive use of the B5-2's against Vietnam? Where is the apology from CBS to the Vietnamese for being insensitive to the costs of the American conflict in Vietnam, acknowledging the B-52 bomber as an instrument of destruction that caused the deaths of over 1600 Vietnamese during the 1972 Christmas bombings?



SUSAN SCHNALL IS A CO-COORDINATOR OF THE VIETNAM AGENT ORANGE RELIEF AND RESPONSIBILITY CAMPAIGN. SHE IS CURRENTLY A PROFESSOR IN HEALTH POLICY AND PLANNING AT NYU AND A MEMBER OF VFP AND APHA. SHE IS ON THE VVAW BOARD. IN 1969 SHE WAS TRIED AND CONVICTED BY A GENERAL COURT MARTIAL FOR HER ANTI-WAR ACTIVITIES WHILE A MEMBER OF THE US NAVY.



Cops in Times Square, 1972.



Getting arrested in Times Square, 1972.

Nixon Sabotaged Paris Peace Talks and Our Future

DANIEL C. LAVERY

Johnson furiously attempted to achieve peace before the 1968 election. Nixon secretly convinced the South Vietnamese leadership that he could win a better deal if he became President. Watergate grand jury testimony from 1975 showed that Nixon complained that the Johnson administration bugged his 1968 campaign. Why? Nixon revealed a secret that LBJ called treasonous about Tricky Dick's 1968 campaign's sabotaging of the Paris peace talks regarding the bloody Vietnam War.

The evidence came from diplomatic cable traffic and Johnson's audiotapes showing a better deal awaited if South Vietnamese President Nguyen van Thieu boycotted the Paris peace talks and awaited Nixon's defeat of Hubert Humphrey, two weeks after Nixon's plumbers were caught at Watergate bugging the Democratic National Committee. Nixon's aide Charles Colson discussed with him a story that the Democrats had bugged Nixon's connection to Thieu, right-wing Chinese-American activist, Anna Chennault. Wanting to make Nixon's 1968 bugging complaint to deflect attention from the Watergate investigation, he proceeded despite the danger to his party leadership by revealing his campaign had sabotaged resolution of the vastly unpopular Vietnam War.

Urging Haldeman to plant a lie about Democratic bugging in the Washington Star, Nixon was quoted as saying, "You don't really have to have hard evidence...just put it out as authority, and the press will write the Goddamn story, and the Star will run it."

When LBJ learned a Star reporter made such an inquiry

he threatend to reveal Nixon's malicious subversion of the peace talks when over 500,000 Americans were in the Vietnam War and that if successful would have saved an enormous number of lives and US treasury.

As fate would have it, Johnson died of a heart attack a week and a half later, preventing the public from learning Nixon's dirty secret. Since Nixon and Humphrey were in a tight race,

Nixon prevailed by under one percent of the vote. Instead of being the peace candidate he claimed, immediately after Nixon won the presidency, he escalated the air war against North Vietnam by bombing the dikes experts warned would kill more than 200,000 civilians in a flood, and destroy the Vietnamese staple of rice.

LBJ privately called Nixon's conduct treason to prevent

based on false information about the presence of weapons of mass destruction as a pretense for a war that nearly bankrupted America and killed about five thousand of our troops and estimates of up to a million or more Iraqi deaths. Another military conflict without a congressional declaration of war.

As of this writing, we are assassinating persons with mechanized drones on a "kill list" including Americans, albeit who have proven themselves terrorists willing to kill Americans. Nevertheless, no hearing established their guilt or innocence. Merely intelligent reports. We must demand Congress prevent presidential abuses to protect our country from more extreme and deadly fiascos.

Our future is threatened by more recent destructive developments. Supersonic drones with human input from a computer thousands of miles away are killing a few terrorists and thousands of innocents. We fail to allow the rule of law to adjudicate war crimes by torture, rendition, and assassination as well as indefinite imprisonment of suspects without the right of habeas corpus. We continue down the slippery slope of engaging our military in a state of war without congressional approval allowing restrictions never intended by our Constitution.

The seeds of our own destruction have been planted: The military industrial complex, huge corporations that manufacture the latest weapons, other corporations who fund these endeavors, and those in the financial industry that devise various schemes to bilk consumers, and those that are environmentally ignorant. Any of these entities may dominate and control our future if we let them. We must keep vigilant and demand strict adherence to our cherished constitution or be victims of our indifference.



DANIEL C. LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, AND A SHIP TO VIETNAM, FELL IN LOVE, TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST, AND A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW. HIS MEMOIR, "ALL THE DIFFERENCE," DESCRIBES THE EXPERIENCES THAT CHANGED HIS CONSCIOUSNESS TO AN ADVOCATE CRUSADING FOR JUSTICE. WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM.

How different would America be if Hubert Humphrey had been elected?

a successful peace agreement at the Paris peace talks would have given a significant surge to the Democratic nominee's chances just before the election. But Thieu announced his refusal to attend three days before the election on Nov. 2, 1968.

"I think it would shock America if a principal candidate was playing with a source like this on a matter of this importance. They're contacting a foreign power in the middle of a war," Johnson said.

Nixon began a series of bald-faced lies denying he had any role in ruining the peace talks in conversations with Johnson. He is quoted as saying, "I'm not trying to interfere with your conduct of it. I'll only do what you and Rusk want me to do. We've got to get this goddamn war off the plate." He even said to LBJ, "The war apparently now is about where it could be brought to an end. The quicker the better. To hell with the political credit, believe me."

Unfortunately for our nation,

hostilities to cease at a time our troops were in battle. How could anyone responsible have faced the families of 20,763 American military who died, and 111,230 who were injured? Not to mention the more than a million Vietnamese who lost their lives? Apparently the attraction to high political office in America for the immoral candidate without a conscience would even place a huge contingent of our military at the ultimate risk and defile an election for the highest office.

Walt W. Rostow composed a three page memo May 14, 1973 revealing Nixon's conspiracy using others that came to light from the LBJ library as reported by Robert Parry.

How different would America be if Hubert Humphrey had been elected? Many of the kids lost in drugs during those "four more years" would likely have not tuned in, and dropped out, nor would we have undergone Watergate or Nixon's impeachment.

George W. Bush invaded Iraq



Times Square, 1972.



Telegram

85 1P EST APR 24 70 AA375

BC4 19 PH B WA080 XV GOVT PDB FAX WASHINGTON DC 24 NPT

MR AND MRS JOHN W MOTYKA, REPORT DELIVERY, DONT PHONE, DONT
PHONE, CHECK DLY CHGS AOVE 75 CTS

5435 NW 10 CT APT 202 PLANTATION FLO

THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY HAS ASKED ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR
SON PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JEFFERY J MOTYKA, WAS WOUNDED IN ACTION
IN VIETNAM ON 23 APRIL 1970 BY FRAGMENTS WHILE AT AN ARTILLERY
FIRING POSITION WHEN THE AREA CAME UNDER MORTAR ATTACK BY A
HOSTILE FORCE. HE RECEIVED WOUNDS TO BOTH ARMS BOTH BUTTOCKS
BOTH LEGS BOTH FLANKS, FRACTURE OF THE MEDIOAN-CONDYLE AND
LACERATIONS TO THE POPLITEAL ARTERY AND VEIN. HE HAS BEEN PLACED
ON THE SERIOUSLY ILL LIST AND IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE ATTENDING
PHYSICIAN HIS CONDITION IS OF SUCH SEVERITY THAT THERE IS CAUSE
FOR CONCERN, BUT NO IMMINENT DANGER TO LIFE. PLEASE BE ASSURED
THAT THE BEST MEDICAL FACILITIES AND DOCTORS HAVE BEEN MADE

8F-1201 (R5-69)



Telegram

AVAILABLE AND EVERY MEASURE IS BEING TAKEN TO AID HIM. HE IS
HOSPITALIZED IN VIETNAM. ADDRESS MAIL TO HIM AT THE HOSPITAL
MAIL SECTION, APO SAN FRANCISCO 96347. YOU WILL BE PROVIDED
PROGRESS REPORTS AND KEPT INFORMED OF ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES
IN HIS CONDITION

KENNETH G WICKHAM MAJOR GENERAL USA C 114 -140 THE ADJUTANT
GENERAL DEPT OF THE ARMY WASHINGTON DC

23 1970 96347
(827).



Vets Day 2012, New York City.

John Piester - An Unsung Hero

CINDY PIESTER

John Piester was one of VVAW's unsung heroes. His life was defined not only by his war experience in Vietnam during 1966 and 1967, but how he used it to help others.

John was 19 when he was drafted into the Army, and joined the Navy instead. He was sent to Camp Pendelton Survival Training in preparation to serve as a Riverine. His job with the Brown Water Navy was to man the 50 caliber machine gun while patrolling the Mekong Delta in small agile PBR (patrol boats river). Their mission, called Operation Market Time, included boarding small Vietnamese junks to stop the flow of weapons from the north into South Vietnam. Often fired on from the banks, the River Rat, as they were sometimes called, constantly faced ambushes and uncertainty. Even so, John came to care for the Vietnamese people. He and his buddies sometimes helped the fishermen by tossing an occasional percussion grenade overboard allowing them to gather the fish that floated to the surface - a fond memory.

Unfortunately, not all of John's memories were so fond.

Shortly after arriving in Vietnam, he came to the conclusion that Vietnam was a very wrong war. The Riverines frequently delivered Marines up river. John was upset with the whole Search and Destroy way of conducting the war. He told the story repeatedly of how our soldiers were actually used as bait when they were sent out to be ambushed. He was in disbelief that soldiers were constantly being put in the position to call in heavy artillery strikes on their own coordinates because they were being overrun by the waiting North Vietnamese forces. While this resulted in high body counts for the enemy, it also cost the lives of many of our men. He talked about officers giving insane orders and putting their own men at risk in order to earn medals and go up the chain of command.

John did not appreciate that he and the others were eating C-rats left over from WW II. Likewise, he thought it was wrong that their supplies, sometimes even their ammunition, had been left over from WW II and didn't always work.

He talked about one incident, in particular, that totally horrified him. He and his buddies were out on patrol and ordered to fire on

the shore. Afterwards, they had all gone ashore to check on damage. The vision of what he saw there changed his life forever. He never got over it. Never. He knew that chances were that his own bullets had been among those that struck and killed innocents and he could not forgive himself. He felt our government had put him in that position, but he had to live with the reality of it. If he survived the war, John decided, he would help children when he got back to the states.

Agent Orange was everywhere. He saw the guys cook their own food atop barrels of the stuff. He was constantly sprayed. They had been reassured it was safe.

In 1966, John was part of a mission that delivered Marines into Cambodia. He didn't know why or what they were doing there, only that this was happening. He wrote to his father about this only to find, on return, that his letters to his father had been intercepted and all mention of Cambodia had been cut out. He was blown away that the American people were being misled and lied to by their own government.

While in Nam, he got his "Dear John" from his sweetheart. He was devastated. His letters home to the parents were reassuring. He never wanted to worry them, but it was all insane. Nothing made any sense.

Thankfully, he survived. When his C-130 finally delivered him home safely, he kissed the ground. He was so so glad to be back. His family was overwhelmed with joy to see him, but he skipped out on the party they had happily planned. Instead he got drunk with another veteran's family and unloaded some of his grief about the war. His life had changed forever and John was no longer the life of the party that he had been. Days later, he was embarrassed during a blind date when a car backfired and he found himself on the ground. Isolation would become a way of life for periods of time in the years ahead.

John always felt that we had to support the troops even if the war, whatever war, was wrong. He would say, "You just don't know what it's like to come back after all we had been through!" He tried to return to classes but was called out as a "baby killer" by one professor. Things were not easy. He came home with nightmares



Cindy and John Piester.

and flash backs. Thoughts of suicide plagued him through out his life. The pineapple and sugar cane fields of Hawaii became a refuge as he got himself together.

The best and most immediate thing he felt he could do was to become a member of VVAW. He wanted the war ended. He wanted his brothers home and safe. He spoke out against the war publicly, including giving a talk at San Fernando State College (now California State University, Northridge). Speaking out was not acceptable and the FBI showed up at his house. Nonetheless, John's life was committed. He would never back down.

Neither, did John ever forget the promise he had made himself in Vietnam to help children. He became a licensed psychiatric technician who helped countless emotionally disturbed children over a career that lasted more than two decades. His compassion and insight made him more of a stand-in dad than a staff member. He was proud of having started his career at UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute. Later he moved to northern California where he initiated the Community Re-Entry Program for emotionally disturbed teens at Napa State Hospital. Returning to southern California, John worked in what was probably the California State Hospital's most revolutionary treatment programs for boys, the Re-Ed Program. John's career came to a sad close when the hospital was shuttered.

John and I had been friends for many years, but we were not

able to marry until he went through his own extended therapy with the Vets Center in 1989. John found this group work highly beneficial and he did his best to encourage his veteran friends to go themselves. He was always deeply concerned about vet's issues. He knew those issues and he did all he could to help others.

With the advent of the Iraq War, John was devastated to think of another generation having to experience war trauma. His own PTSD symptoms reemerged. He foresaw what was ahead for a new generation of soldiers and what was ahead for the people of Iraq. He was just sick. We both were. He foresaw the deaths, destruction, the suicides.

For as long as John was able, he used his credibility as a combat vet to stand up for peace and justice and to call for an end to US wars of aggression. This was not always an easy road. Friends and family were not always open to hearing what John had to say, but he never wavered. He spoke boldly and with conviction to both strangers and friends. He wanted people to understand the realities of war. He was appalled by the glamorized Hollywood version of military engagement.

John lived a simple life. His prize possessions were his VVAW sweatshirt and a couple of VVAW t-shirts and a couple of caps. He wanted the people of the country to pay attention to what was going on rather than immerse themselves

continued on next page

Lindsay Graham, John McCain and the Pentagon Fight Hagel's Appointment



John Piester - An Unsung Hero

continued from previous page

in materialism.

John began losing his health in 1997 and was forced into early retirement. He had developed peripheral neuropathy. He was diagnosed with colon cancer, hypertension, and later with congestive heart failure. All of these may have been related to his heavy Agent Orange exposure. He was also disabled from numerous injuries. John worked out intensely and religiously. His muscle tissue should have built, but it didn't. Agent Orange wastes muscle and, for all of John's effort, his muscles remained atrophied. He was reliant, first on a cane, and then, on a walker the rest of his life. He endured many illnesses and setbacks, yet he heroically pushed himself to get up again and again. He and I were certain that the years of pain, suffering, and endless trials were going to pay off and we would enjoy healthier years ahead. We were wrong and John's tragic death from a heart attack came unexpectedly last November.

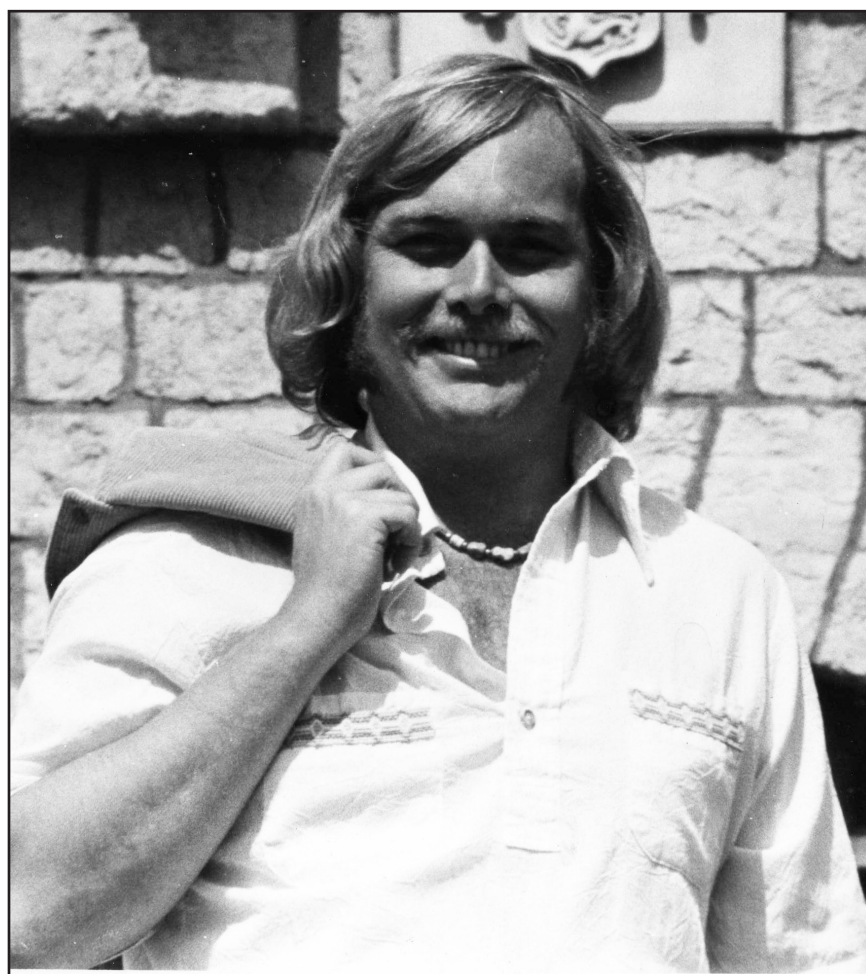
John did what he thought was his duty to his country only to come to the conclusion that the Vietnam War was dead wrong. He joined VVAW and remained loyal to the organization all of his life. He took great pride in

the fact that his brothers-in-arms had come together to speak out and successfully end the war. He spent decades helping emotionally disabled children find their own inner strength so that they could grow up and live fuller lives. He faced countless challenges to his own health and well being, including severe PTSD and Agent Orange. He did it in a heroic fashion. His life was not easy and he would not want it white washed. Neither was it easy for me or our family, and I often failed, but I am honored to have been his wife. He was my partner and I will always love him and treasure the happiness he brought to my life. He is gone, but not forgotten. While it is terribly disheartening that our nation is in such terrible shape, it seems as though the best way we can honor John's life is to continue to confront the injustices of our own times. John supported Bradley Manning. Our work continues.

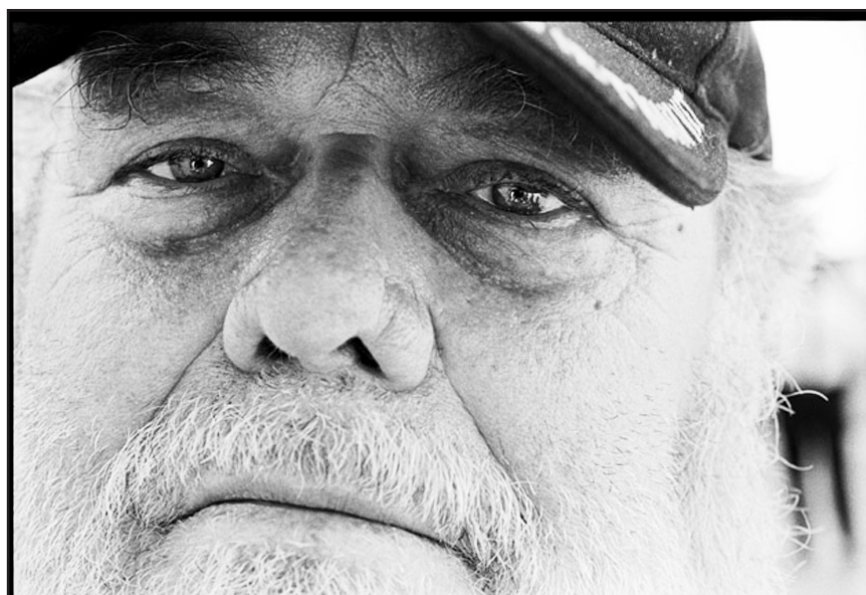
Thank you, VVAW.



CINDY PIESTER IS A PEACE ACTIVIST
AND SUPPORTER OF VVAW.



John at UCLA.



Vietnam: A Time Capsule

SUZANNE COGAN

In 1967 I was a singer-dancer in a USO tour of "Guys and Dolls," starring Hugh O'Brian. When I flew into Danang I saw a nearly deserted city bisected by a dirty river. The military air base was on one shore, the VIP (and only) hotel plus some run-down buildings on the other. We were ferried across the river on an open barge. A few days later we heard that our hotel had been bombed. We shrugged and joked about it, hey, we were young. Nothing could happen to us.

This February I re-visited Vietnam as a tourist with a small group, traveling from Saigon and the Mekong Delta to Dalat, Nha Trang, Hué, Hoi An, Hanoi, Halong Bay and Danang. But - where was it? No trace of the former city remained except the river, now spanned by an impressive, newly constructed bridge. On either shore were high-rise apartments, newly constructed office buildings, and countless streets, shops, restaurants, a thriving, successful city.

When I tried to superimpose memory onto the current image, it was out of focus. Was my memory real? In my mind's eye it definitely was. Then how to reconcile the remembered past with the obvious, visible present? Could they be different and still, in a strange way, the same? These questions haunted me throughout my entire visit.

In Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), I searched for familiar places. I'd checked the internet but found no trace of our former hotel, the Meyerkord. I believe it was located on Tu Do Street (Rue Catinat under

the French, Dong Khoi today), somewhere in the French colonial neighborhood past the Post Office and Cathedral. The Rex Hotel still existed, but it had been totally modernized. The Continental Hotel and open square in front of the Opera House, both featured in "The Quiet American," felt as real as anything I'd actually experienced.

I was struck by the extreme contrast of wealth (5-star hotels, international boutiques) and poverty (beggars, locals squatting or sitting on plastic stools selling cheap items) and a tsunami of motorcycles, bicycles, cars, and cyclos that swerved and honked at pedestrians trying to cross the street. The survival technique (HCMC and Hanoi) - take a deep breath, walk slowly and steadily through the insane traffic, keep your eyes focused straight ahead. If you stop or turn your head you risk an accident! At first it was terrifying, but then I began to enjoy it! It felt like skiing downhill in a blizzard.

In Nha Trang, the country's most popular beach resort. I remembered taking a delightful swim in the South China Sea (renamed "East Sea" by the Vietnamese). I'd seen broken cabanas, dirty sand, and - nothing. Just the sea, the blue sky, a few puffy white clouds. I recalled floating on my back, wondering how it was possible that a War was being fought only a few miles away. Everything seemed so peaceful, beautiful, perfect.

Today it resembles any affluent beach resort. Havana, Cancun, Miami, the Riviera - take your pick. A phalanx of luxury

hotels, many flashing neon signs, overlook the pristine beach. Brightly colored flowers and palm trees separate the road from the thatched roof bars and umbrellas that dot the white sand. Our hotel featured signs in Vietnamese, English, and Russian. There are direct flights from Moscow to Nha Trang, a favorite resort of nouveau riche Russians.

I enjoyed visiting places that were off-limits during the War, especially Hanoi, a fast-paced, modern city, and Hué, the imperial capital that was almost destroyed in 1965. I learned that most Vietnamese consider the American War, along with the thousand-year Chinese occupation and French colonial period (1867 to 1954) as history. Past. Over. I was impressed by their spirit and resilience, as well as a deep love for their land. The Vietnamese I spoke with feel optimistic and are working towards a prosperous future. Even the masses of yellow flowers that celebrate the Lunar New Year (Tet) symbolize prosperity and good fortune.

I have one memory that has no counterpart in the present. During hospital visits we were told NEVER to mention the War, but, to speak about home towns, sports teams, anything to build morale. I will never forget one baby-faced soldier with carrot red hair, pale freckled skin, and enormous green eyes. When I approached his bed he grabbed my hand, "Ma'am, can you help me?" he pleaded. "Ah've been sick ever since ah got here. First they sent me to the Delta but ah got malaria so they brung me here and ah got better so they sent me back down but ah got malaria



Suzanne in 1967.

again so they brung me back and it keeps on happenin' so please Ma'am, can you help me? Ah just want to go home."

I hope he made it.



SUZANNE COGAN TOURED VIETNAM IN "GUYS AND DOLLS" FOR THE USO. SHE DANCED ON FRENCH TV AND OFF-BROADWAY AND SANG SOPRANO AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA. HER PLAYS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED IN NY AND LA. SHE IS MARRIED AND LIVES IN NEW YORK, WHERE SHE IS CO-PRODUCING A MUSICAL.



Suzanne in Saigon (HCMC): Le Loi street between Dong Khoi and Nguyen Hue, Feb. 2013.



The entire USO group, featuring Hugh O'Brian. Suzanne, 2nd from left. 1967.



Suzanne, brunette on the left; Sandy Duncan is the blonde. Performing the night club number, "Take Back Your Mink."

When He Was Good

MARC LEVY

After the shooting stops, after the wounded girl is hoisted away, after we walk past the bodies and the man with no head, after the RTO curses after stepping in brains, the lieutenant says, "You gonna put me in for the Purple Heart, Doc?"

Here is how it happened:

In one great flash BAANG the mines explode. The enemy shrieks like animals, the howls so bad we cover our ears.

The survivors run past firing volleys to draw us out. When they are gone the wounded wail for hours until they are dead.

In the morning we recon the automatic ambush. A half dozen bodies lie bunched in a heap. A few meters on, a man locked in rigor mortis, sits on a tree stump, his death face intact. All are riddled or ripped apart by the Claymore's whizzing steel pellets.

The lieutenant walks forward. "Chieu hoi!" he shouts. But the old man will not surrender and lifts his AK and the lieutenant wastes him. BRRRAAPP. Then everyone opens up. When the shooting stops, when the smoke clears, the old man is headless but the girl next to him appears to wake from a dream.

"Doc, get up here!" shouts the lieutenant.

She raises one arm, reaches for my canteen, claws at it. Everyone wonders, Will he do it? Waste a quart of water on a no good dink. Never see that canteen again. Contaminated. Poisoned. Untouchable. The girl opens her parched lips, she makes a strange guttural noise. What to do? What? A silent voice says, "Just give her the goddamn water. Just give it."

"How is she, Doc?"

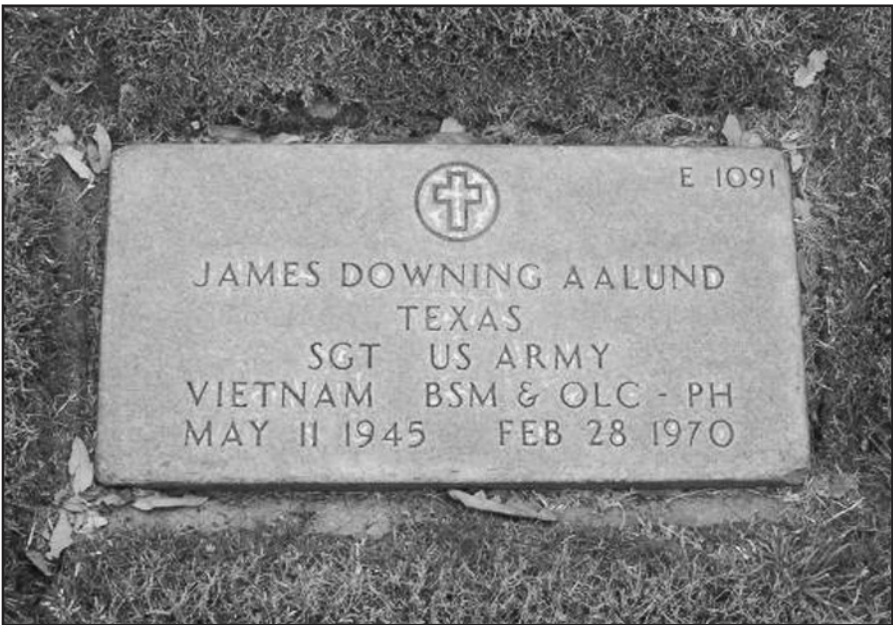
Both her legs are broken. From the mines or machine gun, it's hard to tell. There's nothing for splints except rotted bamboo. More groans. More water. More. Everyone looks as she glugs it down, returns to sleep.

Snap. Someone pops yellow smoke. Purple.

"Medivac inbound in zero ten," says the RTO.

When the bird arrives they kick out a litter. We strap her in, they hoist her up. Then they are gone.

There is time to scavenge for souvenirs. Watches, belt buckles, money, these are the things we crave from the dead. Intimate diaries, pocket photos of wives or



lovers or sons and daughters have no value. None. The enemy is an unfeeling insect to be stomped out. They are not human beings.

"Saddle up," says the lieutenant.

Ten minutes later he stops, opens his mouth wide, pulls back his upper lip. The left canine incisor is cracked. A simple paste will do for now.

"Doc, you gonna put me in for a Purple Heart?"

"No way, sir. You didn't get hit. You didn't get shot. It's just skull fragments from the dink you killed. No fucking way."

Later we learn the girl lived. That five hundred soldiers had stampeded past.

Decades later I have tears for my lieutenant, for the injured girl, the headless man, for all this wars dead and wounded. For the human folly of it all. Folly and sorrow.



MARC LEVY WAS A MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 CAV IN 1970. HIS WAR POETRY AND PROSE HAVE BEEN WIDELY PUBLISHED ONLINE AND IN PRINT. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME.



Medic walking toward wounded NVA female.

Creative Transformation Through Art Therapy

TRINA IRISH

He stands shaking at the podium. As he relates his gut-wrenching, heartbreaking story, his voice breaks and tears flood down his weathered face. Over the course of 27 years I've heard a million of his stories, he only tears up when he tells this one. He quickly wraps it up and wishes everyone a safe and happy Memorial Day while retreating from the podium, moving as if composed of cast-iron. The air is thick with a heavy sense of loss. His fellow veterans pat him gently on the back while commenting to one another on the nice turn out this year and hastily begin cleaning up.

My dad is a Vietnam veteran, and quite a storyteller. Usually the stories illustrate in vivid detail some crazy spot he and his buddies ended up in while fishing, hunting or pulling a prank. But every once in awhile stories of war come seemingly out of nowhere, and it sometimes feels as if he's there again. My passion for working with veterans stems from my observations and experiences related to my father's life-long struggle after serving in Vietnam 45 years ago.

It's impossible for me to imagine living through some of the stories my father has told, and yet, as he points out, he is only one of millions of veterans to carry such a burdensome story after returning from war. He believes his ability to talk about it, however, is rare, and sharing his story with others has been instrumental in helping him cope. In fact, research has confirmed that often times those that have experienced trauma have a difficult time verbally expressing their story. Paradoxically, giving a traumatic experience a narrative is a critical part of healing because it promotes acceptance and

ultimately appropriate integration of the trauma into one's life. Art therapy fits uniquely into this paradox by supporting individuals' ability to access personal traumas through art creation and verbalization of what is being expressed through their work, to develop their personal trauma narrative.

In a podcasted interview with the National Endowment for the Arts, art therapist Melissa Walker discussed her 4-week art therapy treatment program for returning service members. Walker's art therapy program is part of the standard of care at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence, or NICoE, a facility that treats service members that have not responded to other treatments. Walker (2012) cited neuroimaging research performed at the NICoE indicating that, "The Broca's area of the brain, which is the speech area of the brain, shuts down when individuals try to recount a trauma. However, the part of the brain that encodes sensory experiences of trauma - sight, sound, smell, feel - that's the part that lights up, and it's the same part of the brain that you utilize when you're creating art" (<http://www.nea.gov/podweb/podCMS/podlist.php>). Walker went on to say that the NICoE is continuing this research and believes that the art therapy process is reintegrating the brain.

In a BBC television series special, "Art for Heroes: A Culture Show Special," art therapy's role in the rehabilitation of ex-service members is examined through interviews with neurologist Dr. Lukasz Konopka, and veterans participating in art therapy at Combat Stress, a treatment facility in England for combat-related



Trina and her father.

PTSD. Dr. Konopka researched PTSD at Hines VA Hospital and has a particular interest in understanding how and why art expression is effective in therapy with this population. Konopka's research findings are similar to those found by the team at the NICoE. While describing art-making's visible neurological effects on the brain, he called art therapy, "essential because it taps into the very primitive networks of the brain." Konopka went on to explain that through art therapy, new neural pathways may be developed, which in turn allows the person to live a different life.

The documentary concluded with a show at a local gallery of the veterans' artwork. A reception was held with the aim of providing a positive experience out of what had likely been a painful one. When asked what they thought about art therapy's effectiveness, one veteran identified it as his "primary therapy" and described it as the catalyst that opened him up. At its essence, therapy is a process of changing awareness and behavior. Creativity and therapy are interconnected as processes of transformation, metamorphosis and change. You can hear this in another vet's explanation of his work. This vet identified himself as "a veteran turned artist" and in describing his process of creating a work of art stated, "I start with some kind of traumatic disruption and then some kind of rebuilding. That rebuilding is also a creation which has enabled me to move on."

Interestingly, in England, the roots of art therapy are often traced to Adrian Hill, a war artist on the western front during World War I. While Hill recovered from tuberculosis in a Hospital in 1938, he used art to aid his own recovery. He was later

invited to return to the hospital to help returning war wounded soldiers by teaching them art. Art therapy continues to be a holistic avenue of treatment for returning soldiers. We are seeing some exciting collaboration between neurologists and art therapists at the Veterans Administration, where researchers have embraced the task of expanding the research base of how art therapy works neurologically, and why it is an effective tool for post-traumatic stress disorder.



TRINA IS WRAPPING UP A MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ART THERAPY AND COUNSELING THIS SPRING. SHE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF DOING TWO ROUNDS OF PRACTICA AT A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR VETERANS WHERE ART THERAPY IS PART OF THE STANDARD OF CARE. SHE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ON THE TOPIC OF ART THERAPY AND/OR TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE FROM MEMBERS OF THE VETERAN COMMUNITY AND CAN BE CONTACTED VIA EMAIL AT TRINAIRISH@GMAIL.COM.



Forming Relationships of Understanding Promotes Healing

AMY BLUMENSHINE

A version of this article first appeared in InterActs, a newsletter of the Minneapolis Area Synod, ELCA

The healing journey for veterans in the aftermath of war can take varied pathways. Some veterans of foreign wars have found it helpful to develop relationships of understanding, not of war, with the people of the countries where they were deployed.

For Marcus Eriksen, a US Marine in the first Gulf War, connecting with the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project (IARP), has been a pathway to relief. "Participating in the healing process for someone else kind of heals yourself."

Out of a collaboration with the Veterans Book Project, the IARP recently worked with some Iraqi refugees in Minnesota to make books and short films that describe their experiences. The videos and books, as well as a curriculum, are provided free of charge alongside books by American veterans on IARP's website, www.iraqiartproject.org.

Eriksen encourages veterans to "Dive right in! No matter where you are in trying to understand your war experience, the worthwhile things IARP does for other people are good to be part of. You may be surprised by the profound effect. Good work is being done for the people who really need it." He noted that many veterans feel sorry for the civilians in war zones.

"We take away from others during war. At the same time you feel you're doing something for your country, you're taking away from the Iraqi people and the people of Afghanistan."

Creating books and videos with Iraqi refugees and American veterans is the latest in a series of projects that IARP has initiated which include humanitarian efforts in Iraq and educational citizen exchanges. Says veteran Riley Sharbonno, "IARP offers a wider spectrum of discourse about the effects of war on the human condition. It presents real stories by real people who have been directly affected by forces much larger than themselves, in many ways acting beyond their control. The challenge for IARP is to make these perspectives accessible to the public, no easy task."

In addition to the new curriculum materials, which could also be used in church educational settings, IARP has worked to improve water access for the children of Iraq (www.waterforpeaceproject.org). Many veterans find great satisfaction in helping to build up areas that have been hurt by war.

Eriksen notes that dehumanization of the enemy in war is something tactical that happens on the battlefield. Involvement with IARP, he says, helps one's empathy to come back. Psychologists view empathy as a key ingredient for successful relationships at home and work.



A school that received clean water through IARP - in Najaf.

Sister cities Minneapolis and Najaf, Iraq have sent each other delegations for professional training and friendship building, facilitated by IARP. Sister city relationships offer a way for ordinary Iraqi and American citizens to support friendship, healing and Iraqi efforts to rebuild.

One Iraqi supporter of IARP explained: "This project [IARP] marks the beginning to create a more hopeful tomorrow... I want my people to bury the past and start over. I seek to remove the clash of civilizations from the dictionary of our lives. I seek to build a future that is based on our hopes rather than our fears and apprehensions."

Veterans differ as to when they are ready for healing efforts in the aftermath of war, but it often takes a while. A recent study showed that it is averaging

7.5 years for post 9/11 veterans to encounter "meaningful" help. Church leaders and congregations can help accompany veterans as each makes meaning of their war experiences.

Learn more about the Veterans Book Project, another important pathway for healing and understanding, at www.veteransbookproject.com. Learn more about the Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project at www.reconciliationproject.org.



AMY BLUMENSHINE, PhD IS A DIACONAL MINISTER IN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA (ELCA). AMY'S FAMILY INCLUDES A NUMBER OF VETERANS, INCLUDING HER FATHER. SEE MPLS-SYNOD.ORG/PROGRAMS/VETS.



A school that received clean water through IARP - Abi Talib.

Student Response

JOHN KETWIG

VVAW receives many requests from students for help with their papers. Here is one recent exchange - Ed.

Hi there,

I am an 18 year old student and I am currently writing an essay on the Vietnam War. This essay focuses on why the US lost and why the North Vietnamese were able to win. I would be very grateful if I could get an opinion from you on this as it is very important that I do primary research for my essay and your opinion would be incredibly helpful.

Thank you for reading

Laura
Lutterworth College

Hi Laura,

I am a VVAW (Vietnam Veterans Against the War) life member, and also the author of a Vietnam memoir, "...and a hard rain fell: A GI's True Story of the War in Vietnam," originally published by Macmillan in 1985, and currently published by Sourcebooks. Yes, it has stayed on bookstore shelves for over 27 years, so I am very proud of it. You can probably Google the book and learn more.

I do college lectures about the times that influenced the Vietnam

generation, and try to convey what it all felt like to an average kid who became caught up in it. I think it is very important to note that we were the first generation of American soldiers to have portable radios, and to be influenced by socially-relevant music. The songs of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Peter, Paul & Mary were constant as we were growing up, along with songs like "Blowing in the Wind," "Eve of Destruction," and many others. Have you heard "Alice's Restaurant" by Arlo Guthrie? Or the "Vietnam Rag" also known as the "Feel Like I'm Fixin To Die Rag" by Country Joe and the Fish? The anthem of our generation was Dylan's "The Times They Are A'changing." You must hear those songs to understand the music of the times! The Beatles had a huge influence on us. We thought our generation was going to overthrow "the establishment" and make peace and brotherhood a new way of life. Sadly, that movement failed over the long term, but it was very, very strong during the war era. I am concerned that books about the Beatles barely mention Vietnam, and books about Vietnam barely mention the Beatles or the music of the times, and we were totally inundated in both. We were, by the way, also the first generation of American soldiers to leave our personal cars home in the driveway when we went to war. We were the first to have TV, to see space ships

launched, and to see the brutality against blacks trying to exercise their basic rights as American citizens, and TV brought it right into our homes.

You will read that the war in Vietnam failed because the American military failed to understand the Vietnamese culture, and that is partially true, but I contend that a far greater contributor to our failure was the failure of the (post WWII and Korean War) American military to recognize the enormous cultural changes in the recruits arriving throughout the Vietnam era. We were into drag racing, rock 'n roll, and surfing. The sexual revolution was happening, Playboy was available wherever magazines were sold, and everything sacred was in question. We arrived in boot camp and the instructors tried to bully us, but we had grown up in an environment of unprecedented freedom and questioning, and so G.I. rebellion (and yes, even subtle sabotage!) played a very key part in ending the war. By 1972, over 25% of all Americans in uniform worldwide were either deserted, AWOL, or openly mutinous! The army could no longer function, and so had to wind down the war. Years later when I was examining what the war experience had done to me, I realized that I feared the enemy, but I never hated them. I did, however, intensely hate my military superiors, the officers and Sergeants who treated us so badly, who planned the whole tragic war, and who profited so much from the human misery they were inflicting upon the poor peasants of Vietnam. Sadly, they earned their promotions, and they tried out all the latest weapons, but the damage they did was unconscionable. I will hate them, and fear them, until the day I die.

I will only speak about the Vietnamese to say that they wanted their independence, and so they knew what they were fighting for while we Americans never did. We weren't "in country" more than a few days and we could plainly see that everything we had been told about the situation in Vietnam had been untrue and misleading. We were the bad guys, and the US was devastating the poor, agricultural country of Vietnam. The cruelty of the weapons and the strategies were contrary to everything we had been taught about right and wrong, and we were very troubled

to be a part of it. Our goal was simply to survive for 365 days and get on a plane and go home. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, were trying to build a nation and create something better for their children.

Soon after my book came out, I was invited to speak at a conference at Gettysburg College, when I first met W.D. Ehrhart and some other prominent Vietnam authors. We all did our presentations in the morning, and the audience and presenters consisted of a large number of professional soldiers from the nearby Army War College at Carlisle, PA. In the afternoon a nasty old Sergeant Major spoke, and he pointed to us and very specifically stated, "These whining, complaining Vietnam veterans will die off. I want to assure you, we have written the history of the Vietnam war your grandchildren will read." I have labored long and hard over the years to keep my book on the shelves and available to today's curious youngsters. Thank you so much for investigating and thinking, Laura. War is a horrible thing, and should not be glamorized. I have huge respect for veterans and all who have been impacted by wars, and I hope that someday war can be eliminated from our world. I have seen the enormous forces at work selling war as inevitable and even desirable, and I live my life in defiance of those forces. I know what I have seen, and I sincerely hope you and all your peers will never have to witness something so awful. Sorry if this is too long, but you stirred up a bunch of emotions with your questions. I hope this will be helpful. If you have additional questions, or need anything additional, don't hesitate to contact me. Good luck. I hope you get a top grade on your paper. And Happy Holidays!

John Ketwig



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF "...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM." FIRST PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 1985, IT IS STILL AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES.

No Fear

NO FEAR read the tag	the charge explodes
on his civilian shirt	jagged ingots
and the decal	sear
on his pickup window	tear
Ripe with youthful illusions	soft flesh
fed by hungry recruiters	beneath
fresh from high school restraints	body armor's trust
"There's a war on	
gotta get me some"	

Months later	Now a different shirt
gullibility stings	tagged with blood
in a forbidding arena	bone-white shards
Young warrior gags	where sleeves were full
on fear	

Glory	Strapped to a gurney
mission	jaw clamped tight
his role emerges	a morphine haze calls back
expendable	that high school psych class
as a shear pin	the lightness of each topic
when the drive wheel binds	an intense understanding now
a pawn in the shop of war	'fight or flight' means nothing
One errant move	when neither is possible.
a detonator fires	

—Paul Nichols

Jimi

it was a hall
an old movie house really
in the city of saint francis
near the ocean called peace

a grace slick-like chick
jumpin' in blue white strobe lights
amorphous light shows, pulsing walls
all just a prologue to hendrix

he came out at last
a 'fro imitation of a black ragdoll
escapee from some absurd beckett cast
surely a tragedy or farce was about to unfold
in the silver screen-less seat-less theater
above a stoned blue clowning crowd

he violently struck left-handed
upside down strings a bell-bottom blue heron
with piercing dark eyes
heavy with one guitar wing

he looked down
as if into san francisco's blue bay
as if from coit's high tower
as if to jump from another hughes hurly bird

i pushed to the front to hear
his voice soft wings
the wind cries mary
gliding around us
around the statue of saint francis
in the city of saint francis
near the ocean called peace
a cable car hushing up telegraph hill

i wanted to know about over there
so he played alarums purple haze
murderous intent in hey joe
pain of rejection star spangled banner
with its true blue taps near the end

jimi left the stage that night
prophesying his own end
which eventually came street easy
a barbiturate permanent sleep

he was right on however
about over there
and as he knew
coming back was worse

—William J. Reiter



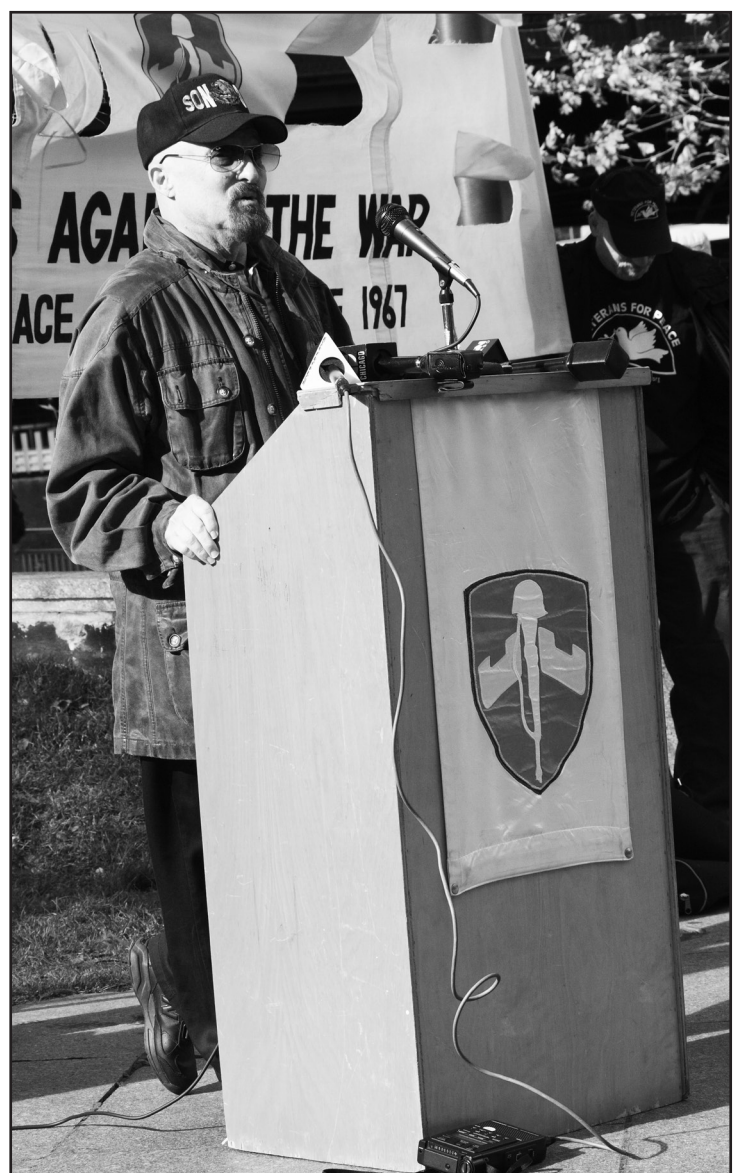
July 4, 1974 - Washington, DC.

Uncoiling

The real challenge not surviving,
but undoing contraction,
uncoiling forty years after,
with or without prescriptions,
beer and Scotch optional.

Clear night,
unknown stars glimmering overhead,
alert raised,
someone has heard fate approaching
or maybe seen tube flashes.
Children once more,
we all dive into soupy mud,
nostrils filling with the sweet odor
of welcoming earth.
Fear rising in a parabolic arc,
apogee poised above our heads,
howling descent,
screaming, screeching music,
a-one, a-two, this one's for you.
At each impact, my body contracts,
tighter, ever tighter,
knees draw to chest,
shoulders seek hips,
consciousness sinks into
fetal ball of forgotten dreams.
Grey smoke geysers, cordite fumes,
debris falling snow-globe gentle,
moment of shocked silence before
the wounded realize they're still alive
then make sure the rest of us
hear all about it.

—Paul Hellweg



Barry Romo at Chicago Vet's Day, 2012.

The Gun Problem No One Talks About: Shooting Ranges in Schools

RICK JAHNKOW

Just about everyone views the National Rifle Association as the leading champion of gun culture in the United States. When there is a mass shooting - even one as outrageous as the attack at Sandy Hook Elementary - we have learned to expect the NRA to uncompromisingly oppose any government response that would limit the rights of gun owners.

Schools, on the other hand, are viewed as the daytime guardians of our children and are expected to have an equally uncompromising stance against weapons and violence. Zero-tolerance policies commonly allow for the expulsion of a child just for bringing a toy resembling a weapon to school, and students are typically barraged at school with messages against joining gangs and using violence to resolve conflict.

Surely it would be inconsistent, then, if schools were to sponsor programs designed to acclimate kids to violence; and we certainly wouldn't expect them to be actively teaching students the skills needed to become shooters. That would be incredibly absurd, right?

Unfortunately, that is exactly what is happening in a large number of our high schools, where local school districts and the Pentagon are co-sponsoring Junior ROTC marksmanship training.

Think about it: a child can be disciplined for bringing a squirt gun to class, but school officials and the Pentagon get a pass when they train students to use rifles with shooting ranges inside our schools. And despite the dangerous implications of giving such a mixed message about guns to young people, this program receives little or no critical attention from the media, politicians or gun control groups who are protesting school

shootings and societal violence.

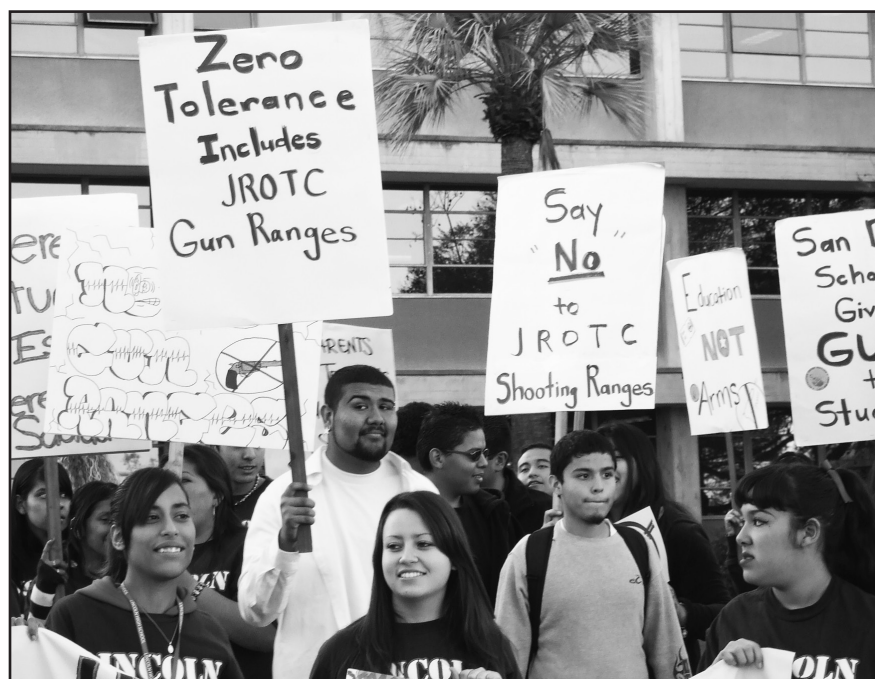
JROTC's Background and Scope

For those who haven't heard, there are now approximately 3,400 secondary schools with units of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, a military training and recruiting program open to students as young as age 14. Founded in 1916, it is operated jointly by the host schools and individual military branches. Instructors are retired officers employed by the local school district. Over half a million students are enrolled in the program and attend daily classes that teach them military customs and demeanor. They are assigned ranks, required to wear uniforms at least once a week, learn to march, and study history, civics and other subjects from Pentagon-supplied textbooks. Students are graded according to how well they can demonstrate that they have internalized military behavior, values and culture. Unlike college ROTC, there is no military obligation with JROTC; however, according to testimony in Congress, 30%-40% of JROTC cadets eventually join the military.

Schools receive a limited federal subsidy to help cover the salaries of JROTC instructors, but a very high instructor-to-student ratio mandated by the Pentagon produces a net cost that is a drain on local school funds.

Marksmanship training is an optional component of JROTC and is used as a magnet to boost student enrollment in the program. The size of enrollment is important because federal law states that JROTC units cannot be maintained at a school unless the number of cadets totals at least 100 or 10% of the student body.

The non-governmental Ci-



vilian Marksmanship Program, which promotes youth involvement with guns and collaborates with JROTC, once published an article stating that at least two-thirds of all JROTC units include marksmanship training (<http://www.odcmp.org/0305/JMIC.asp>). If true, it means it exists in over 2200 high schools.

Banning the Shooting Ranges

Doubts about the JROTC marksmanship program have not been totally absent. Originally, students were trained with either .22 caliber rifles or compressed-air rifles that fired lead pellets. Sometime in the last 10-15 years, the Pentagon made a decision to phase out the .22s in favor of using only pellet rifles. It seems likely this was because of the perceived possibility of a future public relations problem. That fear might have been fed in 1999 when the superintendent of Chicago Public Schools, home of the country's largest JROTC program, responded to the Columbine school shooting by acting administratively to ban all marksmanship training in the district.

The issue became a major focus of debate in the San Diego Unified School District in 2007, when teachers and students discovered plans to install JROTC shooting ranges at two high schools. Local research soon revealed that shooting ranges had existed for years at other schools in the district, and if the new ones were added to the total, there would be shooting ranges in 11 of the 13 schools with JROTC in San Diego.

Knowledge of these facts provoked an intense campaign of protest that was unusual for such a location. San Diego County hosts one of the largest military complexes in the world, with over 110,000 active duty personnel and a Department of Defense payroll that is often number one in the nation. It is not a place where one would expect elected officials to take a stand against anything military. However, that did not discourage a coalition of students, parents, teachers and community activists from approaching the San Diego school board with the following set of demands: enact a ban on all school shooting ranges, stop the involuntary placement of students in JROTC, and stop the practice of using false claims about college eligibility to recruit for JROTC.

The coalition's campaign lasted 14 months and even drew hostile attention from the national NRA office. However, despite the military's dominant influence in the city and NRA's involvement, the campaign succeeded in all of its goals, including a 3-2 vote by the school board to ban marksmanship



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Shooting Ranges in Schools

continued from previous page

training in the district. The marksmanship resolution stated:

"WHEREAS, the San Diego Unified School District has a zero-tolerance policy on weapons in schools and seeks, as one of its primary goals, to teach students to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence; and

"WHEREAS, the District cannot risk sending a mixed message to students when some of their lives have been recently taken by gun violence;

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that any existing school district property used for shooting ranges shall be immediately closed for that purpose and converted for other educational uses by the beginning of the next regular school year.

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that marksmanship training, whether it is conducted on-campus or off-campus, and through textbooks or physical instruction, shall not be taught in connection with the San Diego Unified School District and shall be discontinued immediately."

A major factor in the coalition's success was the mobilization of students to attend school board meetings. Motivating them was the perception that JROTC was disproportionately recruiting students from working-class families and communities of color, while simultaneously denying them equal access to courses needed to get into college. In addition, there was the strong feeling that placing shooting ranges in their schools was an act of insensitivity toward communities that were struggling to reduce violence rooted in pov-



erty and political neglect. With these and other points, the students and parents who testified at board meetings won over the majority of San Diego school trustees.

Defenders of marksmanship training argued that it was just another sport, and linked it to learning leadership skills in JROTC. The sports argument lost its effectiveness in the context of local news of recent student deaths from off-campus gun violence. And the leadership issue was made moot by the fact that the campaign deliberately chose not to demand the removal of JROTC itself, a broader goal that has been impossible to achieve through protest, even in fervently anti-war communities like San

Francisco. Instead, the San Diego coalition focused more narrowly on aspects of the program that were particularly egregious and served to bolster enrollment in JROTC.

In relation to the enrollment issue, an additional victory was won by students at one of the San Diego schools that had been slated for a new shooting range. The effect of the campaign and peer pressure led to such a low enrollment in the school's Marine Corps JROTC unit that it was eventually forced to leave the campus.

Removing shooting ranges from schools does not, of course, address the general problem of militaristic programs in the educational system. JROTC can

still have an influence on students without marksmanship training, and there are hundreds of middle and elementary schools that are opening their doors to programs like the Young Marines and the Navy's Starbase. All of these serve to popularize a warrior mentality and ultimately acclimate children to violence. Dealing with these influences in the school system is a long-term challenge that deserves our persistent attention.

In the meantime, however, school shooting ranges send a remarkably bad mixed message to students about guns and violence and are something we should feel compelled to protest. Not only can the issue be won, but by raising it we can also stimulate critical thinking about why we even have militaristic programs in our civilian school system.

For educational materials and resources on the issue of JROTC and shooting ranges, visit projectyano.org.



AS A STUDENT DURING THE VIETNAM WAR, RICK JAHNKOW ORGANIZED WITH VETS PROTESTING THE VIETNAM WAR IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY. SINCE 1984, HE HAS BEEN THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR THE PROJECT ON YOUTH AND NON-MILITARY OPPORTUNITIES AND IS ON THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OPPOSING THE MILITARIZATION OF YOUTH.

America, Listen To Your Veterans

RICK HARRIENGER

The statistic that another soldier will die in the hour I spend composing this letter, as in every hour before it, is to many adult readers, we "sophisticated" multitasking moguls of American life unfortunate we think, and tack on the dismissive rhetoric of each individual's responsibility for their actions. But, as a veteran these senseless casualties, these emotionally undeveloped youth we've thrown into the fray, our heroes, are as deserving of as many lines of type it takes to address the realities of these repeated the deployment's and the impact our soldiers suffer from hour after hour, day after day, year after year.

It's mechanized Russian Roulette.

Even that analogy fails to account for the rest of the convoy trapped in the kill zone of an ambush on narrow streets-adrenaline screaming through your body.

Our young warriors have become so radically changed by their repeated deployments re-integration into normal society is beyond them. We combat vets, so impacted by this daily diet of death, are closer to what addicts feel going through withdrawal. The consequence of a threat level such as they've endured, dramatically alters one's psyche; that once removed our dependence on the combat theater becomes apparent. The withdrawal from the combat zone, where equipped, armed, and trained for the realities of combat alters we soldiers so dramatically that psychologically,

the prolonged exposure can't help but exacerbate that psychic dependence. We feel so conflicted, so dependent on what yesterday insured our survival we are addicted to war. Adjustment to civilian life difficult in the extreme.

I volunteered to return for a 2nd tour to Vietnam, justifying it as a sane alternative to the year I had remaining on my enlistment. I never told my family of my decision, though. I couldn't articulate that I'd become dependent on having a weapon in my hands and being a part of my squad, anything else was terrifying. the only place I felt safe was in combat. Such was my addiction to war. Like all addictions it had a tipping point. Halfway through my extension, I cracked so dramatically I was medevaced out of country. I lost the ability to distinguish who the enemy was, they all became the enemy. The logical conclusion to this emotional confusion, was to take my own life.

The military very effectively teaches us to dehumanize life. It's a short leap to de-humanizing your own.

When I compare the effects of my relatively short exposure to today's veterans, their repeated deployments compounds this psychic dependence. To survive combat is not enough; we must survive the "operational imperatives," that yesterday assured our survival. Alone, unaddressed, unexpressed, this flip-flop of realities will, for anyone

with a shred of moral compass left, entertain self extinction. It becomes the combat vets "fix" to cure how deranged, how sick, how inappropriate they feel.

Hollywood depicted this addiction to death brilliantly in an old war movie. Three guards forced two POWs to play Russian roulette betting on the outcome. Slyly, one prisoner ups the ante offering to play with two bullets. His captors hungrily agreed. He then raised it to three. They were so intoxicated with the addiction to death, they failed to realize he now had one bullet for each of them. This story illustrates how intoxicating, and insidious this addiction to death has been and is today.

The emotional consequences of war is neither a familiar or easy topic to talk about, but ask any grieving widow, parent, or sibling what they regret the most, and that dialogue with their warrior didn't begin sooner, will be at the top of the list.

I suggest in your letters to those still abroad you discuss the horrible realities the "S" word is claiming here in the US. Don't content yourselves that the fluff we GI's put in correspondences home is how life really is. Discuss ways to improve honest frank conversations. Suggest keeping a journal for the veteran. For many of us writing was the only way to broach these powerful feelings. Insist on a regular dialogue with them when they return home. Study the way native American Indian communities assimilate

returning warriors. Linking up with mentor figures is also beneficial. Regular dialogue with someone, on good days, makes contact on the bad days automatic. In that regard a principle I learned is "there's no such thing as a bad day, only bad moments that last all day." A vivid dream, a restless night unexpressed can color my entire day, but, if there is one person I trust enough to confide in, it lessens the power of those memories.

How long will this "reintegration" take? A parable that's fitting is, "if you walk 5 miles into the forest, and turn around today, it stands to reason its 5 miles back out." Another indicator might be when you're young warrior becomes a mentor themselves! One of the difficult variables with PTSD, is the "post" part. Historically, we who were in combat in 1967 started having complications that demanded addressing in 1977. "Lifers," or those whose civilian occupation is similar in trauma production may never exhibit what others do.

The only thing I can say with any conviction is, if I am to survive the challenges of tomorrow I must take action today.



RICK HARRIENGER BEGAN WRITING POETRY AS A WAY TO "PURGE THE DEMONS OF WAR" BUT CONTINUED, AT THE PERSISTENCE OF A MUSE TO INCLUDE HIS RECOVERY FROM THE RESULTS OF "BETTER LIVING THRU CHEMISTRY" AND A INDEFATIGABLE LOVE OF NATURE.



A Message of Gratitude

DAN NEW

My wife and I arrived at dusk. I carried the luggage into the condo. Sue cracked open the blinds to let the light in. I went back down to the car. As I reached for the front door's handle, something papery and sticky touched my fingertips. I wasn't sure what to make of the two-inch-square yellow note.

My first thought was, not another scolding from that always disgruntled guy downstairs? Had I not parked between the fading white lines that marked the spaces in the parking lot? Perhaps condensation from our air-conditioner had leaked onto his precious deck again. I was tired from the four-hour drive to Cape Cod, a little cranky on an empty stomach.

I scrunched down into the driver's seat, unfolded the note and turned on the overhead lamp. I was already planning a response to the complaint when I got a glimpse of the delicious handwriting, the kind where the dots on the "i's" are heart-shaped and the letters of each word have their own distinctive curlicue. The two sentences were punctuated with a tiny circle rather than a solid period. The space was completely filled with a beautiful, thoughtful structure, no wasted space, lines straight on

an unlined plane.

The note read, "Thank you for your service. I appreciate the sacrifice that you made for our country." My mind started reframing. There were other cars parked close by. I wondered if one belonged to this note-leaving person. I looked around for clues. The effect of the note's content had yet to reach my heart.

"How did they know?" I asked myself silently. Then I remembered my license plates bear the word Veteran. It was not my intention to advertise, at least that was not something I would care to admit. The plates are simple reminders of some facts in my life about which I have rarely spoken. I had internalized what I thought was public opinion into my own private guilt, a byproduct of my PTSD. Occasionally, a passing motorist might give me a thumbs-up and I would dismiss the gesture with an indifference to protect my vulnerability. Now this anonymous person had taken notice and performed a little intervention. Slowly, I felt the message sink into a deep wounded part of my being that had nursed an emotion without a name, hidden for far too long. I heard a sigh escape my

lips. I felt the tears well up, brimming tiny puddles pooling beneath my lower lids. If I had tilted my head forward, the tears would have streaked down my cheeks. I had heard these words before but never so personally directed. Their power had always been blocked by my fear of long-ago memories. They came to me now in flashes of sight and sound and smell that took me from my place on earth in that moment and transported my soul back to where the terror and grief still lived.

The passenger-side door squeaked open, and the spell started to unwind. Images and odors and sounds faded quickly but left a recognizable residue. My wife sat down.

"Honey, are you OK?"

I could only hand her the note for fear that anything else might expel a potent sob. Sue took my hand gently, then rubbed my forearm reassuringly. I suppose she silently thanked this anonymous angel for this gift to us. I felt my heart expand and embraced the connectedness I sensed with her and the world.

"Do you still feel hungry?" she asked.

I nodded and took the note

from her hand. I folded it neatly. I opened the glove compartment and placed the yellow remnant in with the other stuff collecting there. With the engine started and the car in reverse, I twisted my body and glanced back for safety's sake. On the rear panel behind the backseat, I saw that forgotten sun-weathered baseball cap with the words, Vietnam Vet, stitched above the replica of old campaign ribbons. With the danger of some unseen hazard behind the car avoided, I threw it into drive and moved forward again.

After all these years of searching and probing, a simple act by an unknown had pierced my being and opened my soul to the world about me. What I had searched for in the years since my return from war became abundantly available when clarity dawned through the welcoming extended in that short note.



DAN NEW IS A VIETNAM VETERAN (1967-1968). HE IS AN ARTIST/WRITER LIVING IN RETIREMENT IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. HE CAN BE REACHED AT DNEW1@NYCAP.RR.COM.

Saudis Now Providing Arms for Syrian Rebels

GOOD HEAVENS! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US YOU WERE FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY AGAINST A CRUEL AND UNYIELDING DICTATORSHIP?

WE'D HAVE BEEN HERE IN A JIFFY! WE HATE CRUEL AND UNYIELDING DICTATORSHIPS.

YOU JUST ASK JOHN KERRY.



NYTS/CWS Feb 26 2013 (5544)

To End All Wars

TOM BLAKEMORE - REVIEWER

To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918.

Adam Hochschild

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011)

If any question why we died, Tell them, because our fathers lied. Rudyard Kipling, "Epitaphs of the War"

Nearly a century ago the greatest event of the twentieth century blossomed across the fields of Europe, an event whose legacy is with us still. Woodrow Wilson famously called the 1914-1918 war, "The war to end all wars." Alfred, Lord Milner called the aftermath, "The Peace to end all Peace." In this book, author Adam Hochschild explores why the events of First World War are so meaningful in the twenty-first century and how this great conflict shaped the modern world. He brings a new perspective, focusing on those who resisted the militarism on all sides and followed their conscience and principles to try to end the madness. Over the course of these four and a half years, the carnage is almost beyond understanding. In all, there were approximately 10 million military dead and 21 million more wounded. Great Britain lost 722,000 dead, there were more than double that number in France and more than triple in Germany. The civilian cost was an estimated 12 to 13 million deaths. Yet in the years and months leading up to the beginning of hostilities there were many in all countries that foresaw the carnage to come and were actively working to avoid this war. As Hochschild writes,

"What kings and prime ministers did not foresee, many more far-sighted citizens did. From the beginning, tens of thousands of people on both sides recognized the war for the catastrophe it was. They believed it was not worth the inevitable cost in blood; some of them anticipated with tragic clarity at least part of the nightmare that would engulf Europe as a result, and they spoke out."

These resisters came from the ranks of the socialists, those fighting for social justice, suffragettes and intellectuals. And the price was indeed high: from estrangement from one's family to being stoned at peace demonstrations to harassment from the police and government spies to serving prison time, these people had the courage and fortitude to stand for their beliefs in front of all that was thrown at them. "This is a story of loyalties.

served prison terms under harsh conditions: hard labor, a bare bones diet and a strict rule-of-silence." Of those who served time for their resistance were Britain's leading investigative journalist, a future winner of the Nobel Prize, more than a half dozen future members of Parliament, and a future cabinet minister. The ranks of the pacifists going to prison included many women such as Charlotte Despard, one of the main speakers and writers against the war. Although a leader in the anti-war movement, she never lost her affection for her younger brother, "dearer to me than anyone else," General Sir John French. French was the commander-in-chief of all British forces on the Western front and whose troops suffered hundreds of thousands of deaths in futile frontal assaults on the German trenches, barbed wire, and machine guns.

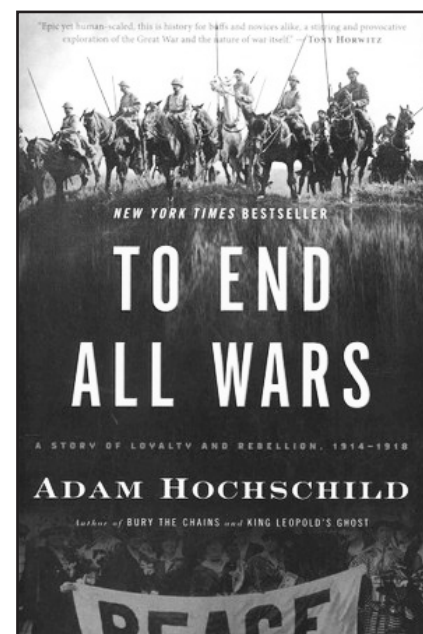
In this book, author Adam Hochschild explores why the events of First World War are so meaningful in the twenty-first century and how this great conflict shaped the modern world.

What should any human being be most loyal to? Country? Military duty? Or the ideal of international brotherhood?"

In Britain, by the conflict's end, more than 20,000 British men of military age had refused the draft. More than "6,000

The fruits of this war are with us still today: the use of poison gas led to the widespread use of defoliants in Vietnam and resulting tragic birth defects; German bombing of English and French cities and civilians would lead to Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and the industrialization of war has led to the weapons of mass destruction around the world. As Lord Landsdowne correctly predicted at the outset of the war, "The prostitution of science for the purposes of destruction" was upon us.

For all those who are interested in peace activism and social justice, this book is a milestone in reporting. Hochschild takes on the crucial issues of pacifism and the question of loyalties as a citizen of both country and the world in an engaging and lively history of the era. Focusing primarily on Great Britain (where

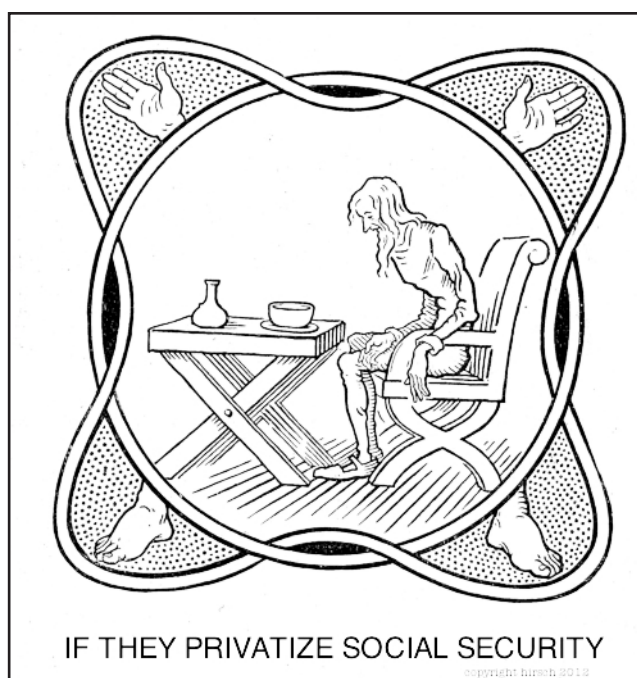


resistance was greatest to the war) he weaves a story of the cost of speaking out on the personal lives of the participants. As important as these issues were to people in 1914-1918, they are equally important to us today as government propaganda (which came of age during the Great War) time and again leads us into unnecessary war and suffering. For as historian Howard Zinn (The People's History of the United States) has said, "If you don't know history, it's like you were born yesterday; anyone up there in a position of power can tell you anything and you have no way of checking up on it." Those from 1918 who survived vowed Never Again, and still today, we have failed to heed their hard-won advice.

To go against the mainstream and listen to one's conscience at such a time can be a lonely struggle. As mathematician, philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Bertrand Russell wrote and is quoted in the final paragraph of this fine work, "I knew it was my duty to protest, however futile that protest might be. I felt that for the honor of human nature those who were not swept off their feet should show that they stood firm." Even a century's worth of bloodshed after the war that was supposed to end all wars, we are painfully far from the day when most people on earth will have the wisdom to feel, as did Alice Wheeldon in her prison cell, "The world is my country."



TOM BLAKEMORE (US ARMY 1969-1971) IS A PROFESSIONAL SOUND EDITOR AND MIXER FOR FILM AND TELEVISION. HE CURRENTLY TEACHES FILM SOUND AT TRIBECA FLASHPOINT MEDIA ARTS ACADEMY IN CHICAGO.



Look Not Unto the Morrow

DAVID SWANSON - REVIEWER

Look Not Unto the Morrow
Robert Fantina
 (Whiskey Creek Press, 2012)

Robert Fantina, the author of a tragically nonfictional survey of the lives of soldiers in all past US wars, has now published a devastatingly fictional account of the war that the Vietnamese call the American War.

I say devastatingly fictional, because Fantina condenses and concentrates into one small book the lives of a very few characters through the lead-up to, the experience of, and the aftermath of a US soldier's participation in that war. The extreme horror and tragedy recounted (leavened by much human goodness) would require the watering down of thousands of additional pages of extraneous information were it nonfiction. It is all based on typical experiences endured, overcome, or surrendered to by many thousands of Americans.

The plot is not predictable, the lessons not pedantic, but the story of "Look Not Unto the Morrow" is a story that grabs you more firmly by the throat because of the knowledge of how many people have lived it.

Here we meet a young man who only figures out what war is once he's in it, and a young

woman who loves him and who only begins to give a damn about the world and the people in it when her lover goes to war. I find myself, as I read this, desperately hoping that someone young will read it too and get themselves together faster, before it's too late.

Then I realize that when I grew up believing war was a sick barbaric atavism, I was growing up after the peace movement of the 1960's had happened. Perhaps people had learned. Perhaps that learning had reached me. I also had the option of going to college. I also was not drafted. The accounts of veterans at the Winter Soldier event during the war on Iraq, just like those during the war on Vietnam, are tales of disillusionment. These are young men, and now women too, who believed the hype, believed some good purpose could be served by mass murder, headed off to participate, and then began to have grave doubts.

The accounts of some veterans are, in fact, very mixed and complicated. Some believe a soldier should tell the truth about a horrible genocidal crime and also continue to take part in it if so ordered. Some believe our current wars should be denounced and actively resisted, but that a good war might start next month

or next year.

A young man recently published a column in the *Washington Post* headlined "I killed people in Afghanistan. Was I right or wrong?" I interviewed him and will air the interview on my radio show. He told me that he had opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003, supported the ongoing occupation once begun, and supported the war on Afghanistan. I asked what he would do if another invasion were launched that he was opposed to. He replied that he would go and fight in it. He would go and kill people in it.

Beneath all the differences between our era and the 1960's/1970's that come through in Fantina's novel, there is much that is the same. Combining Fantina's novel with Nick Turse's new nonfictional account of the extended atrocity and marathon "war crime" that was the assault on Vietnam (all war is a crime, not certain bits of it) should give one a serious understanding of what was, is, and must not continue to be the fundamental error of our ways.

I've read more autobiographical accounts of our current wars than fiction, so please send me your recommendations for the latter, as well as for accounts from Vietnamese and Iraqi and Afghan (etc.) points of view.



Autobiographies have their own advantages. I used to wish Ralph Waldo Emerson's prediction might come true and novels might be displaced by memoirs.

I say I used to wish that, because a good writer can invent truths, can show us what's happening inside the heads of multiple characters, can personalize public affairs with the power of mythology. To see what I'm talking about, read "Look Not Unto the Morrow."



DAVID SWANSON'S BOOKS INCLUDE "WAR IS A LIE." HE BLOGS AT [HTTP://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG](http://DAVIDSWANSON.ORG) AND [HTTP://WARISACRIME.ORG](http://WARISACRIME.ORG) AND WORKS AS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR FOR THE ONLINE ACTIVIST ORGANIZATION [HTTP://ROOTSACTION.ORG](http://ROOTSACTION.ORG).

US To Supply Non-lethal Aid (Food) to Syrian Rebels



Christmas Forty Years Ago

continued from page 40

get any paper cuts?" I'd like to point out that anyone stationed at four bases in Northeast Thailand (Isan) was physically closer to Hanoi than those who served in Vietnam, except for POWs and, perhaps, some special forces. There were two insurgencies going on in Thailand during my year, a guerilla war in Isan similar to those in the rest of SEA, and an Islamic uprising in southern Thailand (not far from U-Tapao). As the

new guy, I was given perimeter guard duty until the end of the Vietnam "police action." It was scary out there in the dark of night, concerned not only about guerillas and bandits, but also tigers, leopards, poisonous snakes and assorted other creepy crawlers. I only learned recently that I was exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals used for vegetation control those lonely evenings. When doing public affairs duty, I

saw some pretty horrible things, such as the remnants of a family killed while scavenging in Korat's ammo dump, and an EC-139E Hercules plane crash that killed the crew and several Thai villagers, among other less dramatic but equally gruesome scenes. You didn't need to be in combat to see blood and gore in the Vietnam Theater of War.



DOUG MASON IS A SOIL SCIENTIST AND GREAT GRANDFATHER WHO RETIRED TO BELIZE BUT NOW RESIDES IN STATE COLLEGE, PA. HE LOVES THE OUTDOORS AND OCCASIONALLY WRITES FOR THE MONTHLY ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER, "VOICES OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA." HE IS A MEMBER OF VVAW AND CHAPTER 17 OF VETERANS FOR PEACE.

A Warriors Psalm from Vietnam

Take hold weary warrior,
We who sense your doubt
Take hold for your recovery
Is what our's about.
I know well the horror
the truth of that been said;
An empty consolation
If spoken to the dead!
I can only promise you
you must stay alive,
To realize the purpose
Of soldiers who survive.
Yes, we're all expendable;
a maddening hopeless state.
To give up though a greater sin;
to self-capitulate.
We warriors know the dues of war;
a burden quite enough.
We need you now to hear this cry :
"Of death I've had enough!"
The burden of your private hell
is only painful now;
A psychic exorcism:
A purging you must allow.

It doesn't mean you're going mad
and here is the litmus test:
The wicked never know your pain
So dude, give it a rest.
The challenge now, to stay alive,
keep that first! Protected.
And day by day to face the ways
we all have been affected.
The newness of the pain you feel
The anguish of your soul,
As broken as you might feel now,
You'll once again be whole.
I don't suggest the sorrow and
the sadness won't return
But the crippling desperation
Will teach you to discern.
The passion you young warriors feel
Has you doubt your worth,
You've already died 1000 deaths
It's time now for rebirth.

—Sgt. Charles F Harrienger, Jr.



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 more than 40 years old. It belongs to VVAW, and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without permission.

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.

RECOLLECTIONS

Christmas Forty Years Ago: Random Thoughts About the Roar of War Planes

DOUGLAS M. MASON

I extended my enlisted tour in the USAir Force by 7 months so that I could serve in the Southeast Asian (SEA) conflict. On Thanksgiving 1972, I arrived at Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), exactly two years after my older brother, Frank, had served there. Dropping out of college after one semester at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, PA, I joined the Air Force in hopes of getting some training that would be useful in the civilian sector after my service. At Korat, I was assigned to the 388th Combat Support Group as an information specialist (military journalist) at this Tactical Air Command (TAC) base.

I arrived already radicalized by two events from 1970. Princeton students protesting the Cambodian incursion on campus (I had gone to see Country Joe McDonald perform there), and the Earth Day events in Philadelphia. Music, my bliss, also informed my politics. I had turned my pen against the Pentagon when I began writing in 1971-72 for the GI Underground newspaper, "Fragging Action," which gave servicepersons at Fort Dix and

McGuire AFB, near Wrightstown, NJ, an alternative view to the propaganda coming out of Washington, DC about the Vietnam War (which should more correctly be termed the Indochina War). I learned that the press used to produce the previous GI anti-war paper, "Shakedown," had been destroyed when some drunken Drill Instructors from Fort Dicks had fire-bombed the Wrightstown coffeehouse where it was housed. My photographer friend Bob from Roanoke, VA, often helped me secretly distribute the anti-war papers at McGuire, and he joined me for several demonstrations outside the gates of McGoo. The dedicated staff at "Fragging Action" also brought the FTA (Free the Army) show to Wrightstown, featuring actress Jane Fonda, actor Donald Sutherland and singer Holly Near, among others. The house was packed with soldiers and airmen of all types and stripes.

The USAF bases in Thailand held their annual talent contest just before Christmas 1972 at U-Tapao RTAFB, a Strategic Air Command (SAC) base. As I was practicing "Johnny B. Goode" on

my harmonica, my rhythm was rattled by the extremely loud, seemingly non-stop takeoffs of B-52 Stratofortresses headed to North Vietnam carrying full bomb loads a few days before the Christmas Day truce. After the contest, I returned to Korat, where the constant roar of F-4a Phantoms ("fast-movers") and F-105 Thunderchiefs ("Thuds") heading out to support the B-52s was equally memorable. My aunt Jeannie had bought me a subscription to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* so I could keep up with the news back in the world, where I learned the extent of the air raids a few days after they ended. I was outraged, and some of my buddies, all of them "heads," were equally pissed off. We all agreed to a work slowdown for the duration of the Indochina War. We kept our spirits high with potent Thai bud and rock music, especially from the "Woodstock" albums. Our favorite performances were Jimi Hendrix playing "The Star Spangled Banner" and vet Country Joe McDonald hollering out "The Fish Cheer" (give me an "F", etc.) and then singing the "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die

Rag." It may be that the Christmas bombings forced the hands of the North Vietnamese to sign the peace agreement that ended the war in 'Nam in January 1973, but the USA was still at war in Laos and Cambodia. The USAF continued bombing Laos through April 1973, and in Cambodia until August 15, 1973, hence my references to the Indochina War. American war efforts in Southeast Asia began in 1961 with the CIA-directed war in Laos, and we began secretly carpet-bombing Cambodia in 1969.

Like everyone who served in Vietnam, Thailand, Guam, etc., I was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal. There are some out there who think only Vietnam combat vets should have received that badge. I disagree, because without the support of those of us in the rear, there would have been many more than 58,000 plus names on the Wall. I have occasionally been harassed by combat vets who, upon learning I was in the USAF, make comments such as "did you

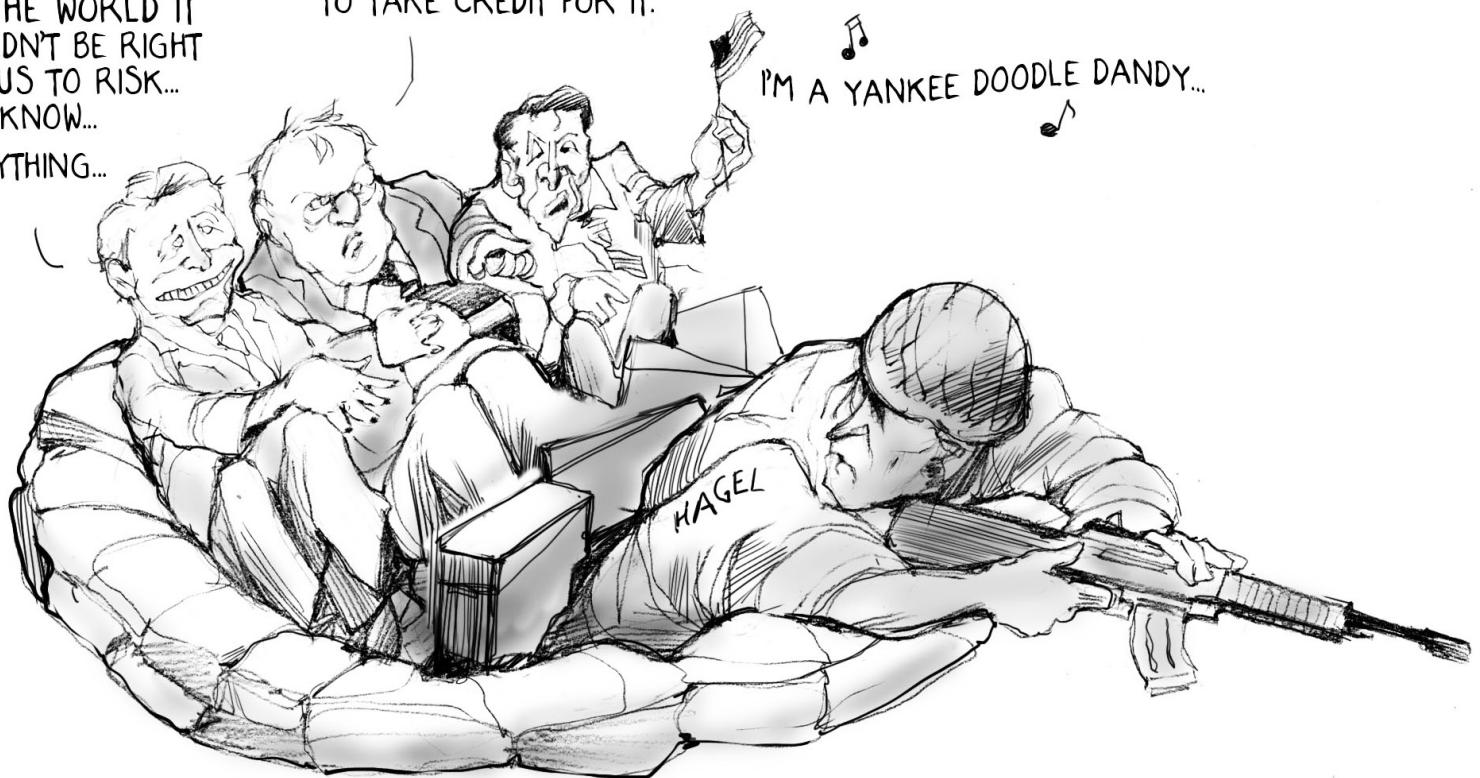
continued on page 38

In the foxhole with neocons William Kristol, Richard Perle and Charles Krauthammer

OF COURSE, AS THE
SMARTEST PEOPLE
IN THE WORLD IT
WOULDN'T BE RIGHT
FOR US TO RISK...
YOU KNOW...
ANYTHING...

BUT OF COURSE, IF YOU DON'T
GET KILLED WE'LL BE HAPPY
TO TAKE CREDIT FOR IT.

I'M A YANKEE DOODLE DANDY...



DANZIGER NYTS/CWS Jan 13 2012 (5489)